

**NILDS' DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRATIC STUDIES' BRIEF**  
**2017 Global Democracy Index and Nigeria: Implications for the 2019 Election**  
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## 1) Background

One of the most organized measurements of the growth of democracy globally is the annual Democratic Index that is done and published by the Intelligence Unit of the, *The Economist*<sup>1</sup>.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (The EIU) is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group, the sister company to *The Economist* newspaper. Created in 1946, this Unit has over 70 years' experience in helping businesses, financial firms and governments in understanding how the world is changing and how that the changing world creates opportunities that need to be seized and risks to be managed<sup>2</sup>.

Consequently, this Data Brief examines the place of Nigeria's democracy in the last year's (2017) Democracy Index with a view to suggesting what should be done to consolidate the country's democracy.

## 2) Major Details of 2017 Democracy Index

*The Economist* Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index is a comprehensive description of the status of democracy worldwide for 165 independent countries and two territories. It covers almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the independent countries. The Democracy Index assessment is based on five measurable variables. These are: *electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture*. Based on the scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then classified into one of the following four categories:

- 1) Full democracy;
- 2) Flawed democracy;
- 3) Hybrid regime; and
- 4) Authoritarian regime<sup>3</sup>.

The 2017 Democracy Index, particularly focused on the state of media freedom around the world and the challenges facing freedom of speech. In the 2017 Democracy Index the average global score fell from 5.52 in 2016 to 5.48 (on a scale of 0 to 10). Some 89 countries experienced a decline in their total score compared with 2016, more than three times as many as the countries that recorded an improvement (27), the worst

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<sup>1</sup> The Economist was founded by the British businessman and banker James Wilson in 1843. it is an English-language weekly magazine-format newspaper owned by the Economist Group in London

<sup>2</sup> The Economist (2018). *Democracy Index 2017 Free speech under attack*. UK: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

performance since 2010-11 in the aftermath of the global economic and financial crisis. The other 51 countries stagnated, as their scores remained unchanged compared with 2016<sup>4</sup>.

The Table 1 below indicates Nigeria's position and other selected African nations in the 2017 Democracy Index on all scores while Table 2 contains the Data on media freedom, which was the main focus of the year under review.

**Table 1: Nigeria's Overall Positions in Africa and globally in the 2017 Democracy Index**

| Country           | Overall score | Global Rank | Regional rank | I Electoral process and pluralism | II Functioning of government | III Political participation | IV Political culture | V Civil liberties | Regime type      |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Nigeria           | 4.44          | 109         | 20            | 6.08                              | 4.64                         | 3.33                        | 3.75                 | 4.41              | Hybrid regime    |
| Gambia            | 4.06          | 113         | 21            | 4.48                              | 3.93                         | 3.33                        | 5.63                 | 2.94              | Hybrid regime    |
| Ghana             | 6.69          | 52          | 5             | 8.33                              | 5.71                         | 6.67                        | 6.25                 | 6.47              | Flawed democracy |
| Liberia           | 5.23          | 93          | 14            | 7.42                              | 2.57                         | 5.56                        | 5.00                 | 5.59              | Hybrid regime    |
| Mauritius         | 8.22          | 16          | 1             | 9.17                              | 8.21                         | 5.56                        | 8.75                 | 9.41              | Full democracy   |
| Senegal           | 6.15          | 74          | 8             | 7.50                              | 6.07                         | 4.44                        | 6.25                 | 6.47              | Flawed democracy |
| Benin             | 5.61          | 87          | 11            | 6.50                              | 5.36                         | 5.00                        | 5.63                 | 5.63              | Hybrid regime    |
| Burkina Faso      | 4.75          | 103         | 18            | 4.42                              | 4.29                         | 4.44                        | 5.63                 | 5.00              | Hybrid regime    |
| Sierra Leone      | 4.66          | =105        | 19            | 6.58                              | 1.86                         | 3.33                        | 6.25                 | 5.29              | Hybrid regime    |
| Guinea            | 3.14          | 137         | 34            | 3.50                              | 0.43                         | 4.44                        | 4.38                 | 2.94              | Authoritarian    |
| Togo              | 3.05          | 142         | 35            | 3.17                              | 0.79                         | 2.78                        | 5.00                 | 3.53              | Authoritarian    |
| Guinea-Bissau     | 1.98          | 157         | 40            | 1.67                              | 0.00                         | 2.78                        | 3.13                 | 2.35              | Authoritarian    |
| Equatorial Guinea | 1.81          | 161         | 41            | 0.00                              | 0.43                         | 2.78                        | 4.38                 | 1.47              | Authoritarian    |

**Source:** The Economist Intelligence Unit (2018)

**Key:**

- a) *The category indexes are based on the sum of 0 to 10 scale. Adjustments to the category scores are made if countries do not score a 1 in the following critical areas for democracy:*
- 1) *Whether national elections are free and fair.*
  - 2) *The security of voters.*
  - 3) *The influence of foreign powers on government.*
  - 4) *The capability of the civil service to implement policies.*

<sup>4</sup> The Economist (2018). Democracy Index 2017 Free speech under attack. UK: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited.

- b) If the scores for the first three questions are 0 (or 0.5), one point (0.5 point) is deducted from the index in the relevant category (either the electoral process and pluralism or the functioning of government). If the score for 4 is 0, one point is deducted from the functioning of government category index. The index values are used to place countries within one of four types of regime:
- 1) Full democracies: scores greater than 8
  - 2) Flawed democracies: scores greater than 6, and less than or equal to 8
  - 3) Hybrid regimes: scores greater than 4, and less than or equal to 6
  - 4) Authoritarian regimes: scores less than or equal to 4

**Table 2: Nigeria Position on Media Freedom in Globally**

| <b>Country</b>    | <b>Score</b> | <b>Rank</b> | <b>Media freedom status</b> |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Nigeria</b>    | <b>7</b>     | <b>48</b>   | <b>Partially free</b>       |
| <b>Chile</b>      | <b>9</b>     | <b>11</b>   | <b>fully free</b>           |
| <b>Mauritius</b>  | <b>9</b>     | <b>16</b>   | <b>fully free</b>           |
| <b>Cabo Verde</b> | <b>8</b>     | <b>31</b>   | <b>partly free</b>          |
| <b>Uruguay</b>    | <b>9</b>     | <b>11</b>   | <b>fully free</b>           |

**Source:** The Economist Intelligence Unit (2018).

**Key:**

- a) The score category in the Table is from a scale of 0 to 10. Where 0 to 4 is classified “unfree”. 5 to 6 “largely unfree”. 7 to 8 “partially free. From 9 to 10 “free”.
- b) The ranking was based on 1 to 165, because the countries considered were 165 in number.

**3) Analysis and Implication of the Global Democracy Index Rating on Nigeria**

In the expanded Table in the full report, only Mauritius was classified as a “Full Democracy” in the whole of Sub-Sahara Africa with a global rank of 16 out of 165 countries. Cape Verde, Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia and Senegal were classified as countries practising “Flawed Democracies”. Thirteen (13) countries in the Sub-Sahara Africa, including Nigeria, are practicing a “Hybrid Democracy”.

**In a hybrid democracy, elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being both free and fair. Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies—in political culture, functioning of government and political participation. Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent<sup>5</sup>.**

For the freedom of the press, which is a major plank of democracy, Nigeria was ranked 48 out of 165 countries in the whole world with a score of seven. Nigeria’s media according to the 2017 Democracy Index is, “partially free”.

**4) Conclusion and Recommendation**

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<sup>5</sup> The Economist (2018). Democracy Index 2017 Free speech under attack. UK: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited.

Since the Global Democracy Index assessors are more interested in the following universally accepted criteria of democracy: *political process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties*. And since their assessments of democracy are predicated on answers to questions such as: (1) *Are elections for the national legislature and head of government free?* (2) *Do freely elected representatives determine government policy?* (3) *Is there a sufficient degree of societal consensus and cohesion to underpin a stable, functioning democracy?* (4) *Do institutions provide citizens with the opportunity to petition government to redress grievances?* And finally (5) *Is there a free electronic media?*<sup>6</sup> Nigeria should therefore adopt the under-mentioned strategies to help it to leave the “hybrid democracy” category in the next democracy index assessment after the 2019 election:

- a) Nigeria should make the 2019 election extremely free and fair to all participants mostly and to others in general. This means current undemocratic challenges such as under-age voting and open buying of votes must be eliminated totally. INEC should deploy Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines in communities that are suspected to have registered under-age persons during the 2019 general elections. This will help to resolve the issue of under-age voters during the 2019 general elections. Open vote buying can be eliminated with a special task force mandated to arrest those who indulge in this negative act.
- b) For Nigeria to be regarded as a country that is practicing a serious type of democracy, the current executive and legislature wrangling must be reduced to the minimum. This can be done through a regular monthly meeting between the president and the heads of the legislature. This meeting should be backed by a legal framework.
- c) Institutions such as Public Complaints Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the National Commission for Women, must be made to work properly. They should be well-resourced and must be properly manned by experts to “provide citizens with the opportunity to petition government to redress grievances”. Finally,
- d) All threats to outlaw or limit citizens to express themselves through the electronic media including through the new media should be stopped. The government should rather make laws and update the capacities of the relevant manpower that will strengthen the judiciary to deal with cases of defamations and libels that emanate from the social media, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp:65