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AN APPRAISAL OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION IN NIGERIA

ANIEKAN S. BROWN

And

EBERE J. OKORIE

Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Uyo – Nigeria.

**Email: asbrown12@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

This paper takes a critical look at the relationship between electoral processes and the quality of leadership in Nigeria. It acknowledges that the country has basked on the euphoria of uninterrupted democracy in the past thirteen years. There are, however, tangible threats from her experiences in the very ingredient of democracy which is free and fair periodic elections. Her electoral processes have undoubtedly cast negative spells on the viability of our democracy; hence, the dire search for electoral credibility. Pivoted by the structural functional theory of Robert K. Merton, and inspired by a multi-stage sampling technique which raised twenty-four (24) respondents, emerging data confirm that quality leadership for a sustainable democracy in Nigeria is predicated on the criminalization of the electoral fraud and the courage of a just and responsible judiciary. The study calls for the need to deconstruct and reconstruct the processes of elections, and

leadership as not just a position, but also as a structure, process, system, and function.

Introduction

This paper is informed by some investigations into the Nigerian democracy with a view to contributing to the debate on how to engender sustainable democracy in Nigeria. It reflects an amalgam of some earlier works of mine, (Brown, 2005; Izugbara and Brown, 2006; Brown, 2010); opinion surveys; the outcome of the Nigerian social production in the spheres of leadership and electoral processes; and observations of the series of elections in the present Nigerian democratic experiment.

The paper intends to appraise the relationship between the state of elections in Nigeria and the quality of leadership. Positionally, it is acknowledged that the electoral processes in Nigeria suffer from credibility standards. They are not seen to be free and fair (Lakemfa, 2009). And Anderson (2005) is scared when considering the aggregate burden of crime. This poses a threat to the nation's democracy. In the circumstance, frantic effects have been fronted to at least purchase some credibility to our electoral processes. These measures seem to be rather ephemeral and clothed with sentimental motivations. As such, the desired results are pedestrians.

It is hoped that as the conceptual and theoretical issues are considered, and the actual work is completed, tangible suggestions will be proffered to enhance the common good of the people. In which case, leadership shall have been more qualitative and democracy more stable and sustained in Nigeria.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Nigeria's present democratic experience has run for an unprecedented twelve years unpunctuated. However, there are serious threats to its survival. These threats emanate from the fact that one of the basic ingredients of democracy - free and fair periodic elections has suffered abuse. Elections are shrouded in fraudulent activities which undoubtedly cast negative spells on the viability of democracy. Electoral fraud

has, therefore, pushed the country to the dire straight of searching for electoral credibility. The intriguing development here this that while those produced as leaders by the largely questionable elections defend the process that produced them, the losers raise counter points. In the calamity, the entire process of election and leadership combine to create doubts as to the sustainability of the democratic experience.

Parsons (1968) presented the society as a social system - of course with many parts and with all those parts contributing to the good of the entire system. Merton (1968) added that some parts may not always be functional. Sometimes they may be dysfunctional, and sometimes non - functional. As the society continues to meet with needs, it creates units to meet such needs. In this case, the Nigerian political space needs a democracy. To facilitate that periodic elections are basic requirements. INEC is the institution created to ensure the free and fair elections. However, the political class has perpetrated fraud in the entire process. Fraud is injurious to the system and as such dysfunctional.

The danger is that when the dysfunctional outweigh the functional, sustainability becomes elusive. This is the state of our democracy today. The way out is the deconstruction and reconstruction of the electoral process. This could be done by criminalizing electoral fraud. What, first and foremost is crime? Simply put, crime is any human (mis)conduct in violation of the criminal laws of a State, the federal government, or a local jurisdiction that has the power to make such laws (Schmallerger, 1999). It follows that without a law that circumscribes a particular form of behaviour, there can be no crime, no matter how deviant or socially repugnant the behaviour in question may be. This situation raises a debate between the legalistic and the sociological definitions of crime.

Legalistic apologists insist that the nature of crime cannot be separated from the nature of law, as the one explicitly defines the other. The position is, however, not without limitation. The major short coming is in the fact that formalized laws have not always existed, and new laws cannot be retroactively applied to past behaviour.

For purposes of criminology, however, the legalistic definition becomes expedient. Hence, Edwin H. Sutherland said of crime that: **...its essential character... is that it is behaviour which is prohibited by the State as an injury to the State and against which the state may react...by punishment.** In a sense, the society secretly wants crimes, and gains definite satisfactions from the present mishandling of it! We condemn crime; we punish offenders for it; but we need it. The crime and punishment ritual is part of our lives (Minninger, 1988).

Theorizing on the possible causes and consequences of crime, Ronald Clarke in his Situational Crime Prevention theory explains the environment, rational choice and routine activity as the underlying assumptions. The environmental thesis holds that crime only occurs when four things come together, namely: the law, the offender, the victim or target, and a place. Added to this is the fact that criminals think about their decisions before they commit crime. Crime is therefore a rational choice (Green & Shapiro, 1994). As a routine activity, Clarke argues that in order for crime to happen, there must be three things in place, namely: an offender, a suitable target, and no one watching the target and the offender (Clarke & Eck, 2003). In which case, if we want to make a big difference in crime, we must make fundamental changes (Wilson, 1983). This, to Comte (1875) is the basis for creating a system of positive policy.

It should be noted that on a practical note the legalistic perspective is persuasive, since only those prohibited acts that are committed after effective date of any new statute can be prosecuted as crimes (Makinde, 2007). We must also note that a serious shortcoming of the legalistic view to crime is that it grants moral high ground to powerful individuals who are able to influence the making of laws and the imposition of criminal definitions on lawbreakers (this could explain why Nigeria is yet to criminalize electoral fraud even against the tide of public opinion).

The cases of June 12, 1993 and the Chief Justice (Rtd.) Mohammed Uwais' Committee Report are clear examples. It could be recalled that the June 12, 1993 Presidential election, which had *Option A4* as its trump, was adjudged to be the most

free and fair in the nation's history. Its virtues have not, however, been appreciated in the nation's electoral processes since then. Also, the imperfect process which transited the Presidency from Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to Late Alhaji Umoru Yar'Adua in 1997 necessitated the inauguration of the Mohammed Uwais-led Electoral Reform Committee. The recommendations of the Committee, sadly, have not been considered needful for a better electoral process for Nigeria. In essence, there has not been genuine desire to curb *crimogenic* tendencies in our electoral processes. Criminalization has not, therefore, been of value – hence – the perpetration of criminal acts (including ballot stuffing, materials snatching and divert, thuggery, outright disenfranchisement of some electorates, multiple voting, etc.) in the electoral processes.

Criminalization, it should be noted, is the process of making illegal any unfair and unjust actions and allotting corresponding and appropriate sanctions to such actions under criminal law. Criminalizing has not, however, been the case. But (Becker, 1968) had advocated punishment to serve as deterrence to crime. Perhaps with inclination to Clinard & Abott (1973), and Summer (1982), the application of punishments on electoral fraud seems to be less real here. The civil liberty groups should drive this. One would notice a corresponding negligence of criminalizing misappropriation and embezzlement of public funds by those produced by the electoral process. A relationship can easily be observed.

Governance and Leadership

Government is an institution of the state as well as the process, art and science of regularly enacting policies, decisions and matters of the State by officials within a political apparatus (Giddens, 2008). As an institution of the state, the implication is the totality of the state machinery, namely: the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. But as a process, art, or science, it involves the ways, methods, manner or systems of ruling or leading people and through which the activity of governance is carried out.

Taken from both points of view, government is functional and important in a number of ways, including but not limited to:

- Making laws for the regulation of the conduct and behavior of people;
- Playing the neutral agent, an arbiter for the regulation of human relations, settlement of conflict, administration of justice, the interpretation of laws, and the punishment of offenders;
- Upholding the constitution and ensuring compliance to constitutional provisions;
- Ensuring the maintenance of law and order;
- Providing essential welfare, economic and social services; and
- Seeing to ensure the guarantee and protection of fundamental human rights of citizens, etc.

In sum, therefore, government presupposes the body of persons in the legislature, the judiciary and the executive, legitimately empowered to carry out the duties of the state.

Inherent in good governance is adherence to the rule of law. Of course, where there is rule of law, everyone is equal before the law but undoubtedly we still have a long way to go in this regard. Otherwise, there would not arise any situation where members of the society are treated differently in the application of the law, on a political note; or some people live in opulence or scandalous wealth while others wallow in poverty, which serves as an extreme form of economic injustice which does not exist without its adverse consequences. This queries the efficacy of government.

To John Fitzgerald Kennedy, *to govern is to choose*. The emphasis here is the absolute necessity that public servants deliver public services and goods in an ethical manner as systemic corruption contributes to the erosion of the rule of law. This should be in congruence with an independent and well-functioning judicial and law enforcement system which is needed to protect human rights and administer justice in an impartial manner. These are attributes of good government, the act of which is governance.

Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2005) opine that governance has become a front-page story of discourse propelled by cases of acquiescent and negligent enclaves. Gordner (1983)

advocates multiple intelligences as the bases for personal competence, while Birnbaum (1992) emphasizes cognitive complexity which underscores the ability to think and work effectively and concurrently in multiple modes, including: politicians, managers, entrepreneurs, culture makers, administrators, learners, etc.

As a principle, Chait, et al (2005) identified three modes of governance; viz:

- (i) The fiduciary mode, where officers are concerned primarily with the stewardship of tangible assets;
- (ii) The strategic mode, where officers create a strategic partnership with management; and
- (iii) The generative mode, where officers provide a less recognized but critical source of leadership for the organization or group. Arguably, when officers work well in all three of these modes, the group achieves governance as leadership. What a food for thought?

At the instance of leadership, a quick look into the historicity of leadership in Nigeria as in other African Countries would reveal that there are several stages of Nigerian leadership. For instance, during the colonial era (1885 – 1960) the stage was autocratic. Thereafter was the stage of National rule with a toxic or narcissistic style. As awareness grew, toxicism gave way to the transitional rule which tried to be participatory (but with uncomfortable interruption by the military). Today, the drift is that of the economy – the stage of economic rue which is characterized by Laissez Faire cum transformational style. The cliché today is about “Transformation Agenda” of the present national leadership. The suggestion is that the leadership type is transformation which should aim at out-performing its set agenda.

Leaders are thus agents of change (Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly Jr., and Konopaske, 2003). Leadership is thus an attempt to use influence to motivate individuals to accomplish goals. It occurs when a group member modifies the motivation or competences of others in the group. The challenge here is that a leader can make a difference in measures of organizational effectiveness: production, efficiency, quality,

flexibility, satisfaction, competitiveness, and development. Gibson, et al (2003) adds that another dimension of leadership is **transformational leadership** which refers to the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve results that are greater than originally planned.

The basic national vision, in current terms, is 20:2020. Barely eight (8) years to go, the extent to which we have gone leaves much to be desired. It is worthy to note that there is need for some missions within the vision these should reflect all steps as planned towards 20:2020. Thus, there should be 20:2015; 20:16; 20:17, etc. We have not had this breakdown because we are yet to conquer the problem of raising the leadership the right way. Ekong (2003) sees a leader as one who initiates interaction with other group members and move the group toward the attainment of its goals or solution to its problems. As a complement, Forsyth (1999) states leadership as a universal phenomenon as groups. To him, leadership binds the leader to the led. Leadership is a specialized form of social interaction: a reciprocal, transactional, cooperative, and sometimes transformational process in which cooperating individuals are permitted to influence and motivate others to promote the attainment of group and individual goals.

Generally, leaders exhibit and possess some traits such as: abilities (skills), personality (emotional maturity), motivation (have relative power and act on socially acceptable ways in order to record success). Little wonder Ronald Reagan in Jay (1997:302) states:

To grasp and hold a vision, that is the very essence of successful leadership... everywhere

Put rather philosophically, great leaders know their life's mission. They are focused and determined to pursue a vision; and that results in setting a mission that usually centres around helping other people. Such a leadership could inspire trust, ensure justice, and remain God-fearing. In its pure form, therefore, leadership exerts altruistic, positive and profound impact on a people, both in tangible and intangible ways. It galvanizes challenges and propels a people along clearly

established path of development, achievement and progress. In this light, Mbanefo (2005) submitted that responsible leadership and good governance is imbued with: Vision and imagination, Commitment, Selflessness, Integrity and courage, as well as clearly defined goals and aspirations.

It follows that for leadership to exert desired and lasting impact on society, it must be visionary. It must have an acute sense of where it wants to take the society, and how society can change for the better without losing its very essence and values. Thus the fundamental question every responsible follower should ask and every responsible leader should strive to answer correctly is: *"where are we heading?"*

Mbanefo in the same place aptly captures it thus:

Leadership, essentially, is the exercise of political, economic, (social), and administrative authority in the management, at all levels, of the country's affairs. Holding or occupying a high position and office does not define a leader or leadership. Leadership is not simply about waving the flag or singing the anthem. The indices of power and leadership are not more guns, personal wealth and paraphernalia and trappings of office such as motorcades and sirens. These are merely the visceral manifestations of rulership, not leadership.

In sum, leadership is a structure, system, function, relationship, and process with the sole aim of raising the stakes of the led with sincerity and selflessness as the watch words. The question, however, is, having regards to our electoral processes of evolving leaders, where are we located on the contour of leadership? Are we on the right path? It is time for self appraisal.

Our response to the above question is incumbent on if we are ethical and accountable. Ethics has to do with, what ought to be; what is right; what is morally correct; and what guides conduct (Etuk, 2000). Accountability is a management tool that is aimed at curbing profligacy. This regrettably has been

practically reduced to mere financial figures with little or no qualitative attachment for a possible social flesh. This places accountability too much in the domain of too few experts who could easily manipulate figures.

Very practically, however, ethics and accountability have become a jaundiced pair in administration of local governments in Nigeria. This development is rather negatively costly and regrettably sad.

Notably, certain abilities, traits, and motivation constitute possible indicators of leadership. Theories abound in attempting to explain leadership. For instance, Stogdill (1988) and Likert (1981) emphasize on job - centred and employee - centred leadership. Fiedler (1987) points to the contingency model, while Evans (1990), and House (1991) route for the path-goal model. And more classically, Max Weber in Ritzer (2000) discusses leadership on traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational fronts. From which ever perspective, Vroom and Jago (1988) and Vroom and Yetton (1993) emphasized on decision quality and decision commitment as they highlight the most effective procedures of leadership. Thus, the bottom-up construction of social needs and social plans for the provision of needs will engender the need for accountability.

From the fore-going, one agrees with Allen (1995) as he posits, there is need for a good understanding of politics in Africa. In Nigeria, interest groups construct the democratic space. The interest, however, usually have sectional and parochial values (Beckman, 1997). As such Cowen and Shenton (1996) would suggest that proper doctrines be put in place to enhance the development of the political space. Such a doctrine should be strong enough to subdue the anti - politics machinery in the system (Ferguson, 1990).

The Current Electoral State

Indeed the Nigeria electoral situation calls for criminalization (a process of naming an act as criminal and ensuring that punishment is visited on offenders, without any short change of the criminal justice system). Understandably, the law has not kept pace with the activities of people, political parties, and institutions in our electoral processes. This is

because our democracy is still toddling. Though more than fifty years as an independent sovereign entity, in thirty (30) of these years, she has experienced a variety of military regimes. The remaining forty (40%) percent of the time found her intermittently experimenting democracy. Something to cheer is the fact that this present attempt at democracy is the longest, but is capable to do more.

It is important to note that though the legislature presents the fulcrum of democracy in terms of organs of government, periodic free and fairs elections hold the key to its entrenchment (Brown, 2010). Unfortunately, history holds that apart from the first elections of 1923 and perhaps the controversial June 12, 1993 Presidential elections, every other election has been coloured with massive rigging and fraud including but not limited to: multiple registration, ballot materials snatching, ballot box stuffing and multiple voting, falsification of figures, disenfranchisement, violent conducts, to mention but a few. Hence - the challenge for credibility.

In a determination to better the electoral system, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru Jega, made use of lecturers of the Universities in Nigeria as the collation/returning officers at the Ward, Local Government Area and State levels in the 2011 general elections. Their authorities were evident in what INEC designated as forms EC8 A to C respectively. To that extent, the arithmetic in the collation was more authentic and the elections coupled with the caliber of the collation officers and their integrity levels, the elections were on the whole generally deemed to have been credible.

However, there is a remarkable difference between credible elections, and free and fair elections. The earlier discussed attempt by the Chairman of INEC did not accommodate the credibility at the levels of polling units and centres. To his end, what was gabbaged from EC8 A from the units were (though not probed nor vetted) deemed to be the true and correct figures.

The consequence was the receipt of illicit result as though they were licit. Such were played out in the post-presidential furore in Northern Nigeria and a myriad of litigations

at the tribunal. The tribunals (judiciary) then prove to be the hope for a virile and sustainable development in Nigeria. Presently, however, serious doubts have been cast on the commitment of the judiciary to the upliftment of democratic ideals. The problem of the suspended President of the Court of Appeal, Ayo Salami and the former Chief Justice of the Federation, Katsina-Alu is unfortunately the grotesque picturesque that encapsulates the ugly trend.

Method and Data

Methodologically, this work employs opinion, summary, observation, and impetus from previous works. The sampling procedure was multi-staged including: purposive, and stratified, and systematic random sampling. Instrument of data collection was in-depth interview. The number of those interviewed was fourteen. The study which lasted for three month (from March to June, 2012) relied on data raised from active players and participants in the last Presidential Election in Imo State, Nigeria. Such include: those who won (3), those who lost (3), Academics who participated as collection officers (3), National Youth Service Corp Member (3), Women (3), Youth (3), Clergy (3), and INEC staff (3). A total of twenty-four (24) respondents were of significance to thus study. The inadequacy of the sample is not in doubt, but the feelers there-from cannot be disregarded. Thematic submissions embedded in simple percentages are adopted for the reporting the typical opinions of the people with regard to the variables.

Findings and Discussions

Table 1:
Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Perception of Electoral and Leadership Processes.

S/No	Nature of question	Response Guide	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Whether they participated in the 2011 elections	Yes	18	75
		No	04	16.7
		Not Quite	02	8.3
	Total		24	100.0
2	Whether the elections were free and fair	Yes	06	25
		No	14	58.3
		Not Quite	04	16.7
	Total		24	100
3	Whether those elected merited such	Yes	08	33.33
		No	10	41.67
		Not Quite	06	25
	Total		24	100.00
4	Whether materials were duly delivered	Yes	08	33.3
		No	12	50.00
		Not Quite	04	16.7
	Total		24	100
5	Whether electorates freely cast their votes	Yes	06	25
		No	14	58.3
		Not Quite	04	16.7
	Total		24	100
6	Whether those elected have delivered so far	Yes	06	25
		No	14	58.3
		Not Quite	04	16.7
	Total		24	100
7	Whether the 2011 elections were more credible compared to others	Yes	10	41.67
		No	10	41.67
		Not Quite	04	16.67

	Total		24	100
8	Whether they would agree that there was fraud in the election?	Yes	16	66.7
		No	04	16.7
		Not Quite	04	16.7
	Total		24	100
9	Whether the perpetrators of such fraud were apprehended by the law	Yes	0	0
		No	18	75
		Not Quite	06	25
	Total		24	100

Source: 2012 Field Survey

In the table above, nine interrelated questions were asked the respondents and they variously showed similarities and dissimilarities. Their views are summarized under the following themes:

(i) On Whether they Participated in the 2011 Elections:

The table above shows that 75% of the respondents participated in the said elections. 16.7% of them claimed that they did not participate; and only 8.3% were ambivalent. It reveals that most of them participated in the elections. Notably, most of those who did not participate were of the clergy and women's class. Those who showed ambivalence were those who claimed materials never got to them.

(ii) On Whether the Elections were Free and Fair: The table above reveals that most of them perceived that the elections were not free and fair. For instance, 25% of them posited that the elections were free and fair. 16.7% of them were in a limbo, but 58.3% of them negated the argument that the elections were free and fair. Characteristically, from indepth interviews, it was found that those who negated the fairness of the elections are those who had lost in the elections, and those who were ad-hoc facilitators to the electoral body.

(iii) On the Suitability of those Elected: 41.67% of the respondents doubted the suitability of the elected officers. 33.33% of them affirmed to their suitability; and 25% of them were neither on the affirmative nor negative positions. Understandably, those who lost in the elections never thought that the successful merited their positions. The overwhelming negation of their suitability attempts to establish a link between the processes of election and leadership.

(iv) On the Availability of Electoral Materials: Asked whether the electoral materials were duly delivered on the election days, 50% of the respondents opined that they were not delivered duly. 33.33% of them argued that they were delivered duly, and 16.70% showed ambivalence. Data reveal doubts as to if materials were duly delivered.

(v) On Whether the Electorates Freely Cast their Votes: The table reveals that 25% of the respondents argued that the electorates freely cast their votes. 58.3% of them were opposed to the former claim, and 16.7% of them were indecisive on the matter. It is also a pointer to the fact that the electoral process is below standard.

(vi) On the Delivery Level of the Elected Officers: Here again, 25% of the respondents agreed that the elected officers had delivered upon expectations. 58.3% of them posited differently, and 16.7% of them showed ambivalence. Here also, doubts are cast on the quality of leadership produced by the electoral process.

(vii) Comparing the Credibility of 2011 Elections with Others: When asked whether the 2011 elections were considered more credible than others, 41.67% of them were affirmative and same went for the negative response. 16.67% of them, however, were indecisive. Indepth interview revealed that the involvement of Academics in the 2011 election made room for the slight difference between fraud and credibility. The fact is that Academics who acted as Collation and Returning Officers attended to the EC8 forms were rather more meticulously than what others did in

previous elections in the Fourth Republic. There was a tilt towards dissatisfaction with the process and an unwitting difference between free and fair elections, and credible elections.

- (viii) **On Admission of Fraud in the 2011 Elections:** Emerging data show that 66.7% of the respondents admitted that there was fraud in the elections. 16.7% disagreed with the earlier position, and 16.7% also expressed ambivalence. There is an overwhelming suggestion that there was fraud in the said elections.
- (ix) **On the Apprehension of the Perpetrators of Electoral Fraud:** Asked whether the perpetrators of electoral fraud were apprehended by the law, the respondents responded as revealed in the table. No respondent admitted to the apprehension of any electoral offender. 75% of them opined that there were no apprehensions, and 25% were in doubt of such occurrence. There is a strong expression by the respondents that perpetrators of electoral crimes have not been apprehended by the law.

It should be acknowledged that responses took partisan lines and sentiments. Those favoured by the results of the electoral process never really found anything wrong with the process. And those who played the roles of umpires were given largely to double-speaking as in-depth interviews revealed.

The onus lies with the judiciary which should help interpret the laws governing elections in the land. Further revelations also show that there are doubts as to the delivery value of the criminal justice system. And as a clergy who did not participate in the elections due to loss of faith in the process submitted:

The judiciary must sit up and re-establish people's confidence in the electoral process...upon which lies the future of this democracy.

The judiciary, therefore, has a tall order to rebuild faith in the system. This will ultimately engender the bottom-top approach

to leadership and enhance the social process of electing the leaders.

The nation's leadership setting is still limited to the idea of leadership as a position. As such anytime anyone ascends a leadership position, there is a general feeling that his or her opportunity had come. Therefore, responsibility is not valued. Emphasis is placed on personal aggrandizement and servicing of the few who constitute the support base. This ugly trend is seen as being predicated on the process that produced the leadership. The social production processes (the elections) are shrouded with fraud and there is need for urgent reconstruction. To deconstruct for reconstruction, leadership should be viewed from the structural perspective. It should be seen as a process and a function.

In the seeming helplessness of the electoral process against fraud, the judiciary is called upon to raise courage as a virtue and be firm as to the ideals of elections. To this end, those found to have been fraudulent should be punished. Since punishment is aimed at serving as deterrence to crime, then electoral fraud would have been reduced and the leadership system would have been better conjectured or reconstructed for the common good.

Conclusion

On a general note, it is considered expedient to from the foregoing admit that the data base here is unconvincing. The situation calls for more investigations, while this remains a preliminary attempt. More particularly, the argument, on face value, would be that there are enough laws to take care of electoral fraud in Nigeria. This work, however, technically posits that laws against behaviour without practically appropriating sanctions do not amount to any attempt to deter such behaviour. Hence, electoral fraud (crime) seems to pay better than operating within the electoral laws.

Summarily, therefore, as the leadership process is defective, the leadership structure and expression will invariably be defective. Hence, the first step to the solution for the leadership question in Nigeria is undoubtedly, a fraud-free electoral process.

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