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Article

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DEMOCRATIC AND MILITARY GOVERNANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SECURITY OF LIVES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study reveals a complex scenario based on existing academic resources that generally show that the security of lives in Nigeria either under democratic or military governance has no clear-cut distinction. It is true that democracy provides a superior framework for long-term security, transparency, accountability and development, the current practice of democracy in Nigeria is fraught with challenges that trigger persistent cases of insecurity. The study adopted the hermeneutic analysis understand the challenges. The major objectives of the study are to; show that there is abundance of human and natural resources that if properly harnessed can provide for the well-being of all citizens, compare which government has worse experience of insecurity of lives in Nigeria and to show that the charisma of a leader is what makes the difference between democratic and military governance. The study discovered that the conception of politics (democracy) as a do-or-die affair not for service to humanity but for personal interest is major challenge of practicing politics in Nigeria. The paper recommended that political leaders should be well trained in the art of political leadership, rather than allowing money bags politicians without morals to dominate the public space. This is possible if there is conscious efforts to rejig the attitude of Nigerians at the tender age through the introduction of ABC of ethics and offenders or criminals must be thoroughly punished to serve as a deterrent to would-be political criminals no matter their political affiliation. The study concluded that military governance may appear to be more effective as it uses force to achieve its objectives, but fundamentally, it undermines the constitution which is the bedrock for sustainable human security. Ethics should be introduced at the family level, primary and secondary school under the principle of catch-them-young and learning by doing.

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Keywords: Democracy, Security, Development, Corruption, Punishment, Nigeria.

Introduction

The aphorism that “the worst democracy is better than the best military dictatorship” is attributed to Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1983. This maxim means different things to different people. The likes of late Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, it highlights strong belief in the inherent superiority of democratic values of liberty, accountability, transparency, rule of law which are absent in autocratic military governance. The philosopher does not get polarized on which of the divides to belong to as he thinks that politics is a worthy project to indulge in as one journey through life. The philosopher politician is not like the crude political criminal who goes into politics to earn a living through the recruitment and use of thugs and application of the militia, bandits and kidnappers for purposes of money-making. The presence of these criminals has sent away individuals who are highly religious from participating into politics or seeking for any political office.

Politics is a Dirty Game

The holier than thou attitude of the “good” individuals are quick to declare that “politics is a dirty game”. So, these defeatist approaches to the game of politics are highly subjective. How can one person decide to condemn politics in its entirety as dirty? It is true that politicians use propaganda, false promises, or misleading information about another candidate just to gain support or discredit an opponent, there are several cases of betrayals, bribery, embezzlement, assassination, but these are never strong points to dissuade political participation. There are so many good men and women who are refusing to take advantage of the opportunities that come to them with the open door of democracy. Politics is essential for every human being who is naturally drawn to live with others. The possession of reason and speech allows humans in a community to discuss justice, fairness, and morality which are the ingredients for achieving the good life. Hence, the purpose of any individual human being to participate in politics is to achieve happiness and virtuous existence by constantly performing good acts. There is no sane person who would not be interested in participating in such a community life that produces a well-ordered society. It is based on this reality that the wise saying that evil prevails when good people do nothing. The best way to describe the situation in Nigeria is very fearful. For Attahiru Jega

Nigeria’s democratic journey in the 21st century is faltering if not stalling, largely on account of deviation from the basic tenets and principles of representative, liberal, democracy. This deviation is manifest in the role of political parties, especially the ways and manners in which they recruit candidates for elective positions and also the ways and manners by which they and their selected candidates engage with the electoral process, as well as engage in governance, once they get ‘elected’.¹

The imposition of ill-educated, unethical, political demagogues is the way the devil has fire in the hearts of men and women in a hyper-religious country like Nigeria. The results of the activities of the agents of death are all over the country.

¹ Attahiru Jega. “Politics, Governance and Leadership Recruitment in 21st Century Democracy: A Review of the Nigerian Situation.” A Presentation of the Maiden Lecture of Kwara Visioners Network for Rural Development, University of Ilorin, Saturday, 9th October, 2021,

Denial of Genocide

There is no day that passes without news of the death of people due to attacks from bandits, terrorists, insurgents, kidnappers, ritualists, and militiamen in different geo-political zones in Nigeria, yet, the government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu through a high-level Nigerian delegation to US in Washington DC denied allegations of genocide in Nigeria. The delegation emphasised that violent attacks affect families and communities of all religious and ethnic backgrounds”.² In the same vein, the Governor of Benue State, Fr. Hyacinth Alia has vehemently denied any form of genocide in his home state. According to him, “There is no religious genocide in the state, countering a narrative pushed by United States government officials to declare Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern”.³ The denials by top government functionaries at the Federal and State government level are contradicted by the ubiquity of corpses all over the country. Over 200 people were reportedly killed by suspected armed Fulani herdsmen in Yelewata, Guma Local Government of Benue State.⁴ The claims and counterclaims of genocide in Nigeria have become intense international debate for those interested in Nigeria. This study does not intend to go into the debate on any side. The truth of the matter is that there is security crisis in Nigeria and both Christians and Muslims are constantly under attack by bandits, insurgents and terrorists. This objective perception is supported by the position of Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) which holds that: “It is difficult, if not impossible, to delineate the killings based on religious affiliations. All the religions in the country have been affected, and there have been fatalities across several ethnic and religious lines”.⁵ Does the government of Nigeria remain terrified by the killings of innocent citizens? Whether the killings are classified as genocide or not human lives are wasted for no just cause and it must not be found during a democratic regime.

Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria

The multiplicity of killings has blunted the psyche of Nigerian citizens from the pains of the bereaved family members or victims. It is no longer frightening news to hear T. Oguntola⁶ report that “at least 603 people have been killed in floods across Nigeria with 1.3 persons displaced from their communities”. Archie (2022)⁷ described it as “the worst floods Nigeria has seen in more than a decade”. The devastating effects of flooding claimed human lives without any indication that great evil has befallen Nigeria as a nation. The absence of floods and draughts are replaced by slaughtering, macheting, burning and shooting of citizens in Churches, Mosques, Market Squares with impunity. There are various literature to support

² Kabir Adeniyi. “Pregnant woman, children among 11 kidnapped in Nigeria’s Kwara State”. AA News Broadcasting System. Retrieved from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/pregnant-woman-children-among-11-kidnapped-in-nigerias-kwara-state/3753549> 4th January, 2026 9.05 am.

³ Falmata Daniel. “No religious genocide in Benue – Governor Alia” Premium Times. November 10 , 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/836831-no-religious-genocide-in-benue-governor-alia.html> 2 January, 2026. 9:20 am.

⁴ Emmanuel Akinwotu. “We are being driven from the land.’ Nigerian village buries its dead after massacre. July 26, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/26/nx-s1-5471472/we-are-being-driven-from-the-land-after-a-massacre-a-nigerian-village-buries-its-dead> on 4/1/2026. 9.42am.

⁵ Olayinka Ajala. “Is there a Christian genocide in Nigeria? Evidence shows all faiths are under attack by terrorists. The Conversation November 5, 2025. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/is-there-a-christian-genocide-in-nigeria-evidence-shows-all-faiths-are-under-attack-by-terrorists-268929>

⁶ Oguntola, T. (2022), “2022 Flood: 603 Dead, 1.3m Displaced Across Nigeria – Federal Govt”. *Leadership*. <https://leadership.ng/2022-flood-603-dead-1-3m-displaced-across-nigeria-federal-govt/>

⁷ Archie, A. “Flooding in Nigeria has killed more than 600 people, the government says”. *Npr.Org.*, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/17/1129399669/nigeria-floods-death-toll>

the fearful situation in Nigeria. A glean reveals the following; “the increasing prevalence of terrorism, armed robbery, kidnappings, corruption, insurgency, and vandalism of local and national assets in Nigeria significantly exacerbates the elevated threat to the security of lives and property overall”.⁸ The economy, agriculture, employment, education, healthcare, and human welfare is the worst hit as abject poverty becomes the order of the day thereby triggering more criminal activities.

Comparing Democratic and Military Governance

There is no doubt that any attempt to compare democratic and military governance is going to be met with difficulties because both governments are associated with poor governance in their practices. In analysing the 26 years of the practice of democracy in Nigeria, this paper examines which of the type of government with fewer cases of insecurity of lives in Nigeria since the attainment of self-rule in 1960.

African Traditional Democracy

Nigerians in their local communities began to enjoy the fruits of democracy before the different parts were amalgamated as a single nation. Outstandingly, Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu argues that “Democracy is a cherished African value”.⁹ The pre-colonial Igbo society presented a sophisticated, decentralized democratic system where values like decision-making was highly respected, councils of elders like Okparas, age-grade had identified certain responsibilities (for defending and civic defence/civic duty). When the Igbos gather in the village square (obodo) where adult males and elderly females have the right to participate in the debates concerning the decision-making process. The hallmark of this practice among the Igbos is the reality of inclusivity which shows the existence of complicity stabilized by structured governance before European had contact with the Igbos. The Yoruba had deep rooted democracy in which values like collective decision-making, check and balance, community involvement, accountability and consensus (ifowosowopo) were held in high esteem. Leadership of Obas and Baales were elected by councils. The Tiv people were no exception as traditionally, the political system was decentralized, egalitarian with elders from every lineage participating in the decision-making process. Consensus and collective responsibility were the guiding principle supported by the philosophy of *ya na angbian* which is literally interpreted as eat and give your kin.¹⁰ These political structured clearly show that in most traditional Africa societies democracy was not new. It provided and ensured fuller participation, consultation, inclusion, all geared towards the achievement of the common good.

Military Dictatorship

Leaders have emerged in different societies and most often attributed to themselves as the messiahs. Religiously, they are human beings who see themselves as special representatives of God with special anointing, direct revelation and with firm authority from God. However,

⁸ C. Berebon “The nexus between security, human development, and economic stability: Addressing insecurity as a threat to national growth in Nigeria”. *Advances in Law, Pedagogy, and Multidisciplinary Humanities*, 3(1), 2025: 28–47

⁹ Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu. “African Traditional Democracy with Particular Reference to the Yoruba and Igbo Political Systems”. Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu. “African Traditional Democracy”. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 1, No. 1, June, 2015: 1 – 10.

¹⁰ Terzungwe Emmanuel Igyom & Tongov Jacob Nyerga. “TIV TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEMS: A STUDY OF GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL ORDER”. 2025. *POLIS* 2 (1). <https://journals.casjournals.com/index.php/POLIS/article/view/19>.

in politics, the leaders are not chosen by God, they chose themselves to be the deliverer of the suffering people. There are four promises every military dictator makes whenever they take over power from the civilian government. They are to restore security and order, fight corruption and economic mismanagement, implement reforms and return power to civilian rule. Experience has shown that most of these promises are unfulfilled. Each passing day presents a chunk of uncertainty.

Military dictators are not from the sky, they are from a particular geo-political zone, from a community and members of a particular Nigerian family. They are not outcast, even if they refer to civilians as bloody, they are children of mostly bloody civilians. Dictatorship is not a title strictly meant for the military. There are civilian dictators even in Nigeria. We shall come to that later in this study. This is because the title dictator defines a specific type of authoritarian government where the armed forces hold supreme power. Military dictatorship as a form of government does not value the freedom and liberty of the citizens (no freedom of speech, assembly) high cases of human rights abuses and over reliance on military force. The leaders are involved in the control of power that comes from the gun not God. The leader is usually above the constitution. This characterization fits nations like France, Russia, Britain and America that exhibit such attitude. Nigerians are afraid of the aftermath of America's airstrikes. What is the interest of America in Nigeria? Is it to ensure the respect for human rights or Nigerians will know it later? The consequences of an action are difficult to be evaluated abstractly until the events occur. The road map to the transition for individuals and nations with the entitlement mentality is built on lack of trust. The moment others do not trust their leadership role; they descend heavily on the opposers. There is pomposity, rudeness and a feeling that there is no better person apart from them.

Transition to Western Democracy

The idea of a transition from military regime to civilian rule usually involves the military government setting timelines, lifting bans on partisan politics, among other factors as events of 1979 and 1999 during General Olusegun Obasanjo and General Abdulsalami Abubakar. There are a lot of issues surrounding transition programmes in Nigeria, for this reason our analysis cannot be wholistic because matters of security of lives are highly complex. So, consideration was given to only critical issues relating to three basic aspects such as the practice of democracy; the conduct of elections and the security of lives. If elections are properly conducted and the right candidates are brought in as representatives of the people, the right policies would be formulated and implemented for the good of every citizen. Securing lives and property is fundamentally the primary business of any democracy. How well has Nigeria done in these two all important areas? It is true that for a country to harvest the dividends of the practice of genuine democracy everyone (citizen) must see elections and the security of life as a priority. Every individual in a state has a perspective on how best free, fair and credible¹¹ elections.

What is Democracy?

With the tincture of the history of hermeneutics, the concept of democracy is traced to two Greek expressions, the noun "demos" meaning the people and the verb "kratein" meaning to rule. A combination of both expressions gives the idea of *democratia* which literally means "the people to rule". It is this phrase "the people to rule," that Abraham Lincoln

¹¹ E.E.O. Alemika, Post-election violence in Nigeria: Emerging trend and lessons. CLEEN Foundation, Publication, 2011.

interprets of the word democracy as coming from the Greek “demos”, meaning people and “kratos” meaning power. So, democracy from this perspective is conceived as “power of the people”. Here lie the ambiguities in the definitions of democracy.

Whether democracy is based on the principle that the people should rule or it is the “power of the people”. The “people” does not refer to the few rich (aristocrats) nor the majority rule. The notion of democracy also includes the minority in any society, women and children. It goes beyond the voting class and political aspirants. A democracy is democratic if and only if the representatives act democratically by being transparent and accountable to the people. It implies that everyone must “stay informed about what is happening, what is being decided in the name of the people about the decisions and actions being taken by your own representative”.¹² Larry Diamond describes democracy as “a system of government with four key elements: i) A system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; ii) Active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; iii) Protection of the human rights of all citizens; and iv) A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens”.¹³ The richness in Diamond’s definition of democracy is its touch on some key tenets or principles of democracy like; periodic elections, representative democracy, and equality of the value of an individual’s vote which is a demonstration of that the protection of the individual rights and freedoms are perpetually guaranteed.

The unique perspectives concerning elections and security of life must be harmonised so that it becomes the business of every individual citizen in Nigeria. There is no need for some people to sit on the fence if Nigeria is to move forward progressively. The need to improved elections in Nigerians is so high for obvious reasons; to foster political stability, democratic legitimacy, enhance political participation, prevent vote buying and achieve electoral integrity. This should be on the front burner of Nigerians and those vested with the mandate to direct the affairs of the electoral body- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as preparations for the 2027 are on top gear. The culture of death must be done away with in the practice of democracy in Nigeria. The return of democracy must be accompanied with a culture of respect for human dignity and respect for human rights. The contrary principle that is built on the winner-takes-all, poor voter turnout, political apathy and electoral violence make political analysis difficult and political stability most challenging. Those who would want to participate in politics are forced to behaviour like the military junta. A transfer of the military mentality of shooting at victims with intent to kill and not to disarm. A crude civilian can public declare to the listeners that if anyone stand on the path of his political ambition, he will simply crush the person.

The State of the Nation from 1999 - 2024

This paper strictly examines how free and fair elections have been conducted in Nigeria using the presidential election as a yardstick to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of elections in the country. This is so because if Nigerians get it right with the presidential elections all other elections will be credible and truly transparent and Nigeria will be better. The moment Nigerians get it right; every other thing will begin to fall in place. There will no longer a clarion call for the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to discuss the fate of

¹² Democracy - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people *Council of Europe*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy>

¹³ Larry Diamond, “What is Democracy?” <http://www.standard.edu/~diamond/Iraq/whatsDemocracy012004.htm>.

Nigeria. At the moment, there is no village, community, town, city, and state that you will go to and not hear an individual complaining of oppression, marginalisation, intimidation, psychological, social discrimination and political fight against godfathers and their godsons and daughters.

Periodic Elections in Nigeria

The tenet of democracy that is open to the people is election or periodic elections. However, Michael Bratton argues that “elections do not, in and of themselves, constitute a consolidated democracy”, they ‘remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but as a requisite for broader democratic consolidation’.¹⁴ This is a demand for qualitative elections that are fair and credible. A constitutional obligation of a good citizen who is interest in the progress and development of the country. The barbarity of military despots from 1993 to 1998 summed up the painful experience of the military rule in Nigeria even though there were two successful transitions – the 1979 and the 1999 that General Olusegun ceded power to a civilian government and when he received power from a military General to launched the longest Republic in the history of Nigeria so far. Immediately after General Sani Abacha’s mysterious death, General Abdulsalami Abubakar came up with another transition programme with the adoption of a new constitution on the 5th May, 1999. However, Nigerians did not take his promise to hand over power to any democratically elected government because the military have always failed in fulfilling their promises. Experience has shown that most of the transitions were either aborted or prolonged. For instance, the Yakubu Gowon’s regime of 1966 – 1975, Ibrahim Babangida’s regime of 1985 – 1993 and the Sani Abacha’s regime of 1993 – 1998. It became a meal of lies the military served civilians seeking to escape politics of the gun. Ethically minded politicians were not ready to go into politics as it was still judged as a dirty game. It is to be noted that politics of itself is not dirty. The practitioners are the ones conducts make the ignorant perceive politics as a dirty game. When those in political offices in collaboration with civil servant begin to support their friends, family members the line of inequality widens between the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The rich money bags become political godfathers with the capacity to recruit their loyalist to serve as conduit pipes for public funds. This tradition is sustained through electoral malpractices.

Election Rigging, Monitoring and Declaration of Results

The presidential elections of February 27, 1999, saw General Olusegun Obasanjo as a democratically President-elect. Chief Olu Falae who got 11, 110, 287 votes went to court claiming that the election was marred by electoral fraud and that General Olusegun Obasanjo was a convict. The result of the election was guided by the action of the INEC Chairman which was based on a tripartite action with multiplier effects; i) a new mentality of announce the result and we will meet in court was built in the actors and actresses of election. ii) The attitude of the winner-takes-all was solidified and iii) the maxim that actions speaks louder than words were instituted. This paper adds the most critical of the mentalities as elections in Nigeria are won by the highest bidder. For instance, in 1999, General Olusegun Obasanjo People’s Democratic Party (PDP) clearly had more money than Chief Olu Falae. He was able to donate N 130 million and several cars to his party”.¹⁵

¹⁴ Michael Bratton, ‘Second elections in Africa’, *Journal of Democracy* 9, 3 (1998), p. 52.

¹⁵ Ihonvbere, Julius O. “The 1999 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Unresolved Issues.” *Issue* 27, no. 1 (1999): 59–62. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1167008>; Victor Agi. “Moneybags Politics and Nigeria’s Rule of Money

The electoral process is supposed to be monitored throughout the process, but in Nigeria, international and indigenous monitors appear on the stage few weeks to the day of election yet they are not visible at the polling booths where the real action occurs. They have little or no knowledge of why some party agents pick up cards to be agents. The International monitors may not be aware of the new political cliché “you can go to court” was birthed by sitting Electoral Chairman on that fateful day. The idea of going to court is a reminder of the constitutional right of any citizen as contained in Section 6(6)(b) and Section 36(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). However, when used by Electoral Chairman was a mocking refrain against those who were challenging the dirty deal of the electoral body. This statement is made with the knowledge that the legal system is very slow, dubious and the candidate who is announced as the winner can use the court to legitimize her announced victory by all means. It is not a new pattern in Nigeria. A similar thing happened when Abel Guobadia, the INEC Chairman declared that:

Obasanjo, the People’s Democratic Party candidate scored 24.38 million votes or 62.04 percent of 39.30 million valid votes cast on Saturday. Muhammadu Buhari, his closest rival among 19 opposition candidates and candidate of the All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), scored 12.61 million votes or 32.09 percent of valid votes... It follows that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP, having satisfied the legal requirements and scored the highest number of votes, is hereby declared the winner and returned as president.

The political gullible saw what appeared on the surface only. They saw the Chairman of INEC carrying out his constitutional duty. The Electoral Chairman in reality allowed the rigging to take place as a means of securing his job and that of his commissioners. If the votes of the voters truly counted and the result announced rightly by morally minded professors as expected by the majority of voters and not the President that puts him there then the representation of democracy would be achieved. The Nigerian culture permits rigging and vote buying. Professor Attahiru Jega during his tenure as Chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) felt that introducing academics with high level of integrity, impartiality and education into the electoral process would make them less susceptible to many forms of political manipulations. The good intent is greeted with data of professors in Nigeria who were convicted of election fraud. Andrew A. Erakhrumen reports that “It is commonplace, now, for some persons to publicly accuse the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of participating in compromising elections for politicians”.¹⁶ The question is for how long can Nigerians remain in this form of ignorance? Over 50 Vice-Chancellors were implicated in rigging 2023 polls.¹⁷ It is on record that two university professors, Peter Ogban and Ignatius Uduk were convicted and sentenced to three years in prison and affirmed by the Court of Appeal in April and May 2025 respectively. They were found guilty of falsifying results in favour of All Progressives Congress (APC) candidates. The current Senate President of Nigeria, Godswill Akpabio was the senatorial candidate during the election. for their roles in manipulating the 2019 general election results in Akwa Ibom

Democracy”. Daily Trust. Retrieved from <https://dailytrust.com/moneybags-politics-and-nigerias-rule-of-money-democracy/>

¹⁶ Andrew A. Erakhrumen. “ASUU: Electoral malpractices and scapegoat syndrome”. The Sun. 6th October, 2025. <https://thesun.ng/asuu-electoral-malpractices-and-scapegoat-syndrome/1/4/2026>. 3L30pm

¹⁷

State, Nigeria. Today, Professor Attahiru Jega knows better that integrity is not synonymous to professorship or the academic in the university. There are people of integrity outside of the university and INEC should begin to look for the people of integrity well ahead of the elections, train them in morals and make attractive remunerations to those who are selected after the rigorous training.

Electoral Tribunals and Testifiers

Whereas the practice of democracy in America gives room for the people to vote the representatives using the ballot paper, Nigerians give their right to the courts to decide election results and declare election winners. The complexity of the election tribunal is in proving that electoral malpractices took place in an election. Any candidate that is declared a winner is also placed in a better light at the tribunal. With knowledge of hindsight, the INEC Chairman would always be the first to suggest for the ethically minded politicians to go to court: "I urge our politicians to demonstrate the highest level of statesmanship and commitment to democratic ideals by operating strictly within the constitutional provisions for seeking redress". Asking the opposition parties to go to court was and is the best thing to say after the announcement of the election results. The fate of many politicians in Nigeria is destroyed the moment results announced are not in favour of an unpopular candidate. Those who arrange with the electoral officers that they should announce them as winners at all cost so that they can go to court are candidates who are moneybags and they put it to effective use in politics. When you are invited to give testimony at an election tribunal as a party agent, you are at the mercy of the lawyers to the defendants who are mostly Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs). The SANs are brought to court to intimidate the other lawyers and as a mark that you are facing a wealthy person so you should not forget that judgement in most Nigerian courts is won not by merit but by how deep one's pocket is. Politicians who do not have deep pockets, but have thugs make good use of the thugs to launch attacks on opponents knowing very well that they are going to lose at the Electoral Tribunal no matter how hard they try to provide evidence.

The highest bidder always takes the day. The processes and procedures that go on at the tribunal are simply academic. The SANs would fire you from all directions even with the use of unreasonable questions like can you show that you have the power of bilocation-that is to be in two different places at the same time? If you introduce pictures, you are charged for carrying a camera to the voting centre which is an offence at the polling unit as forbidden by the electoral law. Be sure that you would be frustrated out of court. It is difficult to be a perpetual customer of the electoral tribunal in Nigeria. It is easier to sell either blood or gametes in Nigeria. The repercussion of announcing results without looking back has resulted to violence in several elections held over the years. As it is common with the spirit of the majority of Nigerians, the accuser becomes the victim and before you blink your eyes in court, the judges have given judgement. This is the game that played out in the case against General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The electoral tribunal struck out the application not based on the merit of the case but on technicalities. It has become a precedent in Nigeria that at the level of presidential elections, once a candidate is announced as the winner the courts have not been able to overturn the results. however, in Nigeria, it is the courts that are declaring politicians' winners instead of voters". Recently, "The highest court with jurisdiction over national assembly elections in Nigeria, the Court of Appeal ousted 12

House of Representatives and 5 Senators”.¹⁸ This new direction is not good for democracy as it will increase the level of political apathy and discourage voter turnout.

Challenges of the Electoral Commission

Historically, in the 25 years under review, there have been at least six presidential elections conducted in the country consecutively. In all of this, arriving at a conclusion of who is a winner of a presidential election is often known from the day the INEC Chairman is appointed by the president. The Chairman has never been ignorant of what it takes to install the anointed candidate. The biggest silence Nigerians are known for is in keeping mute about who becomes a winner of fraudulent polls. This is the number one challenge of our democracy. Silence after an election fraught with irregularities embolden the fraudsters. This challenge was partially resolved with the introduction of the Bi-modal Voting Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Results Viewing Portal (IREV) of Professor Mahmood Yakubu slightly changed the fortunes of the Commission as the BVAS could not transmit results in real-time as earlier promised by the INEC Boss. The 2023 election result shows:

On 1 March, INEC declared that Bola Tinubu (APC) obtained 8,794,726 votes (36.61 percent), Atiku Abubakar (PDP) came in second with 6,984,520 votes (29.07 percent), and Peter Obi (LP) came third with 6,101,533 votes (25.40 percent). Rabiu Kwankwaso (NNPP) was declared to have obtained 1,496,687 votes (6.23 percent). The results showed that among some 93.5 million registered PVC card holders, only some 25 million (27 percent) had cast their vote.¹⁹

After ten successful elections conducted during the period under review, one can categorically say the improvement is very negligible. The results as declared were disputed by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). PDP and LP headed to the Court of Appeal (CoA). The angry voters were asked to calm down and not to destroy their cases. When they could not be persuaded any longer, on March 18 elections, the devil in Nigerians was let loose in some parts of Nigeria which gave rise to violence that resulted in fatalities. The obvious abuse of the power of the legislature is always covered by party affiliation. The moment a politician who is found to be corrupt cross carpeted, the offenses are forgiven. Where the offence can be transferred to other, it is usually blamed on junior electoral officers who were hired as adhoc staff to assist in the conduct of election.

This argument is well captured by J. Shola Omotola who wrote that: “Job security generally increases the stakes officials have in the electoral process: if they mess up the process, they may lose their positions”.²⁰ Humphrey Nwosu in given account of his stewardship narrated how Professor Eme Awa and himself were removed from “office as Chairmen of the Electoral Commission by General Ibrahim Babangida under questionable

¹⁸ Toba Paul Ayeni. “Courts determining election winners instead of voters: A troubling development in Nigeriaq”. *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs and Policy Studies*, Vol. 113, 2024. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00358533.2024.2307723>

¹⁹ Ojukwu, Uchechukwu GraceI, Umeifekwem, Uchenna Timothy, and Okeke, Vincent, Onyekwelu Sunday. “Democracy and 2023 General Elections in Nigeria: Retrospect and Prospects” *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*, Vol. 11 (4), pp. 54 – 66, July 2023, p. 58.1

²⁰ J. Shola Omotola. “Elections and Democratic Transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic”. *African Affairs*, 109/437, 535 – 553, p. 541.

questions”.²¹ This way of hiring and firing personnel with impunity has become a culture in Nigeria. Politicians find it very difficult in Nigeria to give out sensitive jobs to candidates who are both competent and have requisite experience to do the job. Majority of political appointments are made based on political patronage and filial affiliations. The embittered Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Maurice Iwu was for instance a trained scientist with specialisation in Pharmacognosy and Ethnobiology before his appointment. The issue in his case like many others cannot be solely attributed to political patronage. There is one critical thing at stake in Nigeria that is never acknowledged as the cause of failure of individuals and institutions. It is systemic failure.

The choice of the kind of government for the purpose of governing the people comes from the electorate; the political as well as the electoral system are true indications that a state is a sovereign entity. Thereafter there have been six consecutive presidential elections in the history of Nigeria. It is worthy of praise for Nigerians to beat their chest and say that they have experienced the longest period of uninterrupted democratic governance in the whole of West Africa. The setting of this recorded is not without challenges just like no one would claim that the teeth and the tongue in the mouth have lived without conflict. What can Nigerians show for the 25 years of the practice of democracy? What is lacking is the capacity and resources to correct the systematic abnormalities. Nigerians already know that when elections in the country are both credible and fair, the heat will be felt by the majority of countries in West Africa, and the globe. The model of democracy used in Nigeria will be too difficult for countries in Africa to adopt. Although the Electoral Act of 2022 as amended²² warned citizens aspiring to run for political offices not to receive any support or funds from foreign or illegal services by setting a benchmark. NGN 5 billion (\$10,848,800 USD equivalent) for presidential candidates; NGN 1 billion (\$2,169,760 USD equivalent) for governorship candidates; NGN 100 million (\$216,976 USD equivalent) for Senate candidates; NGN 70 million (\$151,883 USD equivalent) for the House of Representatives candidates; and NGN 30 million (\$65,092 USD equivalent) for State Houses of Assembly candidates. No individual or other entity may donate more than NGN 50 million to a candidate. The Independent National Electoral Commission is responsible for monitoring political parties²³ and established the Election and Party Monitoring Department to monitor party finance activities. The unanswered question is how effective is the monitoring mechanism of the INEC? In 2023 Presidential election, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu declares:

It is certainly the second largest presidential democracy after the United States of America. The size of our voter population and elective institutions make elections in Nigeria a huge undertaking... there are 15 countries in West Africa today, including Nigeria. However, with the current voter population of over 84 million, Nigeria has about 11 million more registered voters than the other 14 countries put together which have 73.6 million registered voters. Conducting a general election in Nigeria is like holding election in West Africa and beyond.²⁴

²¹ Humphrey Nwosu, *Laying the Foundation for Nigeria's Democracy: My account of June 12, 1993 presidential election and its annulment* (Macmillan, Lagos, 2008).

²² <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Electoral-Act-2022.pdf>

²³ https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Political_Party_Finance_Handbook.pdf

²⁴ Maria Diamond. "Nigeria's democracy second largest globally, says INEC Chairman" *The Guardian*, 27 November 2021, retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/news/nigerias-democracy-second-largest-globally-says-inec-chairman/>.

Again, the whole ideas of who truly rules are compounded by the reality of the heterogeneous and pluralistic Nigerian society. This is supposed to be controlled by the adoption of the zoning system. Much more than the zoning system, the idea of winning elections in developing nations like Nigeria is strictly tied to those who have deep buffel bags, not pockets again. The citizens who are well educated and are seen to be moral are either not interested in going into politics because of the fear that their hard-earned integrity would be destroyed by the messy politicians or the fear of not being able to change the devil in the old politicians. There is this notion that it is only greed that can lead lecturers with high intelligence to the game of politics. Shared responsibilities demand that those who are super intelligent should go to the universities to teach and prepare the needed manpower to feed the administrative and technological needs of the country. This means that those who have money without brains can be part and parcel of politics to lead and execute projects with the assistance of the lecturers. To this crop of politicians, politics in its entirety is a do or die family affairs.

Military Interregnum in Nigeria

The success of any assessment of the practice of democracy in Nigeria can only be complete if the actions and activities of the military are placed side by side with those of the civilian government under review. The military in their wisdom took the centre stage to avoid the politics of do or die or it must be me immediately after independence. How can one in his right sense condemn the military for venturing into politics at that time? The military as an institution is well trained to act professionally. This has been the emphasis of most service chiefs. However, it is only proper for the military not to adopt the sit-and-look approach to life if “there is lack of law and order”,²⁵ to improve the social and economic challenges facing the nation, and ensure the stability and an enduring democratic rule. Everyone who hears it marvels at the holier-than-thou approach to life and appreciates it.

There are so many good things that the military have done during their stay in power. A few of the good things obtained under the military regime include but not limited to the following; the regime of General Muhammadu Buhari declared “War Against Indiscipline” (WAI) which took care of the social and economic ills. Corrupt politicians, journalists who contributed to the social and economic decay were arrested, detained and jailed. When General Ibrahim B. Babangida struck, he promised a transition to civilian rule in 1990, but was extended to 1993 which culminated in the June 12 annulment. It is out of place to judge regimes whether military or civilian but to look at those who were at the helm of affairs. For instance, there has been evidence of corruption in the land, but when President Shehu Shagari came on board; it was very clear to him that what he saw was the presence and evil of corruption. President Shagari is cited by John Odey to have lamented:

I am ... dismayed to understand that corruption, fraud and smuggling are not only being institutionalized but are fast becoming a business pursuit in our country... Those who rise through criminal records to the position of affluence are embraced by the society while merit, honesty and integrity are hardly recognized.²⁶

He stopped at mere lamentation as he did nothing to change the face of corruption. There was so much evidence of how corrupt his administration was as it stood contrary to the

²⁵ Okay Achike, *Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978: pp. 99-100.

²⁶ John Okwueze Odey. *The Days of the Jackals*, Enugu: Snaap Press Limited, 1999, p. 11.

preaching he made against the acts of corruption. The father of corruption was General Ibrahim B. Babangida who referred to himself as the Evil Genius. He preferred to be called the civilian title of "President" in 1984 and rejected the military title of "Head of State". General Babangida popularised corruption. He threw the nation into darkness when he annulled the election that saw Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola the winner of fairest and most credible election of June 12, 1993. With the activities surrounding his administration, he truly merits the name Maradona.

General Ibrahim B. Babangida's destructive tendencies were higher than that of General Sani Abacha for the singular part he played in the annulment of the 1993 election. The general evil of military dictatorship is "the suspension of the constitution"²⁷ of the state. They execute their policies by decrees. Despite the abuse of the fundamental human rights and disrespect for the freedoms of citizens, nations of the world particularly in the Caribbean, Central and South America, Asia, Africa, Mediterranean Europe and Middle East have challenged the military intervention in politics. Others have argued that many uniformed personnel have changed garb in order to take up new challenges in their communities because the military is a disciplined institution and prepares one for leadership roles in all facets. Does this thinking find a place in the improvement of democracy in Nigeria bearing in mind the "deleterious consequences military regimes have on democracy?"²⁸ There is no objective answer to this question. The three Sahel countries Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are on a daily basis driven by armed conflicts, and challenges of climate change. They are military leaders with the promise to turn the fortunes of their countries around for their citizens. The three countries have clamoured for military disengagement with France by unilaterally terminating their defence agreements. The young military officers have decided to reject the pact they had with France as the French military intervention has not saved their countries from Islamic insurgency. It is an abhorrence of the principle of doing the same thing all the times and expecting a different result. The wing of military take over is on the increase in Africa. It is very difficult for the colonialists to allow Africa full independence. However, if the leaders are able to win the war against insurgency, banditry and terrorism, countries like Nigeria would join the move.

There are times foreign governments are not interested in the stability of countries in Africa especially when the leader has a vision of liberating the citizens. Attempts to be free of foreign influence by African resource rich nations end up in vain. The colonial impacts have been so strong thereby weakening any reform regarding economic and political sectors. saying that the worst democracy is better than the best military dictatorship can only be activated where the military leaders fail to deliver on their promises. It is very true that every military dictatorship has elements of highhandedness, corruption, extra-judicial killings, detention of journalists, freedom fighters, selection of the civil personnel to administer some offices, changing certain aspects of the drafted constitutions and worse of all the suspension of the country's existing constitution. It is not an objective reality to declare that there was nothing good with military rule. The possibility of a silver lining in every cloud should make us in Africa to find something good with military dictatorship. Traditional African wise saying will recommend that military dictatorship should be thrown away with the good things that happen in a military regime. These good things include; preservation of National Unity –

²⁷ Abubakar Ibrahim, Rose, Esther, Aziken, Emmanuel, Ba, Amadou Mahtar (eds.). "Nigeria: The Forgotten Interim President". *AllAfrica. Lagos, Nigeria: AllAfrica Global Media. Daily Trust.*

²⁸ Messas, Kostas. "Democratization of Military Regimes: Contending Explanations." *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* 20, no. 2 (1992): 243–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45294284>.

General Yakubu Gowon kept the as a united entity even after the Civil War. This was guided by the post war policy of “Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (RRR) which was aimed at national integration. Many of the roads, bridges, airports and seaports surviving tear and wear in Nigeria today were constructed during the military eras.

The military established oil refineries in Port Harcourt, Warri and Kaduna which gave the country independence from importation of refined petroleum product at a higher cost. Efforts to carry out turnaround maintenance of these refineries by democratic regimes is Nigeria is proving abortive. This challenge of rehabilitating the refineries spell doom for any democratic regime in Nigeria to create just one addition state in Nigeria. The achievement of General Buhari Mohammadu during his days of military dictatorship cannot be forgotten in a hurry. The military tribunals never delayed in handing down judgment on corrupt offenders. The long jail term of three hundred years was not just symbolic, but a reminder that even after reincarnation, a corrupt offender was open to continue to serve the jail term. It was a punishable offence to litter the streets, arrive late at work or school and poor sanitation was an anathema. Academic researches are not only meant for promotion exercises; therefore, it is imperative to state that military regimes in Nigeria have paid off better than the practice of democracy witness so far. No matter the high rate of corruption, the military regime can be seen as a low-cost option when compared with the cost of running democracy in Nigeria. Can this undiluted maxim be meaningfully applied to the practice of democracy in Nigeria? Nigerians have tested both military dictatorship and civil rule and are in a better position to judge which of the political systems is truly the best. The choice is inevitable with the discussion on how the practice of democracy in Nigeria is able to secure human lives in Nigeria.

Securing Lives in a Democratic Setting

The previous sections have shown that the military regimes contributed immensely the development of the electoral parties, the possible return of democracy. One of the long-standing justifications for the existence of government, especially democracy, is the protection of lives and property. A government must exist to be able to protect the lives of the citizens. Thomas Hobbes in his work *Leviathan* provides a vivid description of the natural condition of mankind as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”. This is so because individuals were in a war of all against all”.²⁹ The Hobbesian definition of the state describes Nigeria in its entirety. Citizens of Nigeria are perpetually living in an insecure society. Nigerians wherever they go they will find various forms of insecurity like banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, and communal conflicts. Nigerians are not safe whether during military rule or democratic regime. Security means different things to different people. It can be food, economic, human, national and psychological security. These parts are built up to human security which is defined as:

An integrated idea of positive peace, human rights and sustainable development. It is related to the enhancement of livelihood of all people at risk, the values of the respect of human rights, the dignity of the individual, respect for diversity, community empowerment, decentralized forms of government, peace and coexistence and the accountability and transparency of actions aimed at the betterment of livelihood.³⁰

²⁹ Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. (ed). C.B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishers, 1968.

³⁰ *Human Security Report* 2005, p. 61.

It is significant to state that security does not simply mean absence of fears. It involves safety from persistent threats of hunger, disease, crime, repression, protection from sudden and hurtful disruption at home, work, schools and other communities.

Justification for Military Killings

It is important to state at the beginning that the only bloodless coup that took place in Nigeria was that of 29th July, 1975 of General Murtala Mohammed when he overthrew the government of General Yakubu Gowon because of Gowon's delay in fulfilling the promise to return democracy to Nigeria. Apart from this coup, every other coup that occurred in Nigeria was bloody. The concern in this section is not to know the reasons for the coups, but the value of lives lost through the barrel of guns. The 15 January, 1966 coup was bloody, vicious, merciless, unrelenting and violent mutiny.³¹ It is on record that the framed bloody coup had 22 people killed. Prominent among them were the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the Western Region, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, Hafsatu Bello (Ahmadu Bello's wife) and Zarumi Sarduna (Ahmadu Bello's bodyguard). The Senior Army officers include; Brig. Samuel Ademulegun, Brig. Zakariya Maimalari, Col. Ralph Shodeinde, Col. Kur Mohammed, Lt. Col. Abogo Largema, Lt. Col. James Pam, Lt. Col. Arthur Unegbe, Sergeant Daramola Oyegoke (Refused Nzeogwu's order in the attack on the Sardauna's lodge and according to the police report was murdered by Nzeogwu. In the same year, a counter coup was staged by the northern military officers on 28 July, 1966. This quick turn of events satisfies the allegation of a revenge for the killings of the majority of Northern political figures and officers in the first coup. The 1975 bloodless coup saw the removal of General Yakubu Gowon. Although, a failed coup took place on 13th February, 1976, the Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed, the Governor of Kwara State, Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo and an aide-de-camp (ADC) to General Mohammed were killed. As a result of the attempted coup, 38 soldiers including Major General Illya Bisalla, five Colonels, four majors were tried and found guilty. They were sentence to death by firing squad.

The fifth coup was involving the overthrow of the democratically elected civilian president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 31 December, 1983. Amnesty Internation reports that "111 or more people were executed during the year".³² This led to the death of Brigadier Ibrahim Bako. In 1984, three Nigerians; Bartholomew Owoh, Bernard Ogedengbe and Lawal Ojolape were executed by firing squad for drug trafficking. The seventh coup led by Major General Mamman Vatsa met his death for an abortive coup and finally the 22 April 1990 coup staged by Major Gideon Orkar to unseat General Ibrahim Badamesi Babangida should actually be referred to as the bloodiest coup in the history of Nigeria. 42 persons involved in the coup were tried, found guilty and condemned to death by firing squad. It was during the administration of Babangida that Dele Giwa met his death via a parcel bomb in October 1986. The return of violent ethnic and religious conflicts across the country was noticed during the reign of the Military President, General Ibrahim Badamesi Babangida. Records show that the conflict between the Tiv and Jukun which began in late 1991 claimed an estimated 5, 000 lives. The annulment of the June 12 presidential election saw an estimated deaths of hundreds of students, pro-democracy protesters and women. The number of lives lost

³¹ Fani-Kayode, Femi. "Importance of history, the bloody January 1966 coup and a tribute to our heroes past". *The Cable.ng*.

³² Amnesty International Annual Report Entries on Nigeria 1968 – 2010. Published by Amnesty International Publication, 2010, p. 16.

during democratic regimes in Nigeria have surpassed those that died during military regimes. The lesson learnt from the data presented on military coups in Nigeria is that the soldier is trained to shoot to kill and not to disarm an enemy of the state. One wonders why the military during these democratic regimes have failed to live up to the expectations civilians have of them.

Killings during Democratic Rule

Nobody in their wildest dreams would compare the security of lives during military rule and democratic regime. This challenge that comes with shedding the blood particularly those of the innocent did not go with the return of democracy in 1999. After election, it is not in any way guaranteed that the way democracy is practised in Nigeria is democratic. This is coming under the heels what President Olusegun Obasanjo said on the day of his inauguration when he promised Nigerians that “We will leave no stone unturned to ensure the sustenance of democracy because it is good for us, it is good for Africa, and it is good for the world”.³³ Nigeria got a leader who preaches what he does not practice. The attitude of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo is likened to the role of the United Nations whose organs have always encouraged countries to adopt the process of democratization around the globe, but the same UN is no respecter of the tenets of democracy. For how long will the UN stop the undemocratic attitude is blocking other countries from belonging to the Security Council?

The practice of democracy during President Olusegun Obasanjo was highly undemocratic. His administration popularised the attitude that “you can go to court”. Other undemocratic practices were; his quest for a third term arrangement, Odi, Zaki Biam killings, the Owo Catholic Church attack, impeachment sham organised by kangaroo members of the house of assemblies and rigging galore. Most electoral tribunal cases were lost by people who were not from the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). The civilian rule may claim that leadership did not create the crisis that resulted in the unholy killings by various militia, banditry and Boko Haram, but no one can deny that their body language spoke louder than their words of hope. Reacting to the question of who is responsible for the crisis and killings in Nigeria today, Felix Awonaiya said:

It is obvious even by the most charitable assessment that his seeming inertia has contributed in no small measure to creating the current existential threat to the security, well-being, and unity of the country that we now have. Let us be clear, he has demonstrated the same inertia and disinterest in my view of the ESN menace in the Southeast as to the oil theft in the South-South, and to the menace of the herdsmen and bandits especially the cross-border ones that have no stake in Nigeria. The only difference is that by words and body language, he has shown understanding of the activities of his tribesmen which he has not shown the other major existentialist threats to the country.³⁴

There are similar practical cases everywhere in Nigeria. For instance, the killing of about fifty people, 35 soldiers in an ambush, a Commando attack on the Kuje maximum prison which got 900 inmates including 60 Boko Haram members to escape in a jailbreak in Abuja the Nigeria's capital city. This attack spelled monumental embarrassment to the security

³³ Norimitsu Onishi, *Nigeria's Military Turns Over Power to Elected Leader*, N.Y. Times, May 30, 1999, at 1.

³⁴ Felix Awonaiya, “Overhauling Nigeria’s Security Architecture: Case for Creation of Internal Security Force”. The Nation. <https://thenationonline.net/overhauling-nigerias-security-architecture-case-for-creation-of-internal-security-force/28> July, 2022.

establishment of the country. These cases are attributed to poor security architecture which has given rise to a vicious cycle of killings during the 25 years of democracy in Nigeria.

Punishment of Offenders

There is no society that strives to be better without punishing offenders for the crimes they commit against individuals and the public. Whose punishment has the capacity to make a difference in the electoral activities? Is it the removal of the INEC Chairman? History has it that "President Ibrahim B. Babangida booted out two professors Eme Awa and Humphrey Nwosu out of their jobs on questionable grounds without any appeal from any quarters".³⁵ Who would have appealed on behalf of the INEC Chairman? Nigerians in their usual way will rejoice at the removal of the Chairman as it will create room for another person from another geographical zone to share in the national cake. The fired Chairman when in office are not unaware of the right and wrong things to do. They are knowledgeable of their responsibilities to the staff, parties and government at all levels. Yet, they get involved in electoral malpractices as there are no two INEC Chairmen at the same time in Nigeria and the risk of losing their jobs if they acted justly. However, job security which is very important to the realization of the full potentialities of a public servant can be provided by government through legislation as it is the case with Ghana's Electoral Law which permits "the Chairman of the Electoral Commission and the two deputies to stay on the job like the Justices of the Court of Appeal who ordinarily cannot be removed arbitrarily until the attainment of 70 years".³⁶

The challenge Nigerians face on a daily basis is who has the power to initiate punishment in Nigeria? INEC in spite of the Electoral Laws does not have the capacity to prosecute and punish offenders. Working with the Nigeria Police Force could be helpful if the personnel is ethically guided to file high profile cases in Court. The difficulty in courts in Nigeria is the ability of Judges to be firm in pursuing the legal issues. When high profile cases are brought to Court, the tendency to delay them until the relevance of the judgement elapses are always up for the highest bidder. Another issue at stake is the one to identify a criminal offense in an election. For most electorate, it is always dead before they are made known to the police for prosecution. So, it is better to keep one's mouth shut even when the offense is noticed. There are situations in which some politicians to manipulate electoral results in favour a godfather and his cronies nobody is interested in righting the wrong. Nigerians are always waiting for foreigners to give approval of what goes on around them. For instance, during election monitoring, while others indigenous monitors were not ready to find fault with the result of the election, the former President of the United States of America Jimmy Carter who was also part of the international monitoring team announce the presence of discrepancies between what is and the claims of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Chairman, Ephraim Ibukun Akpata by noting:

There was a wide disparity between the number of voters observed at the polling stations and the final results that have been reported from several states. Regrettably, therefore, it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election".³⁷

³⁵ Humphrey Nwosu, *Laying the Foundation for Nigeria's Democracy: My account of June 12, 1993 presidential election and its annulment* (Macmillan, Lagos, 2008).

³⁶ B. Agyeman-Duah, 'Elections and electoral politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic', *Critical Perspectives* 18 (July 2005), p. 3

³⁷ Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threatens Nigerian Poll". *The Guardian*. Tuesday, 2 March, 1999. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/02/chrismcgreal>

Apart from Jimmy Carter who spoke on behalf of the International Monitors, it was the opposition candidate, Chief Olu Falae that felt something immoral had happened and said so when he claimed that he was robbed of victory:

Millions of Nigerians who voted for us have a duty to show their dissatisfaction by protesting against the government; General Obasanjo has not won an election. What happened on Saturday was a farce, a charade. The degree of fraud was so monumental as to make nonsense of the entire process.³⁸

The complaints were not to be taken seriously by the electoral officers who were paid from taxpayers' money. The concerns of many other Nigerians were beyond the scope of morality. Those officers including the Electoral Commission Chairman on discovering the manipulation of the process as alleged by Nigerians should have resigned his appointment for failing Nigerians at their duty post. Resigning honourably is not at the moment a characteristic of a typical Nigerian. Rather than resign from the job, the "Nigerian" in public office would ask questions such as: is the lone voice of the international monitoring team stronger than the other indigenous monitors combined? Have those who are complaining observed the body language of the majority of the voters? These and many other questions were answered when Jimmy Carter, the voice of the International Monitoring Team added that there was "no systematic evidence indicating that these abuses would affect the overall outcome of the elections".³⁹ This implies that no matter how many people and organisations complain about irregularities during the electoral process, no one was able to prove that electoral malpractice took place during the election satisfactorily. There were those who consciously decided to neutralise the claims of the opposition party without adequate proof that both parties were heavily involved in electoral malpractices.

The reality in Nigeria is that votes do not count. It is the people who count the votes that count. This known fact makes it difficult to understand the generalization that professors are responsible for rigging of electoral results. Professors are not responsible for the outcome of the result. They are not at the pooling centres when voting goes on. The gullible public holds the professors accountable because of the content of the Electoral Law which states that "free and fair elections is in the hands of the person who has the power to announce results"⁴⁰ and Section 22 subsection (c) (iv) says "refusal of any candidate or polling agent to countersign the appropriate form EC 8 (A) series shall not invalidate the result of the Polling Unit."⁴¹ The professor who has the mandate to announce the results that are already cooked by party men and women at the pool units are left with one opportunity in their kitty bag. The professor should stand tall and reject making any announcement to validate bad electoral results. There were always claims that both parties (in the case of the National Republican Congress (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP)) participated in the rigging of votes and that the strongest party rigged more, so there was no need for the loser to complain. Another group felt Chief Olu Falae and those calling for cancellation of results were unaware of the history of elections in Nigeria and its aftermath. For this group, the best thing to do to keep the soldiers in the barracks and avoid the

³⁸ Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threatens Nigerian Poll"

³⁹ Chris McGreal. "Fraud claim threatens Nigerian Poll"

⁴⁰ Sarah Birch, "Electoral institutions and popular confidence in electoral processes: a cross-national analysis", *Electoral Studies* 27, 1 (2008), pp. 305–20.

⁴¹ Regulations and Guidelines for the conduct of Elections. Independent National Electoral Commission.

recurrence of the first coup in Nigeria was to allow the result announced to be. This was to their thinking the only opportunity for the victory of democracy in Nigeria.

Nigerians are known for not punishing offenders. The best thing is to initially make noise of an evil act, publish on the electronic and print media for some time and the case is forgotten. There are several cases of electoral malpractices in Western part of Nigeria that brought about the Civil War (1967 – 1970), yet no one was punished for the death and destruction of property. The pains of the Civil War have made some Igbos to demand for secession and establishment of the Biafran state. The sit-at-home in the South East has become a norm and Nigerians have given it recognition and are accustomed to it. Since 1999 to date there are no records of how the offenders were prosecuted in court. Majority of the offenders end up dying in the police custody which triggered the EndSARS protest of early October 2020 and nobody has been roundly persecuted for the killings. As usual, no one has been punished for neglect of duty. Electoral officers, political assassins have been offered bail. Can President Muhammadu Buhari and the Chairman of INEC be punished for not delivering on the promises they made to Nigerians so as to be convinced to let them use the billions for the purchase of equipment? They get bails as soon as the politicians get sworn-in. The criminally minded are seen walking on the streets freely. Soldiers who are involved in carrying out dirty jobs are not persecuted; some of them are recommended for better ranks and bigger pay from the taxpayers' money.

Rejigging Nigeria's attitude and Security Architecture

The problem of Nigerians whether under the control of the military or in a democratic regime is not the multiplication of states and roles, but how well available human and natural resources can be effectively and efficiently managed. The ability to rejig the attitude of Nigerians is the first step in the right direction for the attainment of good things and happiness. This changing of attitude must necessarily start at the family level. Parents must make conscious efforts to improve the moral life of their children by teaching them through practical examples. Learning by doing the right thing that when copied, it remains in the child forever. One practical way of learning by doing is for parents to show their kids that contentment is very good. Nigerians should be taught to be content with whatever they have and avoid being greedy in the pursuit of material wealth. Parents that bully and kill should be kept away from their children for life to prevent the children following their bad example. You must not slander a neighbour to get food for the family. Whatever thing that would be yours will always come your way in time. This is the spirit of contentment which a lot of Nigerians lack in life. There are several calls for the establishment of the state police to handle crisis situations in different states of the federation. One would think that there is no need for the State Police at the moment. State governors when they are not interested in helping the vulnerable people of the state with the services of the Police, they quickly remember that the Nigeria Police is under the control of the Federal Government. When they want to embarrass an individual or a group of persons in the State, they know exactly what to do to use the same Police for their selfish interest. Creating State Police is never a solution to the problem of insecurity. However, it is effective when crime profiling is adopted in most local context for quicker response in times of conflicts.

A salient piece of advice is that the Nigerian security architecture needs complete overhauling. Government at all levels must invest greatly to get modern technology like cameras CCTV at the porous borders, airports and seaports. Lack of modern technological tools is killing the military personnel. New security architecture deserves a credible, positive

and decisive action from ethical Nigerians. It is not enough to call for recruitment of security personnel for the Police, Army, Navy, Air Force, Civil Defence and vigilante as well as the newly established Forest Guards. There should be an enhanced collaborative intelligence gathering across security agencies. Government must consciously tackle the rivalry between security bodies for effective internal security by facilitating training of personnel of different agencies together using the same lecturers and security experts. Energetic young Nigerians should not just jump up to join the Police because there is no job to absorb them. The intent to be enlisted in the security outfit is not good enough. What if you got the training and a group of bandits or terrorists came to recruit you and pay you higher than what the government is paying you? You must be part of a security outfit due to the spirit of patriotism. Making sacrifices with your life needs deeper reflection on what you hope to give to your country.

Paying money to be enlisted into any security outfit simply means that your country does not have value for you. The same attitude you are witnessing during the process of recruitment will not stop when you become a foot soldier in the field and the theatre of war. The daily loss of lives to bandits, terrorists, kidnappers and state actors stems from the poor handling of those enlisted in the Police. A well-trained Police on the street should be able to profile crime with the help of members of the community. Security and crime are both local and the knowledge of this reality will go a long way to solving the problem of insecurity. The newly employed should be oriented to know and avoid excesses that would lead to abuses and conflict of interests and overlapping of duties. Nigerians should never give out the security of lives and property to non-state actors. The question of what becomes of the arms and ammunition when the non-state actors fall out of the government at any time will be difficult to answer. The police command, Civil Defence, Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) and other paramilitary agencies should know when to act and when not to act. The role of maintaining law and order and settling disputes, making arrests of offenders in civil cases should be left to the Police. The Police should be well trained, provided for in terms of arms, ammunition, and any other thing the Command needs to work efficiently and happily must be provided without unnecessary bureaucracy. Government officials should desist from telling the public that it is on top of the situation. Deception with sweet promises that cannot see the light of the day should be avoided.

Nigerians should not just model the practice of democracy on American practice, but should go further to act swiftly as the Americans do. Before America was bastardly attacked on 9/11, 2001, the country had a major reorganisation of the US National system after the Cold War. The US National Security Act of 1947 was created. With the Act, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established. As a Cabinet-level position, it housed 22 security agencies in the country. There is a need to create an internal security force that would be responsible for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in the country. This internal security can only be meaningful if the terrible lopsided structure that is making the security system unworkable is changed. All security chiefs must have one reporting authority concerning issues of security. Delineation of roles must be well defined, trained and equipped to do the primary duties and avoid the overlapping of duties. When roles are well defined, the military must return to the barracks and allow the Police to carry on their statutory responsibilities. No one should look down on the Police as far as keeping law and order is concerned. The Armed Forces of Nigeria; the Army, Navy and Air Force should be trained well to protect the territorial integrity of the country. The Joint Task Force (JTF) should be disbanded immediately. The pride of the Armed Forces of Nigeria must return to

them when they will no longer be seen on the street on a daily basis. The welfare of security personnel should be improved to boost effectiveness and efficiency. It is difficult to train someone for a particular job and send the same person to go and do something else.

The Nigerian Navy and Air Force should be well trained to carry out their responsibilities like the British do with their Special Air Service/Special Boat Service. After spending taxpayers' money on training, they should be well equipped with sophisticated up-to-date technology gadgets and most importantly they should be given a clear mandate to rapidly respond to terrorists' attacks, search and destroy missions by following up on the camps, anti-hijacking operations both in the air and ship, hostage rescue, special infiltration, extraction of high-profile figures including president in the event of a mutiny and the capture or neutralisation of high-profile terrorists' figures. There will be a marine unit that will ensure the elimination or capture of thieves working with and ahead of regular forces. With these enhancements; terrorists, bandits and militia cannot boast of taking over the unoccupied forests to make Nigeria ungovernable. The pathways to rejigging the security systems is different from efforts to create a one-party system in a democracy. This will not work especially in Nigeria. No one should deceive President Bola Ahmed Tinubu that grounding opposition is the best way to get re-election.

Conclusion

No one sleeps in Nigeria with both eyes closed because of lack of security. When the military were in power the blame was placed on the table of the military rulers. Everyone thought with the return of democracy and the processes, Nigeria will be a better place. It was a challenging task to decide for and against military dictatorship and democratic rule. The electoral system that is seen as the medium through which credible individuals are elected to represent the people is highly faulty in Nigeria. Those who are courageous to go to vote are bribed, confused, and traumatised with weapons of different shapes and sizes. The vote cast for candidates does not count; it is the people that count the votes that count. This has created political apathy in the younger generation. There is hardly a time in Nigeria that citizens would not be found crying foul and of marginalisation. There should be strong leadership commitment to tackle systemic corruption. Human dignity is lost and there is high preference to the rights to life of animals – cattle. Policies regarding poverty alleviation, unemployment and cases of marginalization should be well planned and implemented by government at the three tiers to handle the root causes of societal ills. The attitude political leadership to human rights and dignity is attributed to poor understanding of the human value system. Political leaders should make it a duty to learn and be better educated to serve humanity. This will be the best way to win the war against insecurity of lives and property if the leaders and the led have adequately rejig their attitude. Knowing oneself and being contented with the things of life is the best war forward. The quantity of things Nigerians have is not better than the quality of life they live. Therefore, analysts would be wrong to condemn military dictatorship and prefer democracy. The leader's personality matters as exemplified in the case of General Olusegun Obasanjo who handed over power to a democratically elected President Shehu Shagari, but wanted to run a third term when he became a civilian leader. General Muhammadu Buhari whose pet project, War Against Indiscipline, as a military Head of State attracted the people to his administration, but when he was a civilian President, he could not perform as expected by the people.

The 2023 general elections is not just the largest democratic election in the whole of the history of African democratic elections, it has a lot to assist Africans in general. Elections

have come and gone. The opposition parties went to court to no avail. The performance of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu will go a long way in making the desired model for other African countries. This should not be through the introduction of the one party – All Progressives Congress (APC) as the only political party in Nigeria. He must choose to value the beautiful of many colours in the Nigerian polity. Parental guidance and the positive attitude of a leader can facilitate the fortunes of Nigeria. The President of United States of America has revealed the secret of disarming bandits and terrorists. Keep away the thoughts of respect for human rights when it comes to bandits and terrorists. Destroying them is the best way to regain stability, peace and tranquillity as Nigerians celebrated 2025 Christmas and 2026 New Year without reports of killings of innocent citizens. This is a better road map that can sustain goodness, human flourishing, contentment for a good society.

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