



Article

Nigerian Democracy and the Challenges of a Credible Electoral System

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Abstract

One of the greatest challenges facing the Nigerian state is how to engender a credible electoral system. Democratic experiments in the country have collapsed on the basis of disputes over elections. Over the year institutional factors such, electoral bodies, security agencies and legislative organ have been blamed for the failure of elections in the country. The paper, while accepting the importance of these institutions, however, attempts a holistic understanding of the failure of elections within the context of an understanding of the entire electoral system. In attempting this, it lays emphasis on the mindsets of individual political actors and that of those that occupy institutions important to the electoral process as the most important factors responsible for the failure of the entire electoral process. Aside this, it focuses on the need for the entrenchment of electoral regulations and laws which are panacea for the enhancement of credible electoral system in Nigeria.

Introduction

The integrity of an electoral system is important for the existence and success of every constitutional democracy. Qualitative governance is also a product of the ability of the state to guarantee a viable and transparent electoral system devoid of known anti-democratic tendencies. In fact, in order to change the nature of a particular democracy, a change in the electoral system is of utmost importance. Despite an understanding of this fact, the historical trajectories of electoral politics in Nigeria show the pervasive presence of electoral fraud of monumental proportion and the prevalent of immeasurable degree of violence, which are not helpful for the survival of any democratic system. The reality of the Nigerian case is that, since Independence in 1960, the major political problem of the country has been that of elections. Transiting from one government to the other through the ballot box had always been the most difficult aspect of the nation's democratic experiment. In fact, Nigeria's First Republic did not collapse until after the 1964 and 1965 elections. In the same vein, the Second Republic did not succumb to the

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myriad of problems militating against it, but caved in under the pressure of disputes accompanying the 1983 general elections. The Third Republic was spectacularly delivered still-born through the annulment of the June 12 Presidential election (Olaitan, 2005 and Omotola, 2009). These suggest that the greatest challenge facing the entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria is how to put in place a sound electoral system that will guarantee the conduct of free, fair, peaceful and credible elections.

Various reasons have been advanced to explain the failure of Nigeria's electoral system, and solutions have also been suggested by commentators interested in the survival of Nigeria's democracy. Some of the solutions are institutional, while others are procedural. Recent developments in the Nigerian electoral system do not suggest that all these solutions have in anyway adequately impacted on the system. Without placing emphasis on the failure of some of these solutions, this work attempts a reconsideration of those solutions which are still relevant to present realities in the Nigerian system, while also suggesting further options for building hopes in the 'country's electoral system. In view of this, the work is divided into five sections. The first section conceptualises electoral system, while also suggesting the importance of credible electoral system in democracies, this is followed by an overview of the Nigerian electoral process, the third section undertakes an assessment of reasons for the failure of the Nigerian electoral system, and the fourth section takes an analysis of how to address the problems of elections in Nigeria. This is followed by the conclusion.

Electoral System and Its Role in Democratic Governance

Our conceptualisation of electoral system will involve the linkage of David Easton's systemic framework to the analysis of Nigerian electoral system. According to Easton, a system is 'a set of inter-related elements or a set of inter-dependent variables' (Easton, 1973). A look at Easton's thesis on a system points to the fact that every system has certain peculiarities. First, a system is composed of elements or parts (sub-system) that function as a whole. In other words, there is an organic unity and interdependence between component parts of a system such that any change in one part causes a change in other parts and by extension the entire system. Thus, electoral system consists sub-system or activities like, the suffrage, the registration of voters, delimitation of constituencies, the rights to contest elections, electoral competition between rival political parties, the method of selection of candidates, method of voting, the actual conduct of the election, the determination of the results, trials and determination of election disputes, electoral malpractices and their consequences. In essence, in the words of Okpaga (2007), the electoral system can be said to be the interrelatedness and interaction of all activities that are involved in the conduct of elections.

We shall add that the above activities alone does not make up for an electoral system, but it also include election observation and verification activities, a measure of accountability on the part of elected government officials, a mean of change of government and a re-call process (Lawal, 1997 and Okpaga, 2007). We would therefore be aligning with Easton's position that these activities interact and are interrelated to the extent that deficiency in any of these activities affects the entire electoral system. Therefore, if any of the sub-system identified above is plaque with problem, the entire political system is likely to be affected. And for any democracy to succeed it requires a credible electoral system, this is due to the fact that the electoral system is important for three reasons in every democracy. First, it allows for the translation of votes of the people into proper representation. Second, it seeks to be conduit through

which the people can hold their elected representatives accountable. Third, it has a more normative function to structure the boundaries of 'acceptable' political discourse and gives incentives for those competing for power (Reynolds and Sisk, 1999). These reasons confirm the fact that for every democracy to flourish the entire electoral system has lot of roles to play. Thus, every genuine democracy is a product of a functional electoral system.

Nigerian Electoral Process: An Overview

In Nigeria's first republic, a leading politician in the western region was quoted during a campaign rally as saying 'whether you vote for us or not we will remain in power'. Another politician in the Eastern region also said that, 'we use what we have to get what we want. Politics is not like going to church' (Ogundiya, 2003). In a related manner, a former President of Nigeria in the Fourth Republic, Olusegun Obasanjo, did said during an electioneering campaign for the 2007 general elections, that, 'this election is going to be a do or die affair'. Under this same Republic, a Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives was quoted while leading the campaign of his political party during a re-run election to have said that, 'during this election we are going to deploy soldiers'.

Above statements which have been replicated in other ways all over Nigeria which were only relatively reduced under the 2011 general elections, suggest the nature and character of the Nigerian electoral process. Therefore, an objective overview of the processes of elections in Nigeria within the context of the above statements, reveals three things; electoral violence, electoral fraud and illegitimate government. Electoral violence and electoral fraud have unarguably become recurrent characteristics of elections in Nigeria and which have led to the emergence of government with legitimate crisis. Various dimensions of electoral violence and fraud in the Nigerian electoral process, which have placed crisis of legitimacy on the part of elected representatives, shall be our attention in subsequent paragraphs of this section.

Since the first general elections in 1959, no election in Nigeria have been completely free of violence, although the degree of violence has varied somewhat. It is significant to note that, political violence associated with election and electoral process in Nigeria started with 1959 federal elections designed by the British to facilitate the transition from colonial rule to independence (Ogundiya and Baba, 2005). The problem intensified with the 1964 federal elections. This was due to the fact that Political competition during this period was tense and severe. The event of the 1964 federal elections was very insignificant relative to those which followed during the western Region election of 1965. During and after the election, there were political disaffection, social discontent and other problems. The situation translated into a legitimacy crisis, leading to protests, and resistance to the unpopular electoral verdict. The crisis got worsened when the electorate poured gasoline on opponents and set them ablaze in the so called 'Operation wet-ie '. Properties worth millions of pounds were destroyed and economic and social activities were disrupted (Arikpo, 1967). In the general elections of the Second Republic there were few recorded cases of electoral violence before, during and after the election, but there were protests and disaffection with election results by some of the contestants. However, the grudges that attended the 1979 general elections snowballed in the 1983 general elections.

The result of the elections greatly eroded confidence in the electoral-process. In view of this, there was violence before, during and after the elections. In fact, before the elections rumours of violence were so rife that the conduct of free and fair election became much doubtful. Some political leaders incited the

public even before the general elections, as was the case in Oyo State where the State governor reportedly threatened chaos on a larger proportion than was the case in the 1965. Apart from verbal and inciting statements, there were actual cases of physical violence before the elections. Political thugs went berserk in some places, like Ibadan attacking voters at polling booths. Reactions to election results during the Republic were in the form of unprecedented incitement and actual occurrence of violence. For instance, the reaction of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was inciting and tended to cause or aggravate public uprising. Dissatisfied with election results in Oyo and Ondo states where National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was declared winner, he unequivocally stated that 'the people are free to do whatever they feel like, in the prevailing circumstances'. This statement, among others, caused unprecedented violence in these two states (Apooyin and Babatunde, 1983). The pattern of the violence showed reactions and counter reactions by party supporters, in some cases revenge and vengeance. The general elections between 1998 and 1999 were relatively free and fair and devoid of violence. This confirms the hypothesis that transition elections in Nigeria are relatively peaceful and devoid of much fraud.

However, preparations for the 2003 elections show a picture different from that of 1998 and 1999, because it was characterised by incidence of violence and thuggery, typical of past elections organised by civilians. Party and personal thugs actively threatened contesting opponents both in inter and intra-party contests. Many cases and allegations of arson, maiming and murder of political opponents occurred as part of the political process. Such cases increased throughout federation as the election approached, climaxing with the assassination of Marshall Harry, National Vice-Chairman of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) on March 5, 2003 on the eve of his hosting the launching of the Presidential campaign of his party (Robert and Obioha, 2005). In Benue State, violence erupted when ANPP supporters accused the People's Democratic Party (PDF) government of scuttling its campaign rally in the State, when its presidential candidate's plane was denied landing. Sporadic violence occurred in parts of the country during the 2003 elections. For instance more than eight persons were killed, while many others were injured during the general elections in Nembe, Bayelsa State (Ibid).

Our experience during the 2007 elections was not in any way different from past experiences on electoral politics in Nigeria. In fact, the situation got worse. Omotola (2009) uses the term, 'garrison democracy' to qualify the 2007 general elections. In his view, the garrison process began with sustained regime of violence against democracy. Other commentators attest to that fact. For instance paraphrasing Emordi and Osiki, the 2007 could be adjudged to be the most widely rigged, most violent, and most brazenly manipulated in the history of Nigeria (Emordi and Osiki, 2008). We shall take an account of incidents of violent conflict between political rivals during, before and after the elections. In its report about the election, Amnesty International observes that the April 2007 elections were associated with at least 200 deaths. A separate estimate of 50 deaths connected with the state governor elections on 14th April seemed to prefigure further ensuing violence associated with the subsequent presidential and federal elections later that month. In the southern oil-producing state of Delta, where the PDP was announced the winner, youths armed with cutlasses and guns burned houses and blocked roads in the city of Warri, while hundreds of women and children fled on the back of motorcycles. During the election of a new governor in Kogi State, North-Central Nigeria, in March 2008, violence was reported in towns and villages in Kogi central and eastern zones. Members of the People's Democratic Party were suspected to be responsible for the shooting of an All Nigeria People's Party member in Ankpa town (Leadership, 30 March, 2008). In the central senatorial district of Kogi State fighting between the PDP and AC occurred in April as a

result of which 10 civilians were killed and six others were treated in hospital with various injuries (Leadership April 30, 2008). In a local election in Rivers State on 29th March, 2008, one person was reportedly killed in a skirmish at a village in Eleme local government area. There were also numerous acts of violence and intimidation (IRIN, 3 April, 2008). In Adamawa State, violence occurred between the PDP and Action Congress supporters who had tried to disrupt voting in a governorship election in Michika and Yola on 26th April, 2008. One person was killed and 19 were arrested (Vanguard, 27 April, 2008). These examples represent few reported cases of violence during 2007 and 2008 elections in Nigeria. There were still election violence cases that were not documented.

Howbeit, in spite of the relative success of the 2011 elections, some parts of the country were thrown into violence and spate of killings before, during and after the elections. For instance in January 2011, four persons were killed in the home town of Mr Timi Alaibe, the Governorship candidate of Labour Party in Bayelsa state, South-South, Nigeria. In the same month Engineer Fanami Gubio, the ANPP Governorship candidate in Borno State and Seven others were shot dead near a mosque in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital (Daily Trust, June 02, 2011). More so, after the Presidential elections, political violence enveloped some Northern states like Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi and Niger States. Following the violence, business premises, houses and churches were razed. The death toll as a result of the violence was about 200, among them were 10 serving National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members, and more than 20 houses were set ablaze in the affected states. An INEC office in Bagoga, Funakaye Local Government area of Nasarawa State was also razed (The Tide, April 2011)..

All the foregoing provides an insight into the credibility problems of elections caused by incidents of political violence and killings in Nigeria. These problems manifest in the form of both procedural and institutional crisis, exemplified by consistent electoral violence and electoral fraud. Thus, elections have not produced a procedurally legitimate regime or leaders in Nigeria. We have paid attention to different forms of electoral violence since the federal elections of 1959 to 2011 in above paragraphs under this section, to support our position. We shall also under subsequent paragraphs of this section examine electoral fraud in Nigeria to further confirm the credibility and legitimacy problems under Nigeria's chequered history of democracy.

Moru (2005), succinctly points out that mode of politicking in Nigeria is characterised by the maturity of electoral fraud from the level of 'retail rigging' to the level of 'wholesale rigging'. According to him, 'retail rigging' as the name implies is a lower dimension in the political economy of elections fraud. It means the utilization of the thumb print mechanism (an electorate voting more than once to upset voting patterns). We shall however add some notable irregularities that undercut most elections in Nigeria which could be subsume under Moru's 'retail rigging' classification. These irregularities include, late commencement of voting in many parts of the country, inadequate voting materials, changing polling centres unannounced, lack of secrecy in the voting process, omission of names and/or pictures of some candidates from the ballot papers, removal of electorates' names from voters register, under-age voters participation in elections, ballot bags snatching, stuffing of ballot papers with already thumb-printed ballot materials, collaboration between security officials party agents to rig elections. Continuing with Moru's categorisation, 'wholesale rigging' is that mechanism wherein a zero is added to the total number of voters in an election. What all these suggest is that, most Nigerian electoral process has fallen short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. And in our opinion, electoral violence, electoral fraud and other forms of electoral chicanery have shown to have two major effects

on the Nigerian electoral system. First, the memory of past electoral violence does not encourage political elites to believe that other players in the political field will not subvert the process of election in order to win. This accounts for the reason why each set of elections seem to deepen culture of electoral violence and electoral fraud. Secondly, there is always a loss of faith in the democratic process by the citizens. This is due to the fact that the electorates believe that experience of pervasive electoral violence and fraud doesn't make their vote count. In view of this, electorates show passive response to voting during elections and candidates that win election are not mostly the people's representatives (Despite the relative credibility of the 2011 elections the voter's turnout was also less than 40% of the registered voters). And since they are not the people's representative, they are not accountable to the people.

Reasons for the Failure of Nigerian Electoral System

Different reasons have been cited for the failure of most elections and the electoral system in Nigeria. In fact adequate attentions have been given to institutional problems like, the electoral body and its composition, the law enforcement agencies like the police, the judiciary, among others. However, we contend that why these institutions constitute bottlenecks to elections in Nigeria, they are not enough to explain the crisis of elections and the failure of electoral system in the country. There are more remote causes for the failure of elections in Nigeria which adequate attentions have not been given to in recent past. These remote causes for the failure of the Nigerian electoral system shall be the focus of this section. These factors are both procedural and psychological. First among the list is the role of the Nigerian Political elites. Their approach to politics, their approach to the essence of power, the value they promote through the use of power, their understanding of democracy and their commitment to democratic values determine to a great extent the survival of democracy. These elites use state power to block every democratic tendency that could affect power holders, and those outside of power continue to use all kinds of means to capture state power in order to protect themselves against the vagaries of politics (Odofin, 2005). For example in the First Republic, elections were won before they were conducted. The same thing could be said of other elections conducted in the electoral history of Nigeria, except partially in the relative success recorded by the 2011 elections. The complex power game among the political elites cannot be eschewed from the central role the Nigerian state plays as the largest dispenser of fund. Since the discovery of crude oil in the Nigerian economy, the state has become the best avenue for primitive capital accumulation. In view of this, the acquisition of state power translates to the accumulation of material wealth by the occupiers. In this regard, the political elites adopt every available means to acquire state power. That constitutes one of the major reasons why electoral politics in Nigeria have assumed a form of warfare.

Closely related to the above is the enormous amount of money spend by candidates before and during elections. For a successful election, candidates need money for campaign posters, newspaper advertisements, mobilisation of voters, maintenance of campaign office(s), printing of souvenirs, transportation during campaigns and other logistical spending. This position points to the fact that democracy is an expensive venture. In fact some contestants sell their properties for the purpose of election. In some other cases candidates obtain loans to meet up with the financial demands of elections. And in a society in which the degree of poverty is very high, two negative effects are bound to occur in the democratic process. First, politics becomes a do or die affair, because candidates cannot afford to spend much and at the end of the day lose such election. Secondly, those assuming political power resort to the appropriation of state fund for personal use, in order to recover their electioneering spending. The resultant effect of this experience is the subversion of the electoral process. This is what we are

experiencing in the Nigerian situation. Thus, despite the adequate preparation for the 2011 elections, politicians still tried to subvert the electoral process. For instance during the elections in Akwa Ibom state, South-South Nigeria Electoral officers in the state in their separate reports reported that over 60 ballot boxes were snatched by unidentified hoodlums. In that state election irregularities took the notorious pattern of intimidation and inducement of voters and open campaign by candidates while voting was in progress (The News 23 May, 2011).

The intervention of the military in the politics of Nigeria has also compounded the problems of elections in the country. The intervention of the military in the politics of Nigeria has virtually destroyed the ideological tendencies in party politics. Political parties are no longer formed to champion specific issues. Another negative effect of the long years of military rule is the collapse of the civilian political class, economically and politically. During the military years, the control of state resources and paraphernalia of office through which the politicians enriched themselves was blocked. This resulted in the emergence of powerful and wealthy retired military officers. Therefore, during the emergence of the politics of the Fourth Republic, there were no politicians who could match them naira for naira (Odofin, 2005). At the restoration of Nigeria's democracy the retired military officers played major roles in deciding who gets what and how. And since they are not known to possess credible democratic credentials, any democratic system dominated by them is bound to be perverted. Therefore, in view of the domination of the Nigerian electoral system by retired military men and their apologists, the process has continued to have a reflection of the military brand of political warfare.

Another important factor that has contributed to the problems of elections and the failure of the electoral system in Nigeria, as identified by lyayi (2005) is the issue of mindsets in general and election mindset in particular. In as much that we have analysed other important factors that are responsible for the failure of elections in Nigeria, we would like to emphasise that, the problem of elections, and in fact, the factor that provides the dynamic to elections as a problem in the country is the mindset about politics and power in general, and election mindset in particular. Election mindsets are particularly consequential for democracy. They shape political behaviour, before, during and after elections (lyayi, 2005). lyayi, in his thesis on the roles of election mindsets and mindsets about politics in general, identifies the place of mindsets of major players and stakeholders in the crisis of credible elections and electoral system in Nigeria. We shall at this point rely heavily on this thesis in order to adequately explain the role of mindsets in electoral politics.

lyayi, in his scheme on mindsets identifies the crucial mindset themes that are involved in elections, groups that are involved with each mindset theme, the mindset of each group on the same theme and mindsets about the Nigerian electoral body, to explain the problem of election in Nigeria. We shall examine some of his position.

Election Mindset Theme

- Elections
- The nature of politicians
- Conception of politics
- Methods of acquiring power
- Political platforms
- The role of the state

- Individual vote
- Money in politics
- Women in politics
- INEC
- Political succession

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:17

Voters

Election Mindset Theme

- Elections
- The nature of politicians
- Conception of politics
- Methods of acquiring power
- Political platform
- The role of the state
- Individual vote
- Money in politics
- Women in politics

Mindset Alternative

(Fair versus unfair)

(Honest versus dishonest)

(As welfare or as competition) (Violence versus peace)

(Build one versus buy one)

(Neutral versus Partisan)

(It counts versus it does not count)

(Decisive versus facilitative) (To vote and/or to be voted for) (Independent versus not independent)

(Merit versus ascription)

Existing Mindset (Assumed)

(Elections are unfair) (Politicians are not honest) (Politics is warfare) (Power is acquired through violence)

(Belongs to one that pays money)

(The state rigs elections)

(My vote does not count)

(Money decides who win elections)

(Women are to vote and not to be

- INEC
- Political succession

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:18

Politicians

Election Mindset Theme

- Elections
- The nature of politicians

- Conception of politics
- Methods of acquiring power
- Political platform
- The role of the state
- Individual vote
- Money in politics
- Women in politics
- INEC
- Political succession

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:19

voted for)

(INEC is not independent)

(Political succession depends on where you come from)

Existing Mindset (Assumed)

(Elections cannot be fair)

(Politicians are not honest)

(Politics is warfare)

(Power can only be acquired through violence)

(You buy political platforms)

(The state is, or, has to be partisan)

(Vote does not count)

(Money is everything in politics)

(Women are to vote)

(INEC is not independent)

(Succession is or must be based on primordial considerations; where you come from must count more your vision) than

Mindset of other Groups about INEC

- INEC is not independent.
- INEC cannot conduct free and fair elections.
- INEC takes directives from the ruling party in government at the centre.
- INEC exist to support the government of the day.
- INEC is well funded.
- INEC officials are members of the ruling party.
- INEC does not prepare well for elections

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:19-20

Mindset of INEC officials about INEC

- INEC is powerless to do anything about the demands of the government of the day.
- INEC is misunderstood by the public.
- No matter what INEC does, it will be criticized by the public.
- INEC exists to support the government of the day.
- Elections period are the only opportunities for making money.

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:20

Mindset of INEC officials about Elections

Election Mindset Theme	Mindset Alternative
• Elections	(????)
• The nature of politicians	(Politicians are not honest)
• Conception of politics	(????)
• Methods of acquiring power	(????)
• Political platform	(????)
• The role of the state	(????)
• Individual vote	(????)
• Money in politics	(????)
• Women in politics	(????) '
• INEC	(INEC is not independent)

- Political succession (????)

Source: Festus Iyayi, 2007:20

From the foregoing it is imperative to point out that mindsets remain an incontrovertible principal remote factor responsible for the problems of elections and the failure of the electoral system in Nigeria. Mindsets have a powerful effect on action and behaviour of individuals in different political system. The Nigerian experience shows that voters have negative mindsets, and under such circumstances it is expected that voters will definitely put up negative and irrational action and behaviour when it comes to the issue of elections. This accounts for the reason why electorates during elections in Nigeria rarely vote for candidates based on merit and ideology, but rather on the basis of the candidate that could dispense material things like money, cups of rice, recharge cards, cloths, etc. More so, the negative mindsets of politicians on elections, methods of acquiring power, political platform, individual vote, money in politics, account for the reason why politicians commitment to playing the political game according to its rules remain a mirage. There is no political system in the world in which the politicians move around with such negative mindsets and the electoral system remains credible. This shows that mindsets of politicians remain an important factor in the determination of the direction of electoral systems. It is however important to put a caveat on this position. In as much as we have advanced the importance of politicians' mindsets in the emergence of credible electoral system, it is also important to point out that, the mindsets of electoral officials is also an important factor. Electoral officials that consistently have negative mindsets on elections automatically become willing accomplice in the subversion of electoral process. Therefore, for the emergence of any credible election and electoral system, the point to start from is the transformation of the mindsets of voters, politicians and electoral officials. This, we shall turn to in the next section.

Addressing Election Problems in Nigeria

We have placed much emphasis on the importance of mindsets in the emergence of credible electoral system in Nigeria. This is informed by the fact that election mindsets are the critical elements that determines electoral practices and behaviour and therefore the failure or success of democracies. Without changing election mindsets, we cannot limit violence and rigging in elections; we cannot stop political assassinations, we cannot move to a form of politicking that places the interests of the country above that of individual; we cannot build lasting political institutions that will promote peaceful change and democratic governance in the true sense of the word (Iyayi, 2007). In view of these, if one wants to change the nature of Nigeria's electoral system, election mindsets is likely to be the most suitable and effective starting point. This would be followed by procedural and institutional changes.

The fundamental question that comes to mind when we talk about election mindsets is that, 'can election mindsets be changed? This question is informed by the fact that mindsets are sedimental beliefs and are more settled than attitudes. We would hazard an answer by accepting the fact that election mindsets can be changed and do in fact change. This is what the improvement in the conduct and outcome of the 2011 elections suggest. However, in order to totally change negative election mindsets, four psychological steps are involved. Changing election mindsets start from the desire of players in the electoral process to change their existing mindset on elections. Desiring a change of mindsets is not enough to guarantee a credible electoral system; it must be followed by a decision to change existing mindset. The decision must also be necessarily followed by the deployment of actions that shows new mindsets. To finally achieve positive election mindsets, the actions, practices and behaviours required to maintain the new

mindsets must be sustained. What is required to achieve the election mindsets change we have suggested are, time, persistence and leadership that will kick-start the process (Ibid). This has in fact started with the 2011 elections, but there is still the need for serious improvement.

With a positive change of election mindsets and orientation, we shall also add that, it is also necessary to enable the electoral process through appropriate legislation that would make it possible for the citizens to monitor the process of elections. What we are suggesting is that our electoral act should include legislation that would make it possible for ordinary citizens and civil society organisations to closely monitor the conduct of elections in order to place another layer of control over the activities of politicians with respect to elections (Olaitan, 2005).

It is also germane to point out that a credible electoral system is also dependent on how well, and on how timely, post-election issues, particularly allegations and counter allegations at election tribunals and election appeal courts are handled. In handling cases emanating from elections there is the need of a judiciary that is independent, courageous, fearless, meticulous and objective. In order for the judiciary to assist the electoral process, it is necessary for judicial cases to be promptly decided (Olaitan, 2005, and Omotola, 2009). We would suggest enabling laws that would enable judicial verdict of election cases before the swearing-in of winners. This would go a long way in ensuring that it is only real winners of elections that assume leadership mantle.

As have been variously suggested by scholars and commentators on Nigeria's elections, free and fair elections cannot be possible without constituting our electoral agency with credible individuals and also by empowering the body to be free and independent of manipulation by politicians (Suberu, 2003, Olaitan 2005, Akinboye 2005, and Uhunmwango, 2009). The independence of the electoral body should start with the method of appointment of its member and the funding of the agency. The present situation in which the president nominates all members of the commission in consultation with the National Council of States and subject to the confirmation of the senate will not enhance the independence of the agency. This is due to the fact that any election umpires chosen and funded by the executive might possibly represents interests of the executive, because, 'he who pays the piper dictates the tone'. What could assist the body is the appointment of its members by the Nigerian Judicial Council with the confirmation of both houses of the National Assembly. In the same way the continuous dependence of the commission on the President and the Cabinet for its 'rinding leaves the body at the mercy of the executive. This is never a development that would enhance the independence of the body. The funding of the body should be done through consolidated funds. More so, only persons of unassailable integrity should be appointed into the electoral body. The membership should also represent various interests within the polity.

Conclusion

Aside experiencing military dictatorship for several years, Nigeria has continued to face challenges of credible electoral system in its search for liberal democracy. Every attempt at entrenching democratic governance in the country has been faced with electoral fraud, electoral violence and attendant crisis of governance. Even despite being acknowledged as being better than past elections, the 2011 elections were far from being free, fair and credible. This position is informed by the fact that while voting during the elections was fair the same thing could not be said of counting, collating and announcement of results. Institutional failure has been advanced for this problem. However, is as much as we might accept

institutional failure as one of the problems confronting our electoral system, it is important to emphasize the premium placed on politics and power by our politicians and the political mindsets of all political players in Nigerian political field. Any attempt to make the Nigeria electoral system more credible must necessarily start with a change in the mindset of politicians on politics and the basis of political power. Changes in the perception of politicians and other players in the Nigerian political space require time, and must be championed by visionary and purposeful leadership. Before achieving the task of achieving a credible electoral system, Nigerian leaders must first have a determination to do so. The determination will necessarily start with the emergence of electoral reforms that will make electoral fraud more difficult and unnecessary. These reforms we have suggested *inter-alia*. If electoral fraud is reduced, the votes of the people would definitely count and which will definitely lead to the emergence of credible electoral process. Getting to the destination of genuine electoral system usually takes time under developing democracies, but there is always a starting point. The starting point we are suggesting is the electoral reform, which would be followed by concerted efforts to change the political mindsets of politicians and voters on politics, power, and the electoral process. On a final note, the judiciary should be made to independently perform its role in electoral cases. In order to achieve this, the number of election cases handled by the judiciary should be minimized. The lower the number of election cases handled by the judiciary, the higher the level of efficiency in dispensing justice in such cases. We must look for ways of reducing the volume of election cases brought before the judiciary. This is achievable, especially when votes of voters start to count. This has started with the 2011 Elections and as Professor Attahiru Jega, the Chairman of INEC, has promised, future elections will be better.

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