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Jan 10, 2003

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Electoral Reforms & Sustainable Democracy

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
leadership The leadership of the 30 political parties
Members of the civil society

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The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be commended for its on-going search and efforts to fashion a new electoral reform for the country. Although there are so many issues at hand, I would like to recommend reforms in the following areas:

1. Impact of Voter Registration Methods

The voter registration methods set down in electoral legislation, guidelines or policies will also impact on how technology needs to be used in the voter registration process.

The current periodic voter's registration generally requiring voters to register within a defined period should be another option and not the only option. More so, this type of register is recorded using manual paper-based systems however, advantages can still be gained by electronically capturing and storing registration data. It is hereby strongly recommended that a continuous registration that is constantly kept up to date by amending and adding voter records whenever necessary. An electronic database can be used to easily update records and add new records, as well as keep track of amended and deleted entries or records.

Also, Voter registration can be active or passive. That is, a person may be required to actively apply for voter registration, or a person may be automatically (or passively) registered through participation in another process, such as holding a drivers licence or being included on a national population register, national ID card or insurance policy.

Where voter registration is active, a process is needed to convert an application into a voter register record. While this process can be conducted using an entirely manual paper-based system, the various outputs required of modern voter registers generally dictate that an application for registration be converted to an electronic form.

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Where voter registration is passive, data is generally taken electronic from another source, such as a drivers licence authority or a national population register. This process is generally not practicable without the ability to use electronic data transfer.

2. Biometric Electoral Voting System

In our reviewing of the Nigeria electoral process we understood the need to have electoral process as seamless and efficient as possible thus we are recommending a Biometric Electoral voting system, which will make voting and election nightmares a thing of the past. The improvement to voting process that is incorporated in the system will not only bring about the best of the best politicians but will also create an atmosphere for international legitimacy of the electoral process, but most of all there is assurance that all election going forward will be seamless, secure, fraud free and election result will be in real time.

The Biometric System is a systematic deployment of complete touch screen computer systems with biometric technology that will recognize and match register voters fingerprint with those stored in the national identification card database. The entire balloting life cycle ranging from the creation of ballots to the generation of detailed final electoral reports is seamless. Result will be broadcast in real time to the central systems in INEC's Head quarters. In addition, the system is guaranteed to minimize the total "life cycle costs" of the system, is guaranteed to reduce the need for technical, logistical and operational precinct personnel by 50% and is further guaranteed to reduce the electoral process preparation time by as much as 80%.

Education Benefits:

Implementing the Biometric Voting System across the country requires a wide variety of technical procedures - by ensuring the technical solutions, timely maintenance, timely on-going voter registration, finger print validation, securing data integrity, providing proper technical training will improve literacy and create information technology awareness among federal, state and local government electoral officers and among Nigerian citizens

Because information technology deployment is not yet at its best in the Independent National Electoral Commission, it's often difficult to find someone in-house with the expertise to maintain the system but iNetworks Canada Inc., a world-class IT company from North-America with years of experience in the industry has expressed willingness to provide the technology solution and training to meet Nigerian expectation.

3. The funding of political parties

The funding of political parties raises interesting economic, political, social and ethical problems. Modern political systems face a major and persistent problem: ensuring that ethnic, religious and other socially and economically distinct parts of their societies enjoy an equal opportunity to participate in the political processes and decisions which affect their well-being and status. Thus the achievement of sustainable democracy demands that particular attention must be paid to the issue of political finance, or the financing of politics. Over the years established democracies have experienced and sought to deal with the issue of money in politics, and their experience can provide useful lessons. However, these more or less satisfactory experiences with the management of political finance issues cannot ensure that unintended effects will be avoided.

France became a constitutional monarchy in 1790 and a democratic republic in 1871, and established a stable democracy (the Fifth Republic) in 1958. Germany became a constitutional monarchy in 1871, made its first attempt at democracy in 1919 and established the present system of stable democracy in 1949. The USA became an independent state in 1783, started with party government in 1824 and established the present party system in 1856. Japan became a

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parliamentary monarchy with party government in 1945, and experienced an electoral defeat of the governing party for the first time in 1993. On the basis of this evidence the process of democracy building took between 27 and 256 years in Britain, between 78 and 168 years in France, between 30 and 80 years in Germany, between 30 and 70 years in the USA, and about 50 years in Japan. Meanwhile, in all these countries and other established democracies popular sovereignty, the protection of human rights, pluralism of political forces, a universal franchise, elections based on a free and secret ballot and institutionalized control of power are the practical concepts on which the political system is based.

Sustainable Democracy is Party Democracy

An important part of the transition to democracy is the formation of effective political blocs – the organization of political pluralism. There is a contemporary tendency, especially in newly Democratizing states, to overemphasize the significance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as the link between the grass roots of society and those who make and implement decisions. While NGOs clearly have an important role to play in the development of pluralist structures in society, the experience of the pluralist democracies of Western Europe and North America is the experience of party democracy. Nobody planned for it, it was not part of any blueprint put into practice, but for all practical purposes it turned out that way. Past attempts to build a democracy without parties have failed. Notable examples are George Washington in North America at the beginning of the nineteenth century and General de Gaulle in Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century. These are two examples of military leaders who became national heroes during a fight for national independence or liberation and then leading politicians may provide telling lessons: Generals Washington and de Gaulle deeply disliked political parties. Nevertheless each of them contributed to the establishment of a new political system which is still in operation. Both critics thus ended up founding a stable party democracy. Effective non-violent competition between Political parties is part of the democratic processes.

Today, although the position of parties is being challenged and even threatened with de-registration, they nevertheless remain the only institutions that carry out *all* these functions which are necessary for the democratic process in Nigeria. Simply put: de-registration of even some political parties in the country, as described is not only unconstitutional but undemocratic. If a party is not able to establish and maintain ties between civil society and the politicians who decide in the name of the people they represent, it will wither away. Other parties that tied more closely to their voting clientele will survive or gain in strength. Such ties change over time and in different societies, according to changing lifestyles and priorities. The parties have to meet these challenges by organizational innovation. For the proper functioning of the democratic system there is no need for a specific party to survive after it has lost the support of the electorate. The party system of any democracy is a never-ending dynamic process in itself. Parties are instruments of change as well as being themselves subject to change. In the long run each major party should have the opportunity to govern once, so Electoral Reforms & Sustainable Democracy must go hand in hand.

Nigerian Situation

In our newly democratizing state the spotlight is on charismatic politicians, who are seen as essential for victory. In the short run this may be true, but in order to build sustainable competition among parties other resources have to be available. Among these prerequisites for party competition three stand out as pillars on which any party relies: **organization, volunteer labour and money.**

Although Political Parties can conduct fundraising, charge membership fees and solicit for private and corporate donation for its source financing, we recommend that a distinction be made between small and large donations. Bans and limits will restrict anonymous, foreign or corporate sources of

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funds or spending on politics. Disclosure and reporting rules for parties and candidates will aim at the transparency of political money. Some amount should be fixed as a useful threshold between “participating financially” and “buying access or influence”. All individual donations exceeding a certain (made public) amount should be seen as crossing the line towards plutocratic financing. Large donations may originate from organizations such as trade unions or other interest groups, corporations and individuals. But most importantly, to provide equal level playing field and equal opportunities in political competition, public money should be made available for parties in equitable basis and on timely fashion. A flat funding grant to the national party headquarters is the standard method of subsidization or funding on the continent of Europe, and a set of equal air time allocation to all parties on the national Media. The rules for providing these funds should neither discourage individual supporters from voluntary giving nor parties from seeking private money (with a cap clearly defined). This is important, because the measures to regulate and subsidize political parties have resulted in many unintended consequences and risks.

Example:

The Autonomy Option - Sweden

The Swedish debate on the funding of political competition has been terminated three times by a decision to abstain from statutory regulation and to respect the internal autonomy of political parties as private, voluntary associations of civil society.

1. As early as 1951 a committee of inquiry presented a detailed scheme for the reporting of party funds, but did not support any legal stipulation to implement such measure. The Swedish Parliament followed this recommendation.
2. When in 1965 the Swedish Parliament decided to provide public support for party activities (partistöd) from general revenue funds this subsidy was not tied to any statutory rules, e.g., for making information about party funds public.
3. Although in 1973 a motion by a parliamentary majority urged the government to propose legislation to disclose corporate donations, no bill was introduced.
4. The issue was resolved when in 1977 Moderaterna (the Conservative Party) followed the example set by Folkpartiet (the Liberal Party) in 1971 and decided “voluntarily” not to accept corporate donations in the future.
5. The parliamentary motion of 1973 was finally put to rest when, in 1980, all five parties represented in parliament concluded a “voluntary agreement” for the annual mutual exchange of their balances of income and expenditure and to make these balances available to others upon request and thus avoid legislative action on the transparency of political funds.

Today parties are funded on equitable and sustainable basis.

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SHORT BIO

Dr Baba Jibrin Adamu
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Dr. Engr. Baba J ADAMU: was born in Kaduna (Unguwan Liman), Kaduna State, Nigeria. Dr. Baba Jibrin Adamu is the youngest son of the late Malam Alhaji Adamu Jibrin Imam, the former Chief Imam of Kaduna State Central Mosque located in Kano Road Kaduna. Dr. Baba J Adamu represented Kaduna State based on academic qualification to go on a scholarship program to study Civil Engineering up to Masters Degree in Poland in 1986. Having completed successfully his M.Sc in 1993, again based on academic excellence received a Polish Government Scholarship to continue to do Doctorate degree in Industrial Research and silo/bunker Technology. Dr. Adamu specializes in Silos and Security Bunker technology and completed his Ph.D in 2000 with Excellence. He then moved to Toronto, Canada in 2000, where is acquired various Certificates in IT, Management and Business at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Toronto Ontario, as well as at the Banf Academy for Business, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA. He now lives and works in Canada as an Engineering/Security Consultant and as the President and CEO of iNetworks Canada, a Managed Technology Solution company based in Toronto. As of this writing, dr Adamu is undergoing United Nations training on Global Terrorism, Law of Arm Conflict and UN working System through the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR POCI), New York, USA.

Dr Adamu has tremendous experience in management of men and materials in private sector, good knowledge of international and Nigerian political, economic and social environment, high level of integrity, evidence of personal discipline as well as courage of conviction. He has a strong conviction for the respect for the rule of law, respect for human rights, beliefs in popular participation and consultation, knowledge and understanding of the working of the international system, voluntary service to the community, sense of history and lesson, competence in concepts and tools of development and respect for African value and cherished all Nigerian traditions. Dr Adamu is an expert both in Structural engineering and . In his own words:

"Where despair and hopelessness exist, those who have the ability to take action have the moral responsibility to take action to help those who live on the bare edge of survival. And democracy is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we must carry, a trust we must bear and pass along. And even after all these years, we have a long way yet to travel, that is why **We must all be involved ...**" - *Baba Jibrin Adamu, Ph.D Engr.*

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