

The New York Times

Published: December 1, 2006

To the Editor:

[“Money and Violence Hobble Democracy in Nigeria”](#) (front page, Nov. 24) rightly emphasizes the importance of the April 2007 election. But its negative conclusion that “a political culture of graft and intimidation ... has led to widespread neglect and disillusionment” is a harsher judgment than facts on the ground warrant.

I visited Nigeria 10 days ago and came away with a more hopeful view. No doubt the coming election will tell us a lot about the future of Nigerian democracy. But it is not the whole story.

As we have seen elsewhere, an election does not secure democracy. Other markers like the growth of civil society and the rule of law are prerequisites.

Civil society and a free press flourish in Nigeria. Judicial reform is promising. A talented and committed younger generation is emerging in key leadership positions. Some of them are running for governor in important states, opening the possibility for reform at the state level.

It is useful to shine a spotlight on Nigeria, one of the most important transitions to democracy anywhere in the world. But it is not helpful to showcase only the negatives. There is another story to tell.

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Chicago, Nov. 29, 2006