ELECTION CRISIS, LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

Akhakpe Ighodalo, PhD

Department Of Public Administration, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos

Abstract

The paper analysed the recurring election crisis under liberal democratic system and the threat it poses to national security in Nigeria. One of the major instruments for selecting political officeholders is election. It serves as means of ensuring accountability and mobilization of the citizenry for political participation. Yet, elections in Nigeria have always been characterized by mal-practices such as: election rigging, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, political intimidation and assassination prior to, during and after elections. This has often brought unpopular governments to power with the resultant legitimacy crisis, breakdown of law and order and general threat to security. The paper with the use of structure agency theory, argued that elections in which "the winner takes all" is unsuitable for a plural society like Nigeria. Adaptation of the liberal democratic system to suit the country's cultural values and peculiarities should lay the basis for people centered development strategies that will empower them to be active participants in policy making and implementation, under a political climate characterized by the rule of law and constitutionalism. Unless these categorical steps are taken, the country may experience another democratic breakdown that will spell doom for the nation-state.

Keywords: Election, Democracy, Development, Security

Introduction

Elections are critical aspects of the democratic framework for governing modern political societies. They serve as instrument of political choice, mobilization and accountability. In the context of liberal democracy that has become the most popular form of democracy in a unipolar world, elections are to facilitate the smooth transition from one civilian administration to the other and help in legitimizing sitting governments.

In a democratic system where elections are devoid of crisis, long term disputes or political violence, are amicably resolved. Such system enhances the prospect for political

stability, peace, development and continuity in governance. But where elections are characterized by violence, thuggery, intimidation, rigging, ballot box snatching and stuffing and other forms of electoral malpractices, they bring to question the very essence of democracy and compromise the nation's security.

One of the principal functions of the modern state is that of protecting the territorial integrity of the state, lives and property of its citizenry and upliftment of the human condition. The promotion of human security has become the central focus of the new development paradigm because building of arms and ammunitions do not bring peace, security and political stability. Eradicating poverty, hunger, diseases through sustainable development programmes, hold the key to an enduring national security. Thus, a country that invests heavily on human security may not have to spend much money and efforts in fighting crimes like: kidnapping, human trafficking, bombing, student unrest, political assassination, etc.

The Nigerian experience with general elections has shown that the political elite has not fully come to terms with the referents of elections for democratic sustenance and national security. More often than not, the elite has failed to play by the rules of competitive electoral politics which prioritizes politics of tolerance, conflict and consensus, bargaining and compromise. They see elections as warfare, characterized by gangsterism and political disorder. Political parties which organize for elections are also, like armband of men and women going to war, where there must be victors and the vanquished. Elections have become warfare, where it is a sin to lose. This dominant pattern of elections and electioneering threatens to tear the nation apart and put its tenuous peace at great risks.

The 2011 general elections in Nigeria has come and gone but its aftermath threatens the very existence of the Nigerian state. The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) has come out openly to reject the results of the presidential elections which it alleged its candidate, retired General Buhari won. While, the case was in court, political jobbers and miscreants seized the opportunity to create a state of insecurity in the country through the spate of bombing and communal violence in several parts of the north. The political uncertainties in the country creates avenues for aggrieved groups to revive their hitherto latent agitations for all manner of things. The most violent of them being the spate of bombing by the Boko Haram sect!

In the light of the above, the paper analyzed the role of election crisis in the Nigeria's democratic experience since the return to civil rule in 1999 and the insecurity it spawns in the country. To address how these issues are played out in the democratization processes in the country, the paper is structured into five sections. The first section undertook conceptual and

theoretical discourses. The second analysed elections and democracy in Nigeria and how elections have hampered the realization of democratic consolidation. The third examined elections and the new development paradigm. The fourth discussed the interface between democratic elections and national insecurity. The fifth analyzed election crisis, liberal democracy and national security: challenges they elicit and the way forward for the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, then conclusion.

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourses

Elections are means of selecting those to represent the people in different public positions within the polity. Election "provides citizens with influence over policy making" (Powell Jr. 2000). Elections could be ratificatory in the sense that they aim at giving a sitting government some appearances of popularity and mobilize the people for popular participation in development. But under liberal democracy, elections play wider roles such as: instruments of accountability, mobilization of the people, promotion of legitimacy, among other functions. Competitive political elections are vital to the survival of the liberal variant of democracy. This democratic method of arriving at acceptable political leaders is well expanded in Schumpeter (1942) articulation of this arrangement as the:

> *Institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decisions. It is a method by which the individual acquires the power to participate in decisions by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples vote.*

It is instructive to note that under liberal democracy words like "competitive struggle" tend to be emphasized more than consensual approach to politics. Thus, Central to the survival of this democratic method is the imperative of playing by the rule of the game. It is the conformity with this stated imperative that allows for uninterrupted transfer of power from one administration to the other. Once a sitting government knows that it can be voted out of power within the framework of periodic elections, it strive to pursue the socio-economic and political interests of the electorates who may switch allegiance to opposition parties if such government fails to meet their expectations. Thus, legitimacy is seen as "the capacity of the political system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for society" (Lipset, 1963) is central to the survival of liberal democracy. A people develop attachment to and belief in the prevailing political system because they trust in its ability to meet their short and long term needs.

Political stability that this system spawns helps to promote development in the body polity. However, for many years, African States operated a misguided development paradigm

which emphasized esoteric and aesthetic needs. This created stagnation, or stunted growth and brought poverty to many Africa countries. Following the failure of the pursuit of modernization as development, a new paradigm of development that prioritizes the people as its center piece, is being propagated, particularly in the global south. This model aims at promoting the welfare and well being of the citizenry. In this perspective to development, public policies are directed at solving challenges of hunger, disease, education, unemployment, environmental safety, medical care, etc.

In countries where appropriate development paradigm is in place and practiced, the citizenry enjoys high standard of living demonstrated by the willingness of government to provide the basic necessities of life in terms of jobs, portable water, electricity, affordable housing, foods, roads among others. Under these conditions, there could be national human security. Thus, security could mean different things at different times to different people. Generally, security could be referred to as "a measure that ensures peaceful co-existence and development at large (Adebayo 2011). Where there is security, there is likely to be absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension and apprehension over lose of life, liberty, property, goals and values, among others (Ibid). From the foregoing, it is clear that security is vital for development in any human collectivity. However, as part of the colonial legacies in Africa, security tends to assume the militarists approach either because the political system is inherently unstable or those in control of state powers want to be there "*ad infinitium*". In either case, emphasis is on the building of arms and ammunitions to the detriment of the basic necessities of life for the citizenry.

Consequently, some of the World's poorest people live in the continent of Africa. Even in peace time, much of public annual budgets still go to the purchase of State arms while education is poorly funded. Thus, in recent times, the concept of security has shifted from the military angle to prioritize the provision of goods and services which make life more meaningful to the people and empower them to participate in the developmental processes. This is a more enduring aspect of national security where people go about their daily activities unhindered. The fragility of the state in Africa is partly due to this deficit in human security (Albert 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that approaching the question of security from a political/state or militaristic angle is detective. The more fundamental basis for security lies in freedom from poverty, disease, ignorance, joblessness, arbitrary power e.t.c (see Ibeanu 1999).

While there are several theories which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the structure-agency theory present us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central

issues of this paper. The theory contends that agents such as politicians and state managers engage in politicking to get their interests promoted. But they have to operate within structure(s) that constraint or support their actions. For example, "actions of ministers and governments officers produce the structure that constrain junior civil servants and state functionaries, the effect of whose actions similarly constrain the rest of us" (Hay, 1988). This theory does indicate a unilinear determinism as the argument seems to suggest. While structure determines the actions of agents, agents also condition the structure in the process of carrying out their roles or simply to realize their parochial interests.

Election and Democracy

Election is central to the effective functioning of modern representative democracy. Since direct democracy has become almost impossible to practice on account of the large population in every modern political society, electing or selecting political leaders through periodic elections has become the norm. This is particularly so under liberal democracy. As Schumpeter (1942) puts it "democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them". Since everybody cannot make such decisions at any given point in time, they have to select those to represent them.

An extended version of this argument on liberal democracy and election is put forward by Sandbrook in (Adejumobi, 2000) "political system characterized by regular and free election in which politicians organize into parties, compete to form the government by right of virtually all adult citizens to vote and by guarantee of a range of familiar political and civil rights". It means that there is an organic link between democracy and elections. For this linkage to be productive, it has to meet certain essential conditions. These include: the people have to be empowered to make political choice without hindrance, and the political atmosphere under which this choice is made should be free from threat, intimidation and manipulation. Also, the practice of choosing political leaders should coher with the cultural values of the people which should safeguard the exercise. In other words, elections must be compatible with democracy that is being practiced in a given country. For election to make meaning to a democratic system, it must go beyond a ritualistic exercise carried out periodically. As Okoye notes:

> *… elections are a complex set of activities with different
> variables that act and feed the other … it involves the
> participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders
> and their own participation in governance. Elections are not
> necessarily about Election Day activities although it forms an*

important component. It encompasses activities before, during and after elections... it includes the liberation or otherwise of the political process in the country and the independence of adjudicating bodies of elections (in Iyayi, 2005).

From the foregoing, it is clear that there are constitutive and regulative mechanisms and percepts of elections which should be taken in its entirety for there to be credible elections and democracy in a given political milieu. For Adejumobi (2000), these constitutive and regulatory aspects include: "the establishment of a competent, relatively autonomous and non-partisan electoral body to administer the conduct of elections, the existence of an impartial press and a non-partisan police force". Also, the process of elections should "involves the rules, procedures and activities relating to the conduct of elections" (ibid). These are constitutive and regulatory rules which should limit the struggle for power and facilitate healthy electoral competition. How these whole gamuts of electoral arrangements can be put into practice to produce security, socio-political and economic development, is the subject of analysis in the next section.

Democracy and the New Development Paradigm

Election is part of the democratic framework in the society that if properly put to use, will produce socio-economic and political development. Credible elections put the right people in government, manage conflict effectively and allocate resources efficiently. But the nature and type of democracy necessary for development has been an issue in Africa. As part of the colonial project in Africa, liberal democracy was foisted on African political systems and societies in an ineffective manner that till date, is difficult for African States to adapt it to suit their pluralistic cultural and political values. These institution and structure together with their processes were uncritically integrated into the African political economy. For example, while western liberal democracy prioritizes individual rights, private property, liberty and so on, African cultural values emphasize communalism and collective security (Osaghae, 1999).

Also, the mal-integration of African states into the international capitalist order, has seen African states playing subservient roles to the advanced capitalist countries. Within this contraption, African states have lost any autochthonous means of addressing challenges of development that was forced down the throat of Africans in form of modernization and in contemporary times, globalization. The aesthetic values in western development paradigm, see development as mere transition from "traditional" African ways of interaction to "modernity" conceived of as westernization. These development models are mainly concerned with stimulating economic growth in form of increase per capital income, import

substitution industrialization, etc. While human or social security is given scout attention by African leaders.

The political correlate of these economic measures is liberal democracy, that is regarded as the inevitable outcome of modernization. Like its economic correlate-capitalism, liberal democracy has helped to create political violence, religious strives and ethno-communal cleavages in most countries in Africa. Yet, more than three decades of experimenting with liberal democracy in Nigeria, the expected gains of multiparty elections have failed to be registered in the lives of average Nigerians. Instead, crisis of underdevelopment still persists nay in greater dimensions. Multiparty elections which are suppose to be the cure for development and insecurity in the continent have actually exacerbated them.

In Nigeria, elections have always been hotly contested under party politics that is intemperate and violence rite-large. The 2011 general elections were no different as the two presidential candidates- Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and General Mohammadu Buhari Rtd of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) sloughed it out to the apex court in Nigeria, the Supreme Court. The court in its ruling in the petition filed by the CPC on the presidential elections, declared that President Goodluck Jonathan and Vice president Namadi Sambo were validly elected. It noted that the petitioners were unable to prove their allegation of violation of the electoral law. As the lead judgment put it "it is trite law that he who asserts must prove. A person must not only assert but also prove allegations of non-compliance. It is only then that the burden will shift to the person whom allegations of non-compliance are made against…" (The Sun 29th December, 2011). In his reaction, the plaintiff retorted that the judgment was "politically motivated and has little legal content", (The sun 29th December, 2011).

The political unrest and spate of insecurity which have invaded parts of the Northern geo- political zone have their links to the disputed presidential elections in 2011. For the umpteenth time, it has shown that politics of tolerance and accommodation, bargaining and compromise are yet to be enthroned in the Fourth Republic politics. The aftermath of the general elections of 2011 continue to pose major threat to the socio-economic and political development of the country. The Boko Haram insurgence has led to the lose of thousands of lives and properties. Also, the economy is threatened due to the insecurity in major flash points of the country. As the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria has rightly noted, "The current spate of bombings across the country by terrorist groups alludes to the fact that our business environment is becoming more and more threatened and therefore the need to

urgently develop a framework that will enable us to effectively respond to any crisis and thus safeguarding lives and properties and ensuring stability and growth in our economic system" (The Punch 29th February, 2012).

All over the world, liberal democracy is prioritized because it is assumed to have the magic wand to effectively deal with inter and intra group conflicts arising from the democratic method. But the Nigerian experience with liberal democracy is not very pleasant. The people's votes in most cases have refused to count. While ethno-religious conflict is rife in the polity, the economy remain on its kneels with abject poverty as a recurring decimal among the people. The popular expectations, that democracy will resolve all these challenges have largely been unattained.

It would seem the behavioral pattern among the political and economic elites is not in consonance with the core democratic values which conduce for stability and development in the polity. Politics of give and take and respect for the unwritten rules of the game of politics are what makes for sustainable democracy. In sofaras these ingredients of the liberal democratic method are lacking, in so much the country would continue to have the orgy of violence and crises in the polity. Tied to these issues is the distributive framework in the political structure of the country. The state managers continues to dish handout in form of funds to groups and nationalities making it too attractive for there to be consensual politics. In this context politics invariably becomes a zero-sum game or winner takes all. Politicians are apt to ignore constitutive rules in the political processes because emphasis is on the sharing of the national cake rather than how it is baked. Devolution of resources to state and local governments would appear to be a more productive way of bringing about development and efficient use of resources. But unless other forms of constitutional sanctions are evolved against abuse of power and resources of the state, the same behavioral pattern that has rendered national politics corrupt and unproductive will find expression at other levels.

Also, it would seem, the state is involved in too many things with little of them being done effectively. Over the years statist approach to development has led to the state chewing more than it can swallow. Thus, leading to inefficiency and mal-development. Civil society has not been able to effectively take its pride of place in the scheme of things in the country. Perhaps, due to the totalizing effects of state that intervenes everywhere. Civil society should take its place in the affairs of governance by creating alternative avenues for wealth creation and power in order to de-emphasize the salience of the state in the life of the people that partly accounts for mis-management and corruption in the public domain.

Democratic Elections and National (In) security

Credible elections are necessary to stem the tide of political decay and renewal in the country. This is because in the view of apologists of liberal democracy, once elections are gotten right, democracy is on its way to being consolidated and in consequence enduring peace and security will be instituted in the country. In essence, credible elections produce security, development and political stability.

Security could take different forms. There is human security, national security, and so on. National security implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparati of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally. Human security involves protecting the citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, etc. However, all these can only take place where there is peace and stability in the polity. Experience has shown that it is human security that presents the most effective instrument for national security and not the building of arms and weapons of warfare.

In Africa, years of economic exploitation, mal-development and bad governance have continued to fan the ember of conflicts and crises in the continent. From Togo to Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria to Kenya and Zimbabwe to Ivory Coast, general elections have been widely disputed. The violence they spawn come from man made barriers on the part of smooth electoral processes. Beyond constraints of funds, manpower and other logistics, obstacles to health electoral processes emanate from the inordinate ambition of the political elite to win elections at all cost. To achieve their goal, they manipulate the constitutive and regulative instruments for credible electoral contest. All institutions and agencies of government are used by those in possession of state power and authority to remain in government. Because of the premium on power everything is mobilized to remain in power against the will of the electorates. Where the ballot box containing the preference of the governed, cannot bring about the transfer of political power from one party to another in a peaceful manner, then democracy (liberal or not) is in grave danger.

Empirical evidence has shown that in elections conducted to public offices, all contesting parties are involved in one form of electoral malpractices or other (Joseph, 1987; Osaghae, 1999, Iwu, 2008). Where the opposing parties fail to win elections, they create one form of electoral crisis or the other. This includes: long litigation in court, political propaganda, use of militant groups, mobilization of religious sentiments, among others. In more extreme cases, violent politics ensues such as: bombing, kidnapping, political assassination and youth restiveness.

More than ever before, the country's security has come under threat. Indeed, the climate of fear pervades the country as politics of impunity pervade the polity. Never before has the country's security being so stretched in peace time. Yet, this threat to national security is not unconnected with injustices which dominate the body polity. Faulty development policies pursued since independence, have left the people pauperized and decimated. Also, failure to play by the rules of the game of party politics brings the country close to the state of nature.

These are manifested in increasing poverty, diseases, unemployment, poor medical care, poor housing facilities, lack of portable water, epileptic power supply, lack of access to power and resources by minority groups and their exclusion from policy making (Onimode, 2007; Ake 2000; Ayeni 2010).

Interestingly, all these are taking place in the context of democratization. Has liberal democracy lost its potency in resolving or managing conflicts as has been well articulated by liberal democracy scholars? Or is it a case of failing democracy in the country? These and other related questions will be addressed in the section that follows.

Election Crisis, Liberal Democracy and National Security: Challenges and the Way Forward

In the proceeding section, we examined the nature of election crisis and the danger it poses for national and human security. Why election crisis? What challenges do they pose for security and how can it be managed for the sustenance of democracy and security in the country? These are some of the questions we seek to provide answers to in this section.

First and foremost, we need to interrogate the type of democracy that should be at stake in Africa. It is accepted that democracy has some universal values such as, freedom, liberty, civil and political rights, free press, respect for the rule of law and constitutionalism (Osaghae, 1999). Yet, processually, the social conditions in Africa demands that, socio-economic, environmental and cultural rights should be given the attention they deserve at this stage of the continent's development. Democracy may mean little to a people that are hungry: poverty stricken, unemployed and illiterate. Votes can only be meaningful in the hands of those who know their meanings and relevance. Environmental and other abuses are going on in the midst of poverty, thereby depriving the people of access to life sustaining resources (Ayeni, 2010).

Yet, the state in Africa remains salient inspite of, efforts to roll it back. It controls greater part of the people's life, appropriating toall intent and purposes much power and resources to itself. Given its attractiveness to the elite as a source of wealth accumulation,

they are apt do everything to acquire, expand and retain political power since capturing it will mean, owing everything. The over-swollen state makes the premium on power very high. Therefore, elections to capture this power cannot but be zero-sum and violent. In the struggle for state power, constitutive and regulative laws remain mute. It must be so because of the intense attraction state power and resources command.

Winner-takes all politics that defines the liberal democratic model, carries with it electoral crisis. It is a system where the winner at election takes all and the loser is vanquished. Since everybody want to be in the mainstream of the subsisting politics, elections become a "do or die" affair. In this context, managers of the electoral processes cannot be above board because the pressure, from the system is too enormous for any one to play by the rules. The 2011 general elections have shown however that with the right political will and tolerance, the learning process can yield much dividends. This has huge implication for civil society that should drive the economy. In the developed world, civil society dominates the economy and dictates its processes. They also, to a large extent, dictate who get voted to power based on the policies and programmes canvassed by contestants. In Africa, however, the private sector remains inchoate leaving the public sector to substantially dominate the civil society realm. Experiences from other developing areas of the world have demonstrated that the inefficient state cannot drive economic growth and development.

Political leadership has been one of the main obstacles to democracy and development in Africa. Post-independence political leadership has been everything but productive. They have been distributive rather than productive in orientation, wasteful, and corrupt in political and economic management. The problem with Nigeria has been described simply as that of leadership (Achebe, 1984). Given the character of the country's leaders, it is not supprising that there are threats to human security. This is not unrelated to the schism in the ranks of the political elite who lack the hegemony and discipline to engender socio-economic and political stability.

Poverty is a principal cause of political, social and economic conflict in the country. Poverty is antithetical to the principles and core values of democracy. Poverty in the midst of plenty; creates disaffection among the populace and leads them toward violent behaviour. It constraints the ability of the people to make independent choices and participate actively in decision making. It reduces their self-esteem and ability to extract accountability from those they elect.

Yet, corruption is the cause and consequence of poverty in the society. It has stunted the delivery of the dividends of democracy and makes civilian rule fragile. Corruption is a

pernicious phenomenon that plagues all sectors of public and private life in Africa. Under the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, it has continued unabated. At the federal, state and local government levels there have been avalanche of accusations, allegations and claims of financial misappropriation running to billions of Naira. These are monies meant for all round development at these levels of government which have found their way into private bank accounts and homes of public officeholders. Local government councils are supposed to fast-track the process of development at the grassroot. However, Local government administration has been characterized by stealing, looting and misappropriation of funds. As a recent survey puts it "the system of Local government administration has been plagued by a lack of transparency and accountability". (Newswatch Magazine (Lagos) April 2, 2012). Such acts of criminality by public officers, create enough social insecurity in the land that can be capitalized on by other tendencies to destabilize the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

Since independence, the country has been in search of democracy that works. What this entail should be the concern of all peace loving Nigerians. Democracy is a contested concept. It is not a given. Countries should find ways of making it meaningful to their peculiar circumstances. The way forward is to find out ways of adapting liberal democracy to the country s pluralism. This may require the pursuit of some kind of consociational arrangement that will allow for the sharing of power among competing groups and political interests in the country. The winner takes all majoritarian system is not healthy for a deeply divided country like Nigeria (Joseph, 1987).

Also, such system will demand enthroning a new political culture of tolerance. Politicians should learn to play by the rule of the game of politics rather than make it a "do or die" affair. A new political culture of tolerance and accommodation, bargaining and compromise, conflict and consensus should be embraced by stakeholders in the political system. The practice of destroying the system every time politicians fail to achieve their goals is not healthy for the future of democracy and the corporate existence of the country. Once the country is able to get its politics right, the economy will certainly be on its way to recovery and growth. The much needed peace for development will evolve as investor (both foreign and indigenous) will begin to develop faith in the system.

The state in Africa is too salient to engender peaceful contest for power by the political elite. The state should be deemphasized as a means of resource accumulation. One way of achieving this goal is for politicians to seek for alternative means of survival particularly in civil society. This will make civil society organizations truly autonomous of

the state and able to serve as agencies of accountability and engine of economic growth and development. Also, where there is distributive justice in the sharing of power and resources in the society, social security, peace and stability are more likely to be enthroned.

Furthermore, there should be institutionalization of electoral reforms. It is refreshing to note that the government is moving along this line. It is a step in the right direction. The electoral body should be made up of men of integrity and high moral standing. Where these standards are compromised, those found culpable should be removed from office and persecuted. Funding of and autonomy for the electoral commission are critical issues which should be addressed with the seriousness they deserve. An organisation like the electoral commission cannot be tied to the apron-string of the executive arm of government. It must be liberated from its strangle-hold through better funding and institutional autonomy to enable it run its affairs effectively and efficiently. Yet, this is not to suggest that there should not be checks on the electoral umpire. Such over-sight functions or checks should be as provided in the constitution.

The political space should continually be expanded to give the people more opportunities to participate in the democratization processes going on in the country. Different interest groups should be brought into the political equation in the country, to enable them contribute their own quota to the Nigerian project. Policy making for many years was done with little or no input from critical segments of the society. This has made it difficult for some policies and programmes of government to achieve their goal and target.

The judiciary is a critical organ in the sustenance of democracy and maintenance of law and order in the society. As custodian of the constitution, the judiciary should dispense justice without fear or favour. While the judiciary has performed creditably well since the return to civil rule in 1999, they should leave no one in doubt that they are impartial through the speedy dispensation of justice. To use three and a half years to settle some electoral dispute arising from a general elections, is justice delayed and denied. The judiciary should be consistent and transparent in the discharge of its constitutional roles. It should be shielded from the rampaging scourge of corruption eating deep into the entire polity. In this regard, government must continue to emphasize merit in the appointment of judges.

Conclusion

Elections are important part of representative democracy. Individuals and groups have to compete in an open contest for the people's votes. Where this is done fairly and creditably, the wishes of the people would easily prevail. But the country's practice of liberal democracy

with its emphasis on multi-party elections, has produced socio-economic decay and a recurring political cauldron in the country. Mere reform of the country's political economy will not resolve the crises which have often threatened the very existence of the Nigerian state. The first major step toward resolving endemic problem of electoral conflicts and crises within the Nigerian state, we have argued, is to enthrone genuine democracy based on the people cultural values which contain what has been described as the universal ideals of democracy. Once this is realized, it will empower the people to bring to bear on the polity their innate potentials for development in various spheres of life and the frustration they presently experienced will be a thing of the past. Development can only take place where there is peace and the greatest guarantee of security is when the people are at peace with themselves and the government of the day.

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