

REBRANDING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: ROLE OF INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

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Abstract

Nigeria continued to dominate both national and international political discourse as a model of democracy for the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa immediately after the successful conduct and the outcome of the 2015 general elections that saw for the first time peaceful conduct of elections and transition from one civilian administration to the other and which brought the opposition party to power without violence or bloodshed. However, following the conclusion and outcome of the 2019 general elections, Nigeria has become a surprise to political scholars and commentators who find it difficult to unravel how she failed to consolidate the gains of the 2015 general elections so as to emerge stronger as a democratic nation. This study adopts the governance approach, and explores the need to rebrand the processes of conducting elections in Nigeria in order to achieve enhanced democratic governance and also for a healthy synergy between the electorates, the political class, political parties and the institutions of government for inclusive nation building. It adopts both the qualitative and quantitative methods of research in its study between 1999 and 2019. It takes a critical look at what has become characterized as Nigeria's 'brand of politics'- which is essentially corrupt, violent, and manipulative of the wishes of the people as well as lacking in legitimacy. The work argues that except the electoral process is rebranded or transformed in line with acceptable international best practices of democratic culture where the will of the people is seen to prevail, political apathy may persist and this may hinder democratic development in the country.

Keywords: Rebranding, Nigeria, Electoral process, political apathy, corruption

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, Nigeria continues to dominate both national and international political discourse as a model of democracy for the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. This was based on the successful conduct and the outcome of the 2015 general elections that saw for the first time a peaceful conduct of elections and transition from

one civilian administration to the other. The 2015 general election was even more remarkable because, for the first time in the history of Nigeria, an opposition party was able to defeat an incumbent President, and political power was transferred from one civilian regime to the other without any violence or bloodshed (Okeke, 2015). However, following the conclusion and outcome of the 2019 general elections, Nigeria has become a surprise to political scholars and commentators who find it difficult to unravel how she failed to consolidate the gains of the 2015 general elections so as to emerge stronger as a democratic nation. The outcome of the 2019 general elections marked another watershed in the history of elections in Nigeria with several shifts and turns in the conduct of the elections. From the Presidential elections which had to be shifted from February 16 to February 23 to the Governorship elections that witnessed the highest level of inconclusive elections in the history of Nigerian elections, the summary of the election was that of dashed hopes and disappointments.

This study adopts the governance approach and employs both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis, in an attempt to interrogate some issues amongst which include: What were the major challenges to democratic governance between 1999 and 2019? To what extent did the management of the electoral process contribute to political apathy of Nigerians? What structures should be put in place in line with international standards to rebrand the electoral process for good governance in Nigeria? This study argues that rebranding the electoral process is more likely to bring about enhanced democratic governance in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Rebranding of the Electoral Process

Rebranding is essentially a change in the mindset or perception of a person or groups of people about the nature, structure or character of a thing (Schneider, 2004; Mensah, 2011). The word “brand” comes from the Germanic word “brandr” which refers to the mark made by a hot iron on an object (Jevons, 2005). Thus the word “brand” from which rebranding is coined, has a history in the meaning of marketing (Jevons, 2005). The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2012) has noted that branding enables products or services offered by sellers or service providers in the market place to have distinctive features like names, terms, symbols and designs that differentiate them from other goods or services offered by the other sellers or service providers. Although branding has been linked primarily to the field of marketing and advertisements, however, in recent times, branding has been conceptualized beyond marketing and advertisements for products and services. Brands are used everywhere including in political analysis and not just as a way to sell a product because the theory of branding has for instance, become a way for public figures to build an identity for themselves in order to communicate or sell themselves to the public (Scammell (2007; Cwalina & Falkowski, 2008; Dijke, 2013). Accordingly, brands, from products to politicians, are a major phenomenon of modern-day society and have become very important in sociological and cultural terms (Chandler & Owen, 2002; Marland, 2013).

Rebranding of the electoral process as used in this study therefore is to be understood to mean a process of effecting a change in the structure and character of the electoral process as well as the orientation and mindset of the various stakeholders in the electoral process through the adoption of internationally accepted best practices of democracy in order to enhance good governance. The major target of electoral rebranding efforts therefore is to restructure the modalities and character of elections, the mindset of the various stakeholders within the polity including the arms of government, the political parties, political class, the masses, the media, the Civil Society Organisations, the agencies of government (the military, the paramilitary, the police) the international donor agencies and the international community. The whole essence of rebranding the electoral process is therefore to change the negative perception of election management body and to increase the loyalty and patronage of the stakeholders especially the masses towards the process so as to contribute their quota to nation building (Worlu, 2010).

2.2 Electoral process

Elections across the globe perform the key function of choosing representatives or leaders based on the choice of the electorates and therefore an important element of democratic governance (Boix & Stokes, 2003). Nkwede (2016) posits that the Electoral process is the method by which elections are conducted and persons are elected into public office. Reynolds, et al (2005) note that an enduring electoral system must be able to enlist the trust and confidence of the masses by ensuring that the number of votes cast in an election reflects the popularity and acceptance of the political parties and the candidates in such an election. The above therefore underscores the centrality of the electoral process in democratic governance. Elekwa (2008) argues that the electoral process is a full cycle that commences from educating the voters about an

upcoming election until the elections take place with elected representatives assuming their respective offices till the expiration of the tenure. This implies that the electoral process includes all associated activities involving both pre and post-election activities and not just the actual casting of ballots in an election. This process includes the formation and registration of political parties, reviewing of register of voters, delineation of constituencies independently or from existing ones, conduct of elections and resolving of disputes arising from declaration of results and the discrepancies at the election tribunals and the law courts, issuance of certificate of returns to the elected representatives and finally the taking of oath of service by elected representatives.

The above therefore implies that the system that guides the conduct of elections in every society is the foundation of sustainable democracy and shapes the civic culture in such a society (Almond & Verba, 1995). Nwabueze (1983) observed that a credible electoral process must accord qualified citizens the right to vote and be voted for, unhindered access to register to vote in elections, the ability of the Election Management bodies to carve out electoral constituencies, internal party democracy leading to the choice of party candidates, free and fair electoral contest by the parties to win seats at elections, a display of impartiality before, during and after the elections by the election management body, a simplified but reliable balloting system that makes the final outcome of the electoral contest acceptable to all the stakeholders especially the political parties and the masses, the mode of determining of results, trial and resolution of election disputes, and how the issues of electoral malpractices are handled with appropriate punishments to the electoral offenders. INEC notes the different stages involves in the electoral process to include: (i) Delimitation of electoral constituencies (ii) Registration of voters (iii) Notice of elections (iv) Nomination of candidates (v) Election campaigns (vi) Elections, announcement of results and completing tribunal sittings (vii) Participation of other organizations (viii) Resolution of electoral conflicts from the participation and other organizations or groups (INEC, 2006, p.12).

The electoral process is therefore a complex process which involves a comprehensive outlay of plans and strategies of the Election Management Bodies in the conduct of elections, the outcome of which is applauded by the winners and could at times be condemned and rejected by those who are on the losing side particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. The electoral process therefore is central to democratic governance. This implies that when these processes are rebranded by making them more credible and less cumbersome to the masses and other stakeholders by the electoral management bodies, the negative perceptions of the masses about the methods or procedures adopted in conducting elections will reduce (Ayo et al, 2015). Further, acceptance of the final outcome of elections which the masses had hitherto believed is not reflective of their mandate will be on the increase. The effect of this will be improved participation in the electoral process and the restoration of the confidence of the people in the sanctity and credibility of elections thereby reducing the incidences of vote buying and political apathy (Gberevbie, 2014; Agbu, 2016).

2.3 Governance Theory

The Governance theory is prominent in the works of Rosenau (1992), Archer (1994), Jessop (1995), Rhodes (1996), Stoker (1998) and Ewalt (2001).

Governance became a prominent policy tool in the early 1990s following the demise of the Cold War in 1989. Stoker (1998) has linked Governance to a call for a new way of governing by the key actors at International Community, especially the donor agencies as a result of their dissatisfaction with the inefficiency and illegitimacy in resource allocation and utilisation by many sovereign nations most of whom are in the developing democracies. The inefficiency and illegitimacy have been linked with lack of inclusiveness of other critical stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation. Inclusive governance means that all the people whether majority or minority, their races, religions or sexes, have the opportunity to participate in the governance process and to hold the government accountable. Inclusiveness also relates to the adjudication of law and distribution of social amenities or other welfare services to all without any form of segregation or discrimination (World Bank, 2003). Governance is therefore opposed to the old bureaucratic way of government and recognises the importance of collaboration of all the stakeholders in the polity including the private sector, the Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, and other sectors in service delivery of government (Archer, 1994; Ikeanyibe, 2016). It blurs the boundaries within and between public and other sectors – profit and non-profit (Ikeanyibe, 2016), and measures the impact of the performance of the public sector through citizen participation and network governance (Wu & He, 2009).

However, modern governance has assumed a lot of complexities and rationality both in terms of decision making and implementation. Accordingly only a well informed and educated citizenry can be trusted to play the active role in governance as expected of them under the governance paradigm. However, in spite of the

limitations of the Governance theory, it still remains a more benevolent theory compared to the Elites theory in so far as it considers the needs and expectations of the masses in policy formulation and implementation, even though this is accomplished through their elected representatives. In the final analysis therefore a lot still hinges on the system and the mechanisms that are put in place to bring into effect the desired outcome within the polity which is good governance (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015). The above therefore presupposes that there must be a healthy synergy between the political process and governance in Nigeria, such that if the Nigerian political process excludes the people by not taking into considerations their needs and expectations and reflecting them in key policies and decisions it is doomed for failure (Ayo, et al, 2015). This is because since the power to exercise political authority is derived from the people through free and fair elections held periodically, any anti-people policies and programmes would mean the ultimate loss of the power to represent the people by the political class (Gberevbie, 2014). Accordingly any political authority that is not exercised in consonance with the wishes and aspirations of the people in order to enhance governance objectives, by promoting the general wellbeing of the people, would mean the withdrawal of the authority by the people in subsequent elections. This implies that good governance which hinges on the promotion of the general welfare of the citizenry is the authentic platform for the continued exercise of political authority in a democracy like Nigeria. This is however dependent on how much the electoral process is free and fair, and is the true expression of the will of the masses.

3. The Nigerian Electoral Process: Post-Independence to the Fourth Republic

Nigeria has been searching effective electoral processes for long as a pathway to of its transition to sustainable democracy (Jega, December 2015). However, due to several ugly experiences in the past especially since independence in 1960, many Nigerians have given up hope about the relevance of democracy to their material and national life (Jega, 2015). In Nigeria since independence in 1960 the electoral process has been bedeviled by a culture of electoral malpractices and violence. The first electoral process in Nigeria was in 1923, and was in response to the Clifford's constitution of 1922. It adopted a direct mode of election, and the key qualification for voting in the election was evidence of British citizenship and residency in the cities of Lagos and Calabar or British protected persons who were residing in these two cities with a minimum gross annual income of one hundred Pounds. The implication of this was the disenfranchisement of many Nigerians. In 1946 and 1951 elections were held through indirect system of election while by 1954 general elections, the Electoral Collegiate System was replaced by direct elections. The First Republic Nigeria's political independence general elections of 12 December 1959 held in 312 single member constituencies nationwide was by secret ballot and the secret ballot system has continued under the various Election management Bodies since Nigeria's independence to date (Adegboyega 1981; Kurfi 1983; Nnamani, 2014).

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been the superintending EMB since Nigeria's Fourth Republic started in 1999. Within this period, INEC has conducted six elections viz 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections. INEC is expected to maintain absolute independent and impartiality in its management of the electoral process by conducting free, fair and credible elections for the sustainability of democracy in Nigeria (INEC, 2014).

3.1 Electoral Process in Developed Democracies

Electoral processes in the developed democracies of the United States of America (USA) and in Europe are not issues that revolve just around providing polling unit and boxes where people can vote in an election. But it is a process that offers the majority of the electorates the platform to determine through a transparent electoral process who governs them. Branding and rebranding of the electoral process in these nations have been elevated to an art where even such issues like voter education, voter perception of the candidates at election, Logos of Political parties and those of candidates during elections and the power to recall elected officials are given the pride of place within the electoral process (Arnon, 2008; Seidman, 2010; Nee, 2011). In the developed democracies, the electoral process often ensures that the best candidates emerge through a transparent process irrespective of state of origin, religion or gender. The political classes in these nations recognise that democracy accommodates divergent opinions and oppositions, freedom of speech, and dignity of human lives.

The electoral processes in many developed democracies have undergone various changes with the introduction of appropriate technologies to make voting an easy civic responsibility (Zavattaro, 2010). Several countries like USA, UK, India, Brazil, Switzerland, and Estonia among others, have fully embraced e-voting system in the conduct of their elections (McCormack, 2016). The introduction of technology in electoral management has been predicated on some key advantages, including accuracy of the voting process by increasing the reliability of ballots to ensure it reflects the actual votes cast during elections, as

well as forestalling some of the most prevalent electoral frauds in the emerging democracies like ballot box stuffing and snatching. In many of the advanced democracies, technology has helped to enhance speedy release of election results which invariably boosts the voters' confidence in the electoral process thereby reducing incidences of civil unrest and post-election violence. Electronic voting has also been known to reduce ballot spoilage, by alerting voters about invalid votes before they can complete their ballot casting, thereby ensuring that corrections are made to what would have been voided votes, thus reducing errors and making such votes to count. Such ballot spoilage averages between 3 to 7% worldwide (McCormack, 2016). Susan Molinari, the Vice President of Public Policy and Government Relations in Google, noted how Google technology launched in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts' Election Initiatives in the USA helped tens of millions of US voters find where to go and vote (McCormack, 2016, p.2). She noted that in a world that is being driven by technology it is frustrating to expect that except a voter is within the precinct of the polling booth he or she cannot exercise the right to cast the vote, whereas such a person can use his or her ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card or smartphone for banking or financial transactions at the banks.

Online registration has recently become very popular in both developed and developing democracies. For instance, in the United States, the growth rose from 2 states in 2008 to 29 states in 2016. Online registration has also grown considerably in Great Britain thereby resulting in the overall cost of EMBs per voter reducing drastically through the adoption of online registration. When this initiative was launched in March 2015, by the time the exercise ended on May 7, over 2 million Britons had registered within 5 weeks. The youthful age group between 25-34 years had the greatest number per age group of those who applied online to register thereby indicating that electoral participation by this chronically underrepresented demographic can be bolstered through the introduction of technology. Registering prospective voters through online platforms have enhanced the reliability and accuracy of data obtained by the EMBs in addition to reducing the cost of printing paper ballot forms that are a times inappropriately completed. Many of the emerging democratic countries especially in South America, Asia, and Africa that had adopted e-voting did so in phases by engaging in pilot testing of the e-voting technology. Countries like Ecuador, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, United Arab Emirates and Zambia have been consistent in recent times in using e-voting in conducting pilot programmes Namibia is the foremost African country to deploy e-voting machines in 2014 for all her 1.2million voters half of which were youths aged under thirty five years (McCormack, 2016). India and Brazil that are regional democratic powers have been in the forefront in mobilizing other emerging democracies within their regions in embracing electronic voting through shared experiences and provision of equipment to help pilot e-voting. For instance, 50% of the machines used by Bhutan which successfully conducted fully electronic national elections in July 2013 were supplied by India.

So the introduction of technology in the management of elections in Nigeria was based on positive outcomes from countries that had embraced the technology.

4. IMPERATIVES OF REBRANDING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN NIGERIA

As earlier noted, rebranding is essentially a change in the mindset or perception of a person or groups of people about the nature, structure or character of a thing. It is the position of this study that the Nigerian electoral process has lost its brand loyalty among the various stakeholders especially the masses and therefore there is the need to infuse more democratic features into the electoral process in order to reassure and empower the people to participate meaningfully in the political process so as to enhance good governance. Accordingly, the overall intention of rebranding the electoral process in Nigeria is to elicit positive actions with the overall aim of increasing and sustaining loyalty and patronage of all stakeholders in the polity. This study reinforces the need for the people to buy into the idea of building a great nation that every Nigerian can call their own by participating meaningfully in the electoral process. However, this cannot be achieved if the electoral process as it is presently is not fundamentally repackaged and repositioned so as to make this revered process of elite recruitment credible.

The Nigerian political process is perceived by many stakeholders as corrupt, violent, and manipulative of the desires of the masses to achieve selfish interests of the ruling class (Ayo, et al, 2015). The modern democratic ethos which revolves around international best practices therefore cannot accommodate ballot box stuffing or snatching, electoral violence, extra judicial killings, politically motivated assassinations, brazen corruption and misappropriation and the like which are dominant features of Nigerian political process. In the survey carried out for this study, a total of 148 or 41.11% of the respondents agree that INEC has not satisfactorily performed its role of Election Management to improve the electoral process and good governance in Nigeria from 1999-2018. Given the increasing distrust accentuated by profound political divisions characterizing the relationship between the masses and the electoral body in Nigeria, the level of transparency, credibility and issues of transparency, accuracy, and credibility of elections should be in the

front-burner of the election management body. Accordingly, as electorates especially the youthful population, worldwide are getting increasingly technology savvy, the concern of many modern governments and EMBs should be how to respond positively to this trend in order to keep pace with this development and reflect their choice of electoral process with the expectations of the modern electorate (Ditsch, 2012).

Some of the reasons that vote buying is currently receiving a big boost in Nigeria include lack of trust in the political class as well as the electoral umpire; high level of illiteracy and low level of voter education. Many of those that voted against all odds discovered that their votes could not count due to mistakes made during elections that resulted into high percentage of voided votes in elections. Further, the unusually high number of 79 political parties on the ballot in Nigeria during the 2019 general elections was enough to confuse the electorate (Makinde, 2019; Ajayi, 2019). Apart from the huge cost of printing ballot papers the illiterate electorates found it difficult to meander through so many political parties listed on the ballot papers. Many who eventually voted but could not fold the papers correctly ended up with voided votes because the ink that was emblazoned on the symbol of their preferred political parties or candidates ended up smearing other political party symbols thereby making void the ballot since the ballot paper showed evidence of voting for more than one party or candidate. This could have been eliminated with intensive voter education to show the electorate especially the illiterate ones how to fold back the ballot paper to preserve its sanctity.

4.1 Constraints to Rebranding of the Electoral Process in Nigeria

The establishment and activities of INEC are constitutionally recognized in accordance with Third Schedule, Section 153 (f) 14 &15 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (As Amended), thereby ensuring that both the legality and constitutionality of INEC are unambiguous (INEC, 2014). However, over the years the constraints of INEC have included:

a. Undue interference of National Assembly on Election Matters

Most of the respondents (180 or 50%) agreed that the oversight role of the National Assembly on the activities of INEC in relation to funding of political parties is weak. Further, majority of the respondents (198 or 55%) are in agreement that the National Assembly is responsible for the delay in the approval of the budget of INEC. According to them, this has contributed to the poor performance of INEC in its role of effectively managing the electoral process since the inception of the fourth Republic. 174 or 48.33% of the respondents agreed that interference by the National Assembly in election matters like fixing of election timetables is not part of their oversight functions on INEC and therefore a major constraint of the electoral process.

b. Lack of Trust in INEC as a Neutral Umpire

The study shows that lack of trust in INEC as an impartial electoral umpire has continued to rise as 79.44% of the respondents agree that they lack trust in INEC as a neutral umpire. This was statistically significantly higher than those opposing to it (79.44% vs. 20.56%; $p=0.0001$). It can therefore be argued that this negative notion about INEC has been a major cause of violence during elections in Nigeria since 1999 to date. This study therefore agrees with earlier studies on electoral violence as carried at by Asia (2001); Osaghae (2002); Gberegbe (2014); Edet (2015); Duruji et al (2015); and Agbu (2016) that violence has been a major feature of Nigeria's post-independence electoral process. This study also shows that with both institutional support of the National Assembly and the resilience of Nigerians in embracing democracy and good governance, much still needs to be done by INEC to convince both the Nigerian electorate and the international community that it is an impartial or neutral umpire with credibility and integrity to conduct free and fair elections in Nigeria. This position was supported by the suspicious activities of INEC during the Ekiti and Osun governorship elections in July and September 2018, where the integrity and impartiality of INEC was brought to serious question in conducting credible elections in the run up to the 2019 February and March Presidential/National Assembly and Governorship/State Assembly elections.

c. Corruption of INEC Officials

The study showed that there is high level of corruption among INEC officials especially the adhoc staff. 244 or 67.77% of the respondents agreed that some INEC officials are corrupt. The wave of corruption in INEC is a reflection of the unmitigated level of corruption in Nigeria among the ruling class where the desperation to win an election at all costs has been the key driver of this monumental corruption in INEC. However, this study revealed that the reward system of INEC especially for the Adhoc staff and the operations staff who work round the clock during the election period is poor. The crisis-ridden and violent nature of the electoral process in Nigeria where many innocent lives including those observing the mandatory one year service under the National Youth Service Corps scheme have died in the course of performing their civic duty and

yet no meaningful compensation or reward was given to them for the supreme price paid makes the issue of insecurity very prominent, and compromise during elections attractive.

d. Lack of Adequate Voter Education

The study shows that INEC often does not embark on adequate voter education. This is supported by 178 or 49.44% who agreed although 141 or 39.17 disagreed. The issue of adequate voter education is key to any thriving electoral process. This is even more compelling in view of the various transformations and innovations of INEC including the introduction of technology in its electoral management. However, a critical review of these voter education initiatives could evidently show that although the initiatives are well intentioned, however, not much result could be achieved by INEC if it continues to outsource the role of voter education to celebrities and donor agencies. Further, the concentration of the initiatives primarily towards those living in the urban areas and among the educated populace to the utter exclusion of those living in rural areas, has continued to undermine the benefits and overall effectiveness of the voter education projects as the incidence of voided or rejected votes especially among the rural electorates has continued to be on the rise, with the effect of disenfranchising several thousands of eligible voters. For instance, in the 2014 governorship election in Ekiti state, about 10,118 votes were rejected. During the controversial Osun governorship elections held on September 22, 2018, over one million voters registered for the election with 48 political parties contesting for the election. The total votes recorded were 767, 955, while rejected votes recorded were 47,843. The 2015 Presidential elections recorded a total of 43,626 rejected votes in Kano state (Vanguard Newspaper, March 30, 2015; Dada, 2018). During the 2019 Presidential elections, 1,289,607 representing 4.5% of the total 28,614,190 votes cast in the elections were rejected while 844,519 representing 2.8 per cent of the total 29,432,083 ballots cast in 2015 were rejected (Premium Times, 2019). Accordingly, majority of the rejected votes during elections in Nigeria are from the rural areas where the means of communication is poor and the level of literacy is low (Dada, 2018; Ajayi, 2019).

e. Executive and Legislative Meddlesomeness in INEC Operations

Another challenge being faced by INEC as the study showed is the extent of executive and legislative meddlesomeness in INEC operations. A total of 209 or 58.05% of the respondents agreed that there is executive and legislative meddlesomeness in INEC operations. Both the officials of INEC (52% of the survey sample) and National Assembly (71.81% of the survey sample) are in agreement that there is Executive and Legislative meddlesomeness in INEC operations. However, 67 or 26.80% of the survey sample are undecided or unsure of executive and legislative meddlesomeness in INEC operations.

f. Insecurity and Violence during Elections

The study shows that insecurity and violence have negative effects on the performances of INEC during elections. 279 or 78.28% of the respondents agreed that INEC underperforms due to insecurity and violence during elections. Insecurity and electoral violence have remained permanent features of the democratic process of Nigeria with the exception of the 2015 general elections which according to international observers witnessed a reduction in the level of insecurity and violence when compared to previous elections (EUOM, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that if the necessary structures are put in place, a rebranded electoral process would enhance mass participation in the political process and reengineer the growth of democracy and good governance. Rebranding the electoral process therefore, is imperative and entails infusing more features like technology, e-voting, e-transmission of election results, independent candidacy and other modern election management mechanisms that will help in changing this negative perception of the people as well as that of the international community through the adoption of international best practices in the conduct and management of the political process. Rebranding of the Nigerian political process will involve the complete overhauling of the activities of the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, Political parties, political actors, the Electoral management bodies, the electorate as well as the security agencies within a democratic culture that will lead to good governance. It is therefore the contention of this study that if properly implemented, democratic rebranding of the Nigerian electoral process will likely improve the political and electoral processes to ensure that the best candidates emerge victorious in future elections. In this regard, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The introduction of technology in the management of Nigeria's elections is a step in the right direction. However, there must be a concerted collaborative effort with the National Assembly, the Executive/Presidency and other local and international stakeholders to amend the legal framework thereby

giving appropriate legal backing to enable INEC fully implement e-voting.

2. Adequate voter education should be embarked upon by INEC in order to educate the masses and the electorate on how to use technology in casting their votes. This role should not be outsourced to NGOs and CSO's or even the political parties with INEC being fully involved in the monitoring and implementation of the project.

3. The welfare system of the officials of INEC especially as they relate to the Adhoc staff should be revisited. Since these members of staff are on crucial national assignment it is suggested that a national insurance scheme of a reasonable amount that can sustain them and their families in case of death or permanent disability in the course of their jobs be set up. This will help dissuade some of them who may want to compromise the sanctity of elections conducted by INEC for personal gains.

4. INEC should be relentless in pushing for the establishment of the Electoral Offences Commission and Tribunal. This would enable INEC to concentrate solely on electoral administration and management, while the Electoral Offences Tribunal would be saddled with the responsibilities of prosecuting electoral offenders, thereby saving INEC from unnecessary distractions.

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