

Electoral Reform and Political Stability in Nigeria: A Reflective Discourse

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Abstract: - The study discusses the necessity of electoral reforms as a drive for political stability in Nigeria. The paper is aimed at bringing to the fore the adverse affiliation that endures between electoral malpractice and sustainable political stability in Nigeria. Information for the study was gathered using the secondary source of data collection which include; journals, textbooks and the internet. The work adopted the Systems theory as its theoretical framework. However, the study realized that the abuse of electoral process breeds weak leadership with the end product being military intrusion, corruption, industrial strike action, ethno-religious tensions, poverty and terrorism. Also, the paper explains that implementation of recommendations of electoral reforms committees produces strong leadership which projects political stability and in turn promotes development. Finally, the work proposes some feasible recommendations to counter the perils of electoral malpractice which include; Method of appointment for head of the electoral body; time frame for a political officer to vacate office prior to elections; INEC to establish electoral offences courts; INEC to review and regulate cost of nomination forms for aspirants; enforcement of the Electronic Voting System (EVS); among others.

Keywords: Electoral Reforms, Political Stability, Election Malpractice and Elections

I. INTRODUCTION

The journey towards attaining political stability for Nigeria has been impeded by several internal and external intervening variables. It is common knowledge that political stability is the foundation on which true development thrives. In other words, political stability is the superstructure which conducts development in every society. However, deducing from the tempo of crisis occurrences prevalent in the polity, it is apparent that these variables revolve around one broad prominent front, which is electoral malpractices. These irregularities or malpractices have forced down the throats of the masses, tyrant rulers whose activities have heated up the polity over the years which has led to religious crisis, ethnic chauvinism, terrorism, economic sabotage, military intrusion, industrial strike actions, etc. Elected leaders maintain a very fundamental position in enhancing or impeding the development of peace and stability all over the world (King, 2005). Competent leadership encapsulates the capacity to promote citizens involvement and freely expose misuse of public office and shady leaders not minding if it is detrimental to their political ambition (Onyekachi, 2013). Elections characterizes an essential means to public involvement in government; and provides validity to an administration

preferred by the electorate (Amankwaah, 2013). Elections devoid of malpractices, strengthens oversight and accountability for the public, in the sense that an unpopular government could be voted out in subsequent elections (Amankwaah, 2013). Further, it is pertinent that public office holders should uphold the fact that their political interest is not more important, compared to the present and posterity. The election may be won, but the salient question is what have we achieved if the land is in crisis?

Given the plural nature of the Nigerian society, unity certainly plays an integral role in order to ensure and maintain the peace and stability among its diverse ethnic groups which in turn translates to the anticipated and desired development both in human capital and otherwise. Unfortunately, the stability of Nigeria as an independent state since 1960 has witnessed more instances of political instability rather than the much-needed unity. Further, elections in Nigeria today is no better than the past, instead election malpractice has attained an advanced level with the introduction of vote buying, etc. giving rise to issues of restructuring of the federation, the "End SARS" movement, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strikes, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) strikes, the activities of the Niger Delta Militants and oil theft, bandits, and the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram insurgents who have declared a war of terror on Nigeria, etc. Arowolo (2013) views electoral reforms as a change of the entire scope of election management with the aim of availing more openings for involvement in a setting that is transparent, viable and unbiased.

This paper seeks to bring to the fore, the correlation between electoral reforms and sustainable political stability in Nigeria with critical focus on electoral reforms with a view to salvage Nigeria from the shackles of political instability and underdevelopment.

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Elections

According to Ujo (2002), election could be referred to as a process that permits affiliates of a group or society to appoint their officials into government." However, elections is a process through which leaders of an organization or community are selected through voting. In a democratic society like Nigeria, the only process through which government is formed

is through elections in which political parties present their manifesto and candidates to the electorate to elect as leaders.

2.2 Electoral Reforms

Eme (2008) views electoral reforms as a positive change in the electoral process, also as an antidote to electoral fraud which would bring about the desired results of the electorates. In other words, electoral reforms could be projected to mean positive and creative innovations introduced by law in order to curb electoral malpractices, bring to book electoral offenders and sustain political stability. The definition however. In simple terms, announces electoral reforms as a panacea to the menace of election malpractices.

2.3 Political Stability

Security is the most prominent and most desired aspect of political stability. The absence of perfect stability keeps everything at a stake (Ahmed & Mukhongo (2016). According to Sottiolotta (2013) as cited in (Nomor, Iorember & Adamu 2019), political stability refers to the absence of domestic civil conflict and widespread violence. Accordingly, a country could be described as politically stable when no organized attacks on lives and property takes place within its territory. Further, Husssain (2014) maintains that political stability is applicable to all aspects in a society which includes; Political systems, education, innovation and arts. Therefore, political stability could be viewed as a permanent and solid state of affairs in all sectors of society devoid of external and internal agitations.

2.4 Electoral Malpractice

Electoral malpractices according to Onike (2009), can be defined as “any unapproved and unethical behavior that usually manifest during elections.” Accordingly, these unauthorized behaviors violate the laid down electoral rules and regulations and generally violate the Electoral Act. To Birch (2008) electoral malpractice can be understood “as operating along three principal dimensions which are manipulation of voting which is the actual electoral administration. Ezeani (2005), defines election malpractice as irregularities indulged in by government, electoral officials, political party agents, groups or persons with ominous intent to manipulate an election to the advantage of aspirants. However, electoral malpractice should be referred to as an aberration of the democratic process and system. From the above definitions, we can say that electoral malpractice means the abuse of electoral process which manifests in nefarious, political activities such as rigging, stuffing of ballot boxes, falsification of results, snatching of ballot boxes to enthrone a failing candidate in election, multiple voting, inducement of voters, intimidation of electorate and electoral officers, vandalization of electoral materials, use of thuggery, non-provision of election materials to some areas to forestall the exercise of franchise by the masses, etc.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYSTEMS THEORY

The claim by Aristotle stating that knowledge could be acquired through knowing the whole but not the component parts (Aristotle’s Holism), prompted scholars into making great efforts in understanding systems and its integrals in terms of

their contents and their relative dynamics. It brought to existence in the last century by David Easton, a theory known as “systems theory”, Bogdanov et al (cited in Cristina, Jacqueline & Francesco, 2010).

A System could be viewed as a body or existence that is logically and well-organized whole in which a boundary is observed around it so as to distinguish internal and external components as well as to know inputs and outputs concerning with or emanating from the entity (Maull and Yip, 2009). Judging from this analysis, a system theory may be seen as a theoretical perspective that explains an occurrence observed as a whole but not only as the basic parts. It emphasizes on the persistent reciprocal action as well as interrelationships among component parts aimed at enhancing the understanding of an entity’s organization, functioning and outcomes.

Deducing from the foregoing theory, it is imperative to understand that it emphasizes on the need for connectivity and/or holistic relationship of a sub-system or sub-structure towards actualizing the set goals of the entire system. Therefore, the system theory offers a holistic investigative background (framework) for analyzing a body in affiliation with the community or setting where it is rooted. The theory focuses on the interaction, interdependency and synergy in the organization; between the organizations and the community (a group of variables existing in synergy towards achieving specific objectives). Furthermore, it empowers sense of positive and dynamic corporate relationship among government, organizations and the public.

Given that the study is to examine Electoral Reforms and Political Stability in Nigeria, the theory will serve as veritable framework for this study. Thus, how the political system attains stability through electoral reforms which produces sustainable development is substantively analyzed. To this end, specifically the Nigerian political system is considered as an open system in the society. Whereas policies, programmes, methods, etc. serve as inputs with which the system must relate or interact with to achieve political stability in order to realize the desired output of sustainable development. Put differently, the political system (Nigeria) cannot function in isolation but with other subsystems to have corporate outcome. Political stability in Nigeria depends largely on implementation of electoral reforms as the political system cannot operate in a vacuum. In order words, political stability as an output depends largely on implementation of electoral reforms as an input in the Nigerian political system.

IV. REASONS FOR ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN POLITICS

4.1. Political Reasons: The desperate attitude for power, displayed by Nigerian Politicians, has turned politics into a selfish venture rather than service delivery to the people. Nwosu (1991) pointed that Nigerian politicians view politics as a money-spinning venture. Occupying public office is a means of controlling state funds which are usually diverted to individual usage. Accordingly, being unsuccessful at the polls means to be deprived access to the prospect of embezzlement.

Awopeju (2011) has referred to this struggle as “do – or – die syndrome of the political parties to capture political power by all means.” This kind of struggle for power often leads to electoral violence and rigging of elections in order to capture power.

4.2 Economic Reasons: There is the need to solve the problem of mass poverty in the county as this is the major propeller of electoral malpractice in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Yusuf (1994) argues that “the peasants and the working class of Africa are said to be largely illiterate and are concerned with how to get rid of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy.” This means that because of poverty and the desire to get out of it; many average Nigerian voters are bought with money and other material gifts during elections to make them vote for particular candidates or political parties which otherwise they wouldn’t have voted. Thugs are hired and paid to rig election and to carry out other dirty jobs during elections. Prevalent poverty is a major issue liable for polling irregularities. Over half of those who indulge in electoral malpractice are hardly able to afford the basic necessities of life which include food, clothing and shelter (Egwu, 2007).

4.3 Socio-Cultural Reasons: Desperate politicians have taken advantage of the plural nature of Nigeria to manipulate and divide the electorate along ethnic lines. The practice of a particular ethnic group nursing the illusion of political power being their birth right would ignite the passion to win an election by all means. However, the sheer drive of ethnic solidarity could lead to all forms of electoral malpractices. Ethnicity categorizes each fraternity by availing its affiliates with a mutual dialect. Ethnicity stands as an rallying force, which helps in gathering a people in one accord to agitate for unity, oneness, and coherence, which also intensifies the awareness of belonging (Mudasiru, 2015).

4.4 Religious Reasons: In Nigeria, three religions are recognized and practiced widely irrespective of societal class or ethnic affiliation which are Christianity, Islam and Traditional worship. These religions are highly influential on the psychology of their followers especially the extremist who engage in fierce rivalry particularly among the Christians and Muslims. Based on this premise, the electorates and politicians become desperate to ensure that a member of their religion group gains power with the belief that the dividends of the political office will swing very generously to their own side of the divide. Religion has been a defining factor in the choice of candidates to occupy key political offices in Nigeria, and this has underpinned the voting pattern and behaviour of the electorates (Egobueze & Ojirika (2017). Moreso, Aristotle described religion as being highly popular and influential among the people.

V. ELECTORAL REFORMS: CATALYST FOR POLITICAL STABILITY

There is a very popular belief, supported by overwhelming evidence that the quality of elections held in Nigeria nose-dives with succeeding elections. Although this assertion has stood the test of time, the escalating crisis of electoral administration in

Nigeria has lately acquired an epidemic magnitude, generating a pressing necessity for electoral reforms (Omotola, 2011). Over time, elections in Nigeria have provided the electorate almost no honest choice, resulting in the conclusion of an ardent scholar of Nigerian politics to submit that the antecedents of elections in Nigeria is embedded in fraud and desperate rigging (Ibrahim 2007). Omotola (2011), opined that in spite of the glaring validation for electoral reforms it is astonishing that the concept has become very contentious in Nigeria. The controversy is partially mirrored in the fact that some of the recommendations provided in the reports of Justice Muhammed Uwais’s Electoral Reforms Committee (ERC), which is widely accepted to be a prototype of the desired electoral reforms, have been ignored unapologetically by the executive and the legislative arms of government. Moreover, former president Olusegun Obasanjo some years ago in his comment on election malpractices and electoral reforms in Nigeria, stated that even if Jesus Christ would come down to manage Nigerian elections, they would still be heavy malpractice (*The Nation newspaper*, 2 May 2010).

Electoral governance is a comprehensive and multifaceted activity that takes place on three levels – rule-making, rule application and rule adjudication. Rule-making entails creating the basic rules of the electoral process; rule application involves the application these rules to conditions in order to harmonize the electoral process; and rule adjudication requires resolution of conflicts that may occur in the course of the process. Generally speaking, electoral governance demands the interface of statutory, legal, and established rules and organizational practices that regulate the basic rubrics for election procedures and electoral competition. It involves organizing campaigns, voter registration and the vote count, resolving disputes and certifying results (Hartlyn, McCoy & Mustillo 2008).

Omotola (2011) states that, the prime obligation for electoral administration in Nigeria is vested in the Electoral Management Body (EMB) which has experienced various modifications in nomenclature under different administrations, but not as much as the modifications to its structure.

Table 1: Reforms in the Nomenclature of Nigeria’s EMB

S/N	PERIOD	NOMENCLATURE FOR ELECTORAL BODY
1	1959 – 1963	Electoral Commission of Nigeria (ECN)
2	1963 – 1966	Federal Electoral Commission (FEC)
3	1976 -1979	Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO)
4	1986 – 1993	National Electoral Commission (NEC)
5	1993 -1998	National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON)
6	1998 to date	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Source: Omotola, (2011)

From findings, it is observed that electoral outcomes in Nigeria have instigated ethno-religious tensions, military incursions, terrorism, industrial strike action, poverty, corruption, etc., despite several electoral reforms conducted at various periods

as listed below. This could be attributed to poor implementation of the recommendations of the two electoral reforms committees, especially that of Justice Mohammed Uwais.

Table 2: List of Electoral Reforms in Nigeria

S/N	ELECTORAL REFORMS IN NIGERIA	PERIOD
1	Electoral Act	2001
2	Electoral Act	2002
3	Electoral Act	2003
4	Electoral Act	2006
5	Justice Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reforms Committee	2007
6	Electoral Act	2010
7	Ken Nnamani Electoral Reforms Committee,	2016
8	Electoral Act	2022

Source: Compiled by authors from various Studies: Shehu, Othman & Osman, (2017)

Electoral controversies resulting from abuse of electoral processes have paved the way at different periods of Nigeria's history for military intrusion in politics. According to Egbon (2000), military incursion in the political affairs of the state introduces political and economic instability. Kew (2006), also observed that twenty years of military rule left a legacy of corruption by the dominating executive. Further, Adeyeri (2013) explained that unpatriotic leaders hide under the guise of ethnicity to rally their sympathizers for political action in pretext to 'protect' ethnic interest.

The ERC chaired by Justice Mohammed Uwais made cogent recommendations that would not only guarantee INEC's autonomy, it also suggested options for ensuring a system in which internal party democracy will thrive. (Electoral Reforms Committee Report, 2008).

However, despite the applause received by the ERC, the presidency rejected some of these recommendations. One of the unimplemented resolutions of the ERC was that the INEC Chairman should be appointed by the NJC, also the postponement of the swearing in of elected candidates until every petition against them have been resolved by the courts, and the transfer of the responsibility of proof to INEC (Electoral Reforms Committee Report, 2008). In its place, the presidency maintained that the head of INEC be selected by the president, and that elected candidates should be sworn in immediately the results of the elections are announced, also the duty of proof should reside with the petitioner. The rejection of these crucial recommendations raises questions about government's commitment to a fundamental reform of the electoral process.

5.1 Implementation of Electoral Reforms: Integral for Sustainable Development

Recommendations for electoral reforms in this paper are made along three principal dimensions that electoral malpractice operate. These dimensions are manipulation of rules governing

elections, the manipulation of vote choice, and the manipulation of voting process or electoral administration.

On the manipulation of rules governing elections, the reform that is needed is the establishment of an independent and impartial legal process that will adjudicate on disputes arising from the conduct of elections timely and without bias in deciding individual cases. This new legal process calls for amendment of the constitution, the electoral laws and other related rules and regulations where loopholes have been observed in the conduct of elections in the country. For example, Section 154 (1) of the 1999 constitution (as amended) vests the power to appoint the chairman and other members of the Independent National Electoral Commission in the President subject to confirmation of the Senate. At the state level, section 198 of the 1999 constitution (as amended) empowers the governors to appoint members of State Independent Electoral Commission subject to confirmation by the House of Assembly. The recommendation in this paper is that the power to appoint officials of the electoral bodies state and national levels should be amended in the constitution and vested in the National Judicial Council (NJC) instead of the Governors and President as is presently the case. Similarly, the constitution should be amended to prevent sitting executives from conducting elections in the country as is the case now because they favour themselves and their political parties. The recommendation is that sitting executives should step aside three months before elections to allow independent and non-partisan persons, preferably the Chief Justice at the State and Federal levels, to take over affairs of governance until the elections are conducted. Another legal reform that is needed, is to allow the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to establish electoral offences courts to deal specifically with perpetrators of electoral malpractice. These courts should embark on strict application of the rules guiding the electoral process. As rightly observed by Edoh (2003) "There are enough rules and regulations in the books in Nigeria to ensure clean and fair electoral competition, what is needed is strict enforcement of these rules". For instance, electoral offenders are caught in Nigeria committing all kinds of electoral malpractice but they are not punished as provided for in the electoral law. Sometimes, these offenders are arrested and detained by the police but as soon as their party leaders bribe the police, they are released.

On manipulation of vote choice, there should be constitutional amendment or provision providing for balanced media coverage of campaigns and activities of political parties and candidates contesting in elections in order to give effective information to voters to make their choice. The Electoral Reform Committee (2009) in its report recommends that "regulations should be developed by the legislature to provide proportional access to radio and television for political parties and candidates competing in elections". But this has not been done instead what we have is a situation where there is blatant biases in campaign reporting and sometimes complete blackout of campaigns of opposition parties by state owned media in some states of the federation.

Another reform needed in the area of manipulation of vote choice is to regulate the use of money for campaigns by candidates and political parties. The practice where there is distribution of gifts such as wrappers, umbrellas, bags of rice, salt, and outright distribution of money to the electorate during electioneering campaigns should be banned by INEC. INEC should also regulate on the amount of money that political parties should collect from aspirants for purchase of forms. The practice at present is that the political parties fix exorbitant fees for sale of forms to candidates wishing to contest elections on their platforms. Recently, in preparation for the 2023 elections, the ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC) fixed the cost of purchase of Presidential nomination forms for aspirants at a whopping one hundred million Naira (₦100,000,000), Gubernatorial forms at fifty million Naira (₦50,000,000), Senate at twenty million Naira (₦20,000,000), House of Representatives, ten million naira (₦10,000,000) and State Houses of Assembly at two million Naira (₦2,000,000). By implication, these very high fees mean that these political positions are reserved for only the very wealthy class in the society and it denies the majority of citizens the right to vote and be voted for. Another implication of this high fee has been pointed out by Ikeanyibe (2008) who posited that “those who have had no opportunity to steal public money and are desirous of getting to political leadership get themselves hooked on to the apron strings of prebendalism which further increases the depth of election malpractices.

The third recommendation intended to check manipulation of vote choice is that voter intimidation or coercion by thugs, cultists or by some dubious security agents should be checked and seriously punished. Candidates known for making use of thugs to harass people or voters should be banned. Candidates and party activists from all political parties should be allowed to carry out lawful campaign activities unhindered by state authorities, by the representative of other parties, or by other agents. Anyone found obstructing lawful campaign activities of candidates and political parties should be made to face the full wrath of the law.

On the manipulation of electoral administration, the following reforms are hereby recommended: Firstly, INEC should be given autonomy for it to operate in an impartial and transparent manner. This means the power of appointment of members of the electoral body should be vested in a neutral body like the Nigerian Judicial Council or National Council of State who would appoint people of proven integrity who would be neutral and impartial in carrying out their obligation in regards to electoral functions. The names of such appointee should be sent to National Assembly for confirmation and should include names from organized groups like women organizations, the media, the Nigeria Bar Association, the Nigeria Labour Congress, National Association of Nigeria Students, etc.

Secondly, INEC should always ensure that there is accurate and comprehensive voter registration for us to have free and fair elections in Nigeria.

Accurate and comprehensive voter registration entails registering all categories of people who are qualified to vote and maintaining accurate data in the register. In addition, the register has to be displayed for public inspection and complaints of inaccuracies should be investigated and corrected.

Thirdly, INEC should work towards making sure that polling arrangements for elections in the country are always adequate and equitably distributed. This means polling units should be provided in sufficient number for all voters to have a reasonable opportunity to exercise their franchise. They should be located relatively conveniently, and the facilities provided should enable voters to cast their vote without unnecessary delay. Special arrangements should be made for certain categories of voters such as the disabled and those on special assignments.

The fourth reform needed is in providing unhindered and equal access to voting for all electors and safeguarding of ballot secrecy. In some place in Nigeria especially in the rural areas, there is denial of access to voting opportunities in some polling units where powerful politicians particularly those from the ruling party, corner electoral materials into their houses and stuff the ballot boxes. Where voting is free and fair and open to all, counting, tabulation and reporting of results should also be done accurately for all the voters to see and acknowledge.

The fifth reform need is to enforce the Electronic Voting System (EVS). According to Abawua (2007) the Electronic Voting System is very good for the country because it has features of an undefinable system and it involves four stages which are: Electronic Computerized Registration of voters, electronic finger-print Authentication Machine, Electronic Voting Machine and Electronic Transmission of Results. All the four stages are designed to check malpractice at each stage. Electronic voting system is necessary in Nigeria since all the other systems have failed to stop electoral malpractice. After all, it has been used in countries like the United States and India with huge success and so there is no reason why it cannot be enforced in Nigeria.

Figure 2: Impact of Implemented for Electoral Reforms



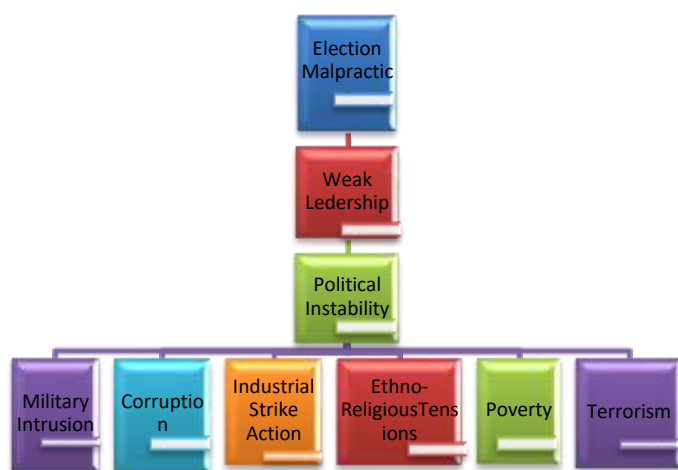
Source: Authors

Sustainable political stability which will bring about the much-desired development, is only realizable if the recommendations provided by the electoral reforms committees are one hundred percent implemented.

5.2. Implications of Electoral Malpractices for Political Stability

Electoral malpractices, therefore, is an aberration in a democratic system. It impedes popular participation in government by denying the electorate freedom to choose their representatives. It also makes leaders who are elected through fraudulent means not to show respect for rule of law, due process, civil liberties and human rights. Further, they are not accountable to the people because they were not elected by popular mandate but through fraud.

Figure 1: impact of Electoral Malpractice



Source: Authors

Electoral malpractice also causes political instability because it makes the people to embark on public protests some of which are violent. This threatens national security and stability because it destabilizes the social order, peace and progress existing in a nation. Due to the persistence of electoral malpractice in Nigerian politics over the years and the problem associated with it, there is dire need for electoral reforms in Nigeria in order to restore the confidence of the citizens in our electoral system so as to maintain political stability and ensure a sustainable democratic culture.

5.3 Reforming the Electoral System in Nigeria: The Way Forward

There are other problems in Nigeria which are not directly related to electoral administration but which have contributed to promoting electoral malpractice in Nigeria. It is based on these problems that general recommendations will be made on them in this paper to help improve the electoral process in Nigeria.

There is the need to solve the problem of mass poverty in the country. The reason is that one of the root causes of electoral malpractice in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general as argued by Yusuf (1994) is that “the peasants and the working class of Africa are said to be largely illiterate and are concerned with how to get rid of poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy.” This means that because of poverty and the desire to get out of it; many average Nigerian voters are bought with money and other material gifts during elections to make them vote for particular candidates or political parties which otherwise they would not have voted. Thugs are hired and paid to rig election and to carry out other dirty jobs during elections. In order to solve this problem, government should intensify efforts towards improving living standards of the people. This means programme aimed at alleviating poverty by the various tiers of government in the federation should be genuinely implemented to improve the economic condition of the people. With improved economic capacity, it is hoped that the average Nigeria will no longer sell his vote or allow himself to be used by politicians to carry out condescending tasks during elections simply because of money.

Concerning illiteracy, it is clear from occurrences in Nigerian politics that owing to of the high level of illiteracy among the Nigeria electorate, many of them are easily manipulated and sometimes intimidated to vote against their conscience during elections or to carry out certain political activities ignorantly. In order to drastically reduce this factor of illiteracy, government should introduce political education programmes for the masses to create the necessary political awareness among them which will enable them understand the issues at stake better during and after elections and take appropriate decisions. In addition to the teaching of formal political education in Nigerian schools, colleges and universities, political education for the masses can be achieved through the following means: Firstly, government should organize mass literacy adult political education classes at designated centres all over the country. The centres should be created in such a way that proximity to the people will be ensured.

Secondly, political education programme should be frequently organized on the television and the radio for political education of the citizens.

Thirdly, established institutions and agencies such as the National Orientation Agency, Federal and State Bureau of Information, Federal and State ministries of information as well as local government Information Departments should carry out massive political education campaigns through public lectures

and the printing and distribution of political pamphlets and hand bills.

VI. CONCLUSION

Nigeria is endowed with a lot of resources to provide development but unfortunately, she is classified as a poor country. What is responsible for this state of affairs is the fact that our leaders over the years, have dissipated their energies on fighting one another either to control power or to remain in power instead of mobilizing the resources for sustained development (Weak leadership). This weak leadership has led to political instability. This paper has identified the abuse of electoral process in Nigeria as an important factor responsible for political instability in the country. It has accordingly endorsed the recommendations of Justice Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reforms Committee as well as others recommended in this paper. It is hoped that if these recommendations are implemented, there will be political stability in Nigeria which is much needed for sustained national development.

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