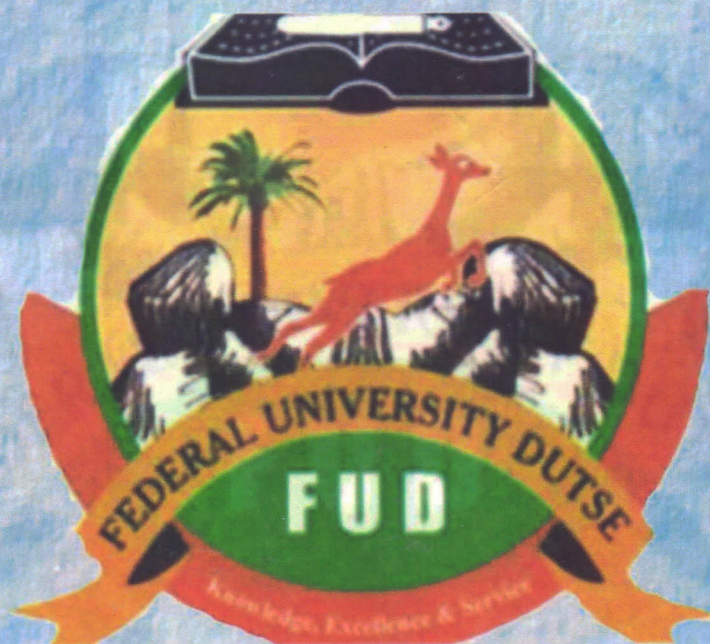


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The Jigawa Journal of Politics (JJP), a biannual peer review publication of the Department of Political Science, Federal University Dutse. The journal contains well-researched article written from a political Science perspective or show relevance to contemporary politics in Nigeria, Africa and the entire globe.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Internal Security Management and the Nigerian Military: Issues and Challenges in the Fourth Republic.

Ekpo, Barnabas David, Odey, Samuel Odey and Inameti Udoh,1

Corruption and the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: A Challenge for Poverty Reduction

Abdullahi Lawal Dangiwa and Hassan Abdulazeez17

Electoral Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria: An Analysis of 2019 General Elections in Kano State

Ahmed Rufa'i Usman27

Nigeria-UNDP Collaboration for Public Institution's Capacity Development: An Evaluation of the Fourth Republic

Anuga Joseph, Shuaibu Ibrahim and Adadu Yahaya41

An Assessment of Impediments to Local Government Administration and Service Delivery in Kwara State

Bamidele, Joseph Adekunle61

The Implications of Vote Buying on Government Legitimacy: An Insight from the Ekiti State 2018 Gubernatorial Election

Abubakar Abdulrahman74

Assessment of the Effectiveness and Challenges facing the Whistle Blowing Policy on the Fight Against Corruption in the Public Sector in Ilorin East LGA, Kwara State.

Ibrahim Bornoma, and Ajibade Abayomi Abdulkadir91

An Assessment of the Role of Vigilante Groups in the Management of Insecurity in Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, North Western Nigeria

Aliyu Tanko Ahmed and Suleiman Aisha Halliru106

An Appraisal of Kanem-Bornu Pre-colonial Diplomatic Relations with the Maghreb and Ottoman Empire, 1553-1603

Hamisu Sani Ali and Abdulmajeed Aminu Mahmoud122

Assessment of Performance of State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in Emergencies in Yobe North Senatorial District 2014-2017

Ahmed Buba, Yakubu Haruna Ja'e and Hussaini Ibrahim135

The Implications of Boko Haram Insurgency on Democratic Governance in Tarauni Local Government, Kano State, Nigeria

Usman Suleiman Sarki, Mansur Ya'u and Aliyu Dalhatu Adamu149

Electoral Violence and the Prospects of Peaceful 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

✓ Abubakar Abdulrahman, Zekeri Momoh and Hassan, Adijat Kuburat159

Sustainable Development for National Strategy as a Factor for Socio - Economic Growth and Development

Maina Mackson Abga175

Electoral Violence and the Prospects of Peaceful 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

In an ideal situation, elections ought not to be characterized by conflicts and violence if the actors were genuinely seeking power for the common good. The increase in electoral violence at every turn of election in Nigeria has been alarming and has raised concern over the country's ability to conduct peaceful general elections devoid of electoral violence in 2019. This study seeks to identify the various drivers of electoral violence in Nigeria. Secondly, is to explore the prospects of conducting peaceful 2019 general elections owing to the increasing rate of electoral violence. This study is situated within the mixed method of research, drawing from both qualitative and quantitative design. The data for this study were drawn largely from secondary sources including books, journals, EU official publications, newspapers and other internet sources. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis together with quantities tools such as graphs analysis. This study identified saliency of communal identities in politics and communal tensions, decline in trust and social capital among communities, culture of impunity, economic vulnerabilities, institutional and behavioural issues such as erosion of trust in the electoral justice system, and lack of internal democracy in political parties in Nigeria as drivers of electoral violence in past Nigeria's general elections. Moreover, this study further revealed achieving peaceful 2019 general elections in Nigeria will require the concerted efforts of all the election stakeholders in abiding by the rules of the game.

Keywords: Electoral violence, Political parties, INEC, Security agencies, 2019 general elections, Peace.

Introduction

Elections represent an important pillar of democracy in any democratic system. Besides, evidence from the United Nations has shown that on a global scale that one in every five elections experiences some measure of violence and this makes security in the electoral process an imperative especially in Africa (USAID 2013). Moreover, of 387 elections conducted in the developing countries, approximately twenty percent of the elections were flawed, signifying that irregularities were on a high scale such that opposition political parties boycotted or refused to accept the outcome of the electoral result. Also, about sixty percent of the flawed elections are in Africa and those administrative constraints and in some instances, blatant fraud, were the cause (Momoh 2017).

In addition, studies have shown that between 19 and 25 percent of elections in Africa are marred by electoral violence. Also, after reviewing elections in Sub-Saharan Africa, 33 of the elections the major opposition parties rejected the electoral results immediately. These were: Benin (1996 and 2001); Cameroon (1992, 1997, and 2004); Ethiopia (1995, 2000, 2005); Ghana (1992); Guinea (1993, 1998, 2003); Kenya (1992 and 1997); Madagascar (1996 and 2001); Malawi (1999 and 2004); Mali (1997 and 2002); Mauritania (1992, 1997, 2003); Mozambique, (1994, 1999, and 2004); Seychelles (2001); Togo (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005); and Zambia (1996 and 2001). Moreover, out of these 33 cases, in 25 instances the losers challenged the results in court. These are: Benin (1996 and 2001); Cameroon (1992, 2004); Cape Verde (2001); Ethiopia (2005); Guinea (1993); Kenya (1992, 1997); Madagascar (2001); Malawi (1999, 2004); Mali (1997, 2002); Mozambique (1999, 2004); Namibia (1994); South Africa (2004); Seychelles (2001); Togo (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005); and Zambia (1996, 2001). Only in rare instances (Mali 1977, Benin 1996, Madagascar 2001) opposition parties' legal appeals won favorable court rulings (Manninig 2005; Teshome 2009; Momoh 2018).

However, only in one case (Madagascar 2001) the election result was wholly overturned by the court. In 25 cases protests occurred following the elections. These were in: Cameroon (1992, 1997); Ethiopia (2005); Ghana (1992); Guinea (1993, 1998); Kenya (1992, 1997); Madagascar (1996, 2001); Malawi (1999, 2004); Mali (1997, 2002); Mauritania (1992, 1997, 2003); Mozambique (1999); Togo (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005); and Zambia (1996, 2001) (Teshome 2009; Momoh 2018).

Nevertheless, electoral violence is becoming a common phenomenon that characterized most elections in Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, under the fourth republic electoral violence has become one of the enduring patterns in its electoral system. Over the years, election have been problematic in Nigeria arising from what is at stake politically and economically as derivable benefits including dividends and privileges of political office holding. All this, therefore, makes elections to assume war-like and zero-sum dimensions among politicians in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2006).

Though, the history of elections in Nigeria has not shown that the masses can look forward to them as a significant force in changing the material conditions of their existence. During most of these elections in Nigeria moral values of the country were also corrupted by the blatant disregard of cherished rules, norms and regulations by politicians who want to win election at all costs. Under such conditions most Nigerian politicians regard elections as warfare, in which the all is fair that brings victory, pervasive indiscipline is inescapable and clarion call for ethical revolution can only fall on deaf ears (Nnoli 2003).

Experiences from elections conducted in Nigeria since 1999 has not led to the institutionalisation of formal rules, and uncertainty of rules is witnessed, especially before and during most elections. A bird's eye view of democratic experiences in Nigeria suggests that, institutional reforms have frequently failed to produce influential 'watchdogs' and counter-forces against state malpractice, corruption and electoral violence as assumed in democratic theory (Momoh 2017).

On the whole, in the literature considerable numbers of studies have been conducted on electoral violence and election related security challenges such as Ochoche (1997); Nwolise (2007); Matlosa, Shale, and Motsamai (2010); Jinadu (2011); Maitambari (2011); Fischer, (2002); Akhakpe (2012); Adekunle (2012); Babatude (2012); Orji, and Uzodi (2012); USAID (2013); UNDP (2009); and Yoroms (2015) in Nigeria. However, these studies do not assess the prospects of conducting a peaceful 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to make significant contributions in this endeavour.

Theoretical Perspectives on Electoral Violence

Scholars have developed a number of theories to explain the motivations for electoral violence in any political system. One of such theories is hypothesis of relative deprivation which postulates that there is a discrepancy between what one gets and what one should get (based on what is given one's counterpart(s)). Another theory worthy of note is the hypothesis of revolution of rising expectation which states that when the hope of people are dashed or when people failed to achieve a promise they subscribe to electoral violence (Momoh 2013).

Also, we have the group conflict theory which views the cause of electoral violence as concomitant of the struggle for power within and among the various political parties in an election remains inadequate in explaining the nature of electoral violence in Nigeria. Yoroms, (2015) asserts that within physio-psychological context we can establish that all violence; and especially political violence (electoral violence inclusive) are traceable to relative deprivation as gaps are created between expectations and capabilities (i.e. the lack of capabilities to meet the rising expectations). This then creates frustration that swells up to anger. When the anger reaches a threshold of intolerability it burst into aggression and subsequently into electoral violence.

On the whole, this study is situated within the context of the frustration-aggression theory which states that individual or group subscribe to electoral violence as a result of failure to realize their objectives using legitimate means of the state. In addition when an individual's basic objectives are thwarted would experience profound sense of dissatisfaction and therefore, prone to react to the condition by directing aggressive behaviour at what he/she perceived as being responsible for the thwarting those objectives, or at a substitute (Oladipo 1996). Momoh (2013) asserts that the frustration-aggression theory best explains the actions of most Nigerian. He argued that most politicians who lost during elections often express their grievances through the act of violence because they do not trust the Nigerian judicial system. He added that the electoral violence witnessed during the 2011 general elections, make frustrated Nigerians to subscribe to electoral violence as a way of expressing their grievances.

Conceptual Discourse: Electoral Violence

Electoral violence is a component of political violence which is broader in perspective, encompassing or relating to violence that is political (Yoroms 2015). Besides, Electoral violence as an aspect of political violence is specifically referred to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to impending electoral contest or to announced electoral results (USAID 2013). Lapalombara (1974:383) define electoral violence as "all acts of violence associated with the conduct of elections for public office qualify very highly as violent politics. Such acts encompass violence that occurs after the results of an election are made public". Similarly, Yorom (2015) posit that electoral violence has to do with violence that take place during elections in fragile democracy resulting from the failure to meet the rising expectation of the electorates.

Again, Momoh (2013) sees electoral violence as election motivated violence that involve the use of threat or use of physical act by an individual or group of person against another person (s) and /or property, aimed at unleashing injury or death to person (s) and/or damage to property with electoral undertone or a way of expressing dissatisfaction of the electoral processes or outcome of an election result. However, Ochoche (1997:15) states that "any attempt at any stage of the electoral process to corrupt, influence or determine the outcome of an election beyond what it would have been objectively, does damage to the election and could be said to amount to electoral violence".

In addition, Fischer (2002:8) defines electoral violence as "any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced 'protection', blackmail, destruction of property or assassination'. In the same vein, Ujo (2000) assert that electoral violence are perpetrated in the course of political activities including pre, during and post-election periods, and may include any of the following thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes.

Furthermore, Orji, and Uzodi (2012) identified three key elements from the above definition of electoral violence are worthy to note. The first is that like any other form of violence, electoral violence manifests in physical forms (kidnapping, killing, and destruction of property) and non-physical forms (threats, intimidation and blackmail). Secondly, the main goal of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process, either by changing the outcome of elections or by disrupting the electoral process. Thirdly, electoral violence can occur at different periods in the election cycle; that is, before, during, or after election.

Finally, electoral violence is violence that is elections related. It represents a segment of politically motivated violence. Electoral violence can occur before, during and after any given election or within a given election circle. The target of electoral violence can be people, places, data, or things. In an attempt to influence the electoral process, perpetrators of electoral violence may attempt to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll and determine the winners of competitive races for political office (UNDP 2009). It is against this background that we shall adopt the definition of electoral violence provided by Momoh (2013) as our working definition in this study.

Historical Overview of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

a. Electoral Violence in the Nigerian First Republic

The origin of electoral violence as observed by Nwolise (2007) can be traced to the 1954 Macpherson constitution that confirmed the regionalism introduced by the 1946 Richard's constitution as the basis for governing Nigeria as a federal system. He added that the equation of key ethnic boundaries to marched regional boundaries (North for Hausa/Fulani, West for Yoruba and East for Igbo) set the stage for violent electoral battles among the three ethnic groups.

The first post-independence election organized by that government led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa/President Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1964 and 1965 were characterized by widespread complaints of fraud, violence and intimidation (Osaghae 1998; Obakhedo 2011). Also, the 1964/65 elections was ridden with various degrees of electoral violence ranging from assassination, maiming etc. which provided the platform for military intervention in Nigeria politics by 1966. Moreover, protest in the wake of the regional elections, which in some places in Nigeria degenerated into a violent exercise in competitive rigging, led to widespread violence and inter-communal rioting that claimed more than 200 lives (Anifowose 1982; Obakhedo 2011).

b. Electoral Violence in the Nigerian Second Republic

The Second Republic also had its share of electoral violence especially during the conduct of the 1979 and 1983 general elections. The Shagari-led government organized the first civilian to civilian transition election in 1983 but again like the 1959 general elections that ushered in the First Republic witnessed a repeated incidence of massively electoral fraud in the 1983 general elections which resulted to

electoral violence as the electoral umpire (Federal Election Commission (FEDECO) and security forces are seen as been biased in favour of the ruling party.

Though, the intensity arguably is minimal when compared to the 2011 post-election violence in many states in the northern part of Nigeria. The Second Republic was not devoid of various degrees of electoral violence such that Politicians on their campaign tours were accompanied by a vehicle full of thugs brandishing their weapons and singing war tone songs to intimidate political opponents in the words of Momoh (2013) "if the opportunity avail itself may kill or maim anybody with opposing view who crosses their part". However, Nwolise (2007:164) rightly observed that there was minimal electoral violence in the 1979 general elections when compared to the 1983 general elections in which there were wide spread of electoral violence which was widely criticized because violence persisted before, during and after the election. This position was shared by Adebisi (2014) who asserts that there was evidence of electoral violence in the second republic.

c. Electoral Violence in the Nigerian Third Republic

The Third Republic witnessed little cases of electoral violence which arguably was insignificant when compared to the electoral violence witnessed during the first and second republic election was arguably one of the best election conducted in the post-independent history of Nigeria as it can be argued that the election represented to a large extent the wishes of most Nigerians. It is pertinent to states here that the annulment of the June 12, 1993 general elections resulted in massive protested that cumulated into post-election violence across major cities in Nigeria especially in Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta amongst others.

Moreover, despite that the third republic was short leaved by the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election. This singular act unleashed a spate of violence-demonstrations, looting and industrial strikes that nearly divided the country (Ehindero 2007). However, one feature that characterized the Third Republic was that it political space was dominated by military for thirteen years which ushered in a period of ban on political parties and other democratic institutions.

d. Electoral Violence in the Nigerian Fourth Republic

The return of the country to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 has witnessed another dimension of electoral violence such that EU Report (2003) states that the 2003 general elections "were more peaceful than expected, to which the deployment of the Military and additional government security forces contributed. However, there were a number of serious incidents resulting in death. The EU EOM recorded 105 election-related deaths". The 2003 general elections witnessed the death of 105 persons who were reportedly killed on various occasions through violence related to the elections. Violent events were witnessed in Warri, Delta State, though, did not affect the election process, but were not directly election related. EU EOM, (2003) states that before the 12 April election, reports of electoral related violence were minimal in most areas.

However, the assassination of Harry Marshal of the ANPP was believed by many to be politically motivated. It further states that during all election days, political thugs were used to intimidate voters and/or INEC officials. These acts often turned violent resulting in death to voters or officials. Burning of INEC vehicles and buildings occurred predominately during the days following an election, by disgruntled youths. The majorities of the perpetrators were not apprehended nor was their party affiliation known.

EU EOM Report (2007) made similar submission on the 2007 general election that "The continuing and widespread use of thugs by a number of political parties created a significant degree of fear and intimidation. Despite welcomed and repeated messages from security agencies showing a tolerance zero policy towards political violence, the security agencies, INEC and political parties did not appear to take decisive steps to address the situation and hold perpetrators to account. Electoral violence was a major issue of concern throughout the election process. While in some states peaceful campaign activities were observed, 49 incidents of violence increased as the elections drew nearer. Overall, credible reports, including from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and international and domestic media indicate that at least 200 people, including police, were killed in election-related violence. This is a higher number than was reported for the 2003 elections and is unacceptable with respect to the fundamental right to life and the democratic process (EU EOM 2007).

The EU EOM report 2011 states that there were clashes among parties supporters and attacks at campaign events, such as on 3 March the explosions at a PDP rally in Niger State when ten people were killed and 20 others injured. Despite the explosion of a bomb on 8 April at the INEC office in Suleja, Niger State that killed eleven people. After the Presidential elections on 18 April, violence erupted in the North and in the Middle-Belt of the country including Kano, Kaduna, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa and Taraba States, probably triggered by the perception of the presidential results. Protesters burnt places of religious worship, public buildings and the houses of politicians from the ruling PDP and religious leaders considered to be related to the party, targeted INEC buildings and its personnel, including the NYSC members serving as INEC ad hoc staff and in Bauchi State ten of them were killed in a gruesome manner.

Also the palace of the Sultan of Sokoto, the highest Muslim authority in Nigeria was attacked. Protesters clashed with the security forces. All in total hundreds of persons were murdered and tens of thousands were displaced. The authorities imposed a curfew in the affected States until heavy military presence restored order in the following days. In the afternoon of 21 April, INEC Chairman Prof. Jega announced that due to the security situation, the gubernatorial elections in Bauchi and Kaduna States were postponed from 26 to 28 April (EU Election report 2011).

The campaign environment during the 2011 general elections was extremely tense, with increasing violent incidents occurring across all parts of the country, especially in

the South-South and South-West. Since the official launch of the presidential campaigns in early January the EU EOM noted reports 2011 states that of 114 election-related violent events with more than 157 persons killed, although the actual number of incidents and casualties is likely higher. Both PDP and APC were accused of deploying thugs to intimidate opponents and attack party rallies, convoys, members and offices. Armed attacks increased, especially in Rivers, Lagos and Kaduna states. Anxieties related to the resurgence of militant groups in the Niger Delta were amplified by intensified bomb attacks and shootings, especially in Rivers state. For example the shooting at vehicles conveying APC supporters to the inaugural presidential rally in Port Harcourt on 6 January and the multiple bomb explosions and shootings at the APC campaign rally in Okirika on 18 February.

The National Human Rights Commission report on pre-election violence identified 60 incidents and 58 people killed over a 50 day period from December 2014. There have been reports of at least 56 cases of shootings at rallies and convoys, polling units and voters; 19 cases of stoning/mob attacks on campaign convoys; 7 cases of bomb explosions at party offices; and 16 cases of destruction of vehicles, bill boards and other properties of parties. For example the shooting at vehicles conveying APC supporters to the inaugural presidential rally in Port Harcourt on 6 January and the multiple bomb explosions and shootings at the APC campaign rally in Okirika on 18 February (EU EOM 2015).

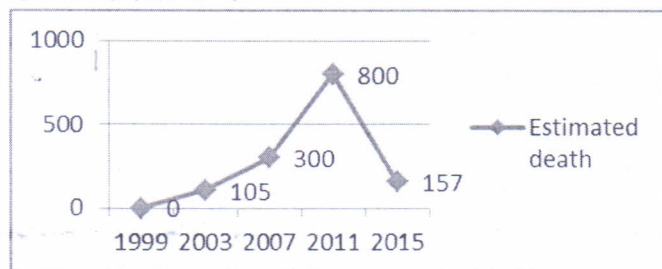
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EU report, (2015) states that: *“INEC reported at least 26 violent incidents involving its staff, property and premises on 28 March and 96 on 11 April. Furthermore the REC for Benue state and Returning Officer for Abia North senatorial district reportedly received threats related to their work as electoral officials”* (EU 2015:14)

By and large, the EU Election report 2015 states that “On 7 February 2015 INEC postponed the elections scheduled for 14 and 28 February by six weeks. This followed the National Security Advisor and all the Armed Services and Intelligence Chiefs stating that they could not guarantee security for the proposed election days as six weeks was needed to conclude military operations against Boko Haram and on 28 March Election Day over 19 killings were reported. Generally the process may be characterized as disordered and prolonged”. A critical assessment of the dimensions of electoral violence in Nigeria since the 2011 general elections shows that if nothing is

done to term the tide of increasing electoral violence in Nigeria, the conduct of peaceful 2019 general elections will be problematic. It is against this backdrop that we will examine the prospects of conducting a peaceful 2019 general elections in Nigeria devoid of electoral violence.

Trend of EU reports of recorded Electoral related death in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria



Source: (Compiled by the Authors with data obtained from Thurston, 2015; EU EOM report, 2015)

Figure 1 above shows that estimated elections related death figure were not available as at 1999, in 2003 an estimated 105 deaths were record. In 2007 the death toll increased to 300. By 2011 the death toll had reached 800 deaths and in 2015 there was a decline in election related death to over 157 deaths.

On the whole, a close look at the chat above shows that there was a reduction in the level of recorded cases of electoral related violence owing to the fact that all the political parties that contested in the 2015 general elections signed the Peace Accord. The respective political parties were careful to some extent on how they conduct themselves.

Drivers of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The conduct of peaceful general elections in Nigeria devoid of various forms of electoral irregularities that have resulted to electoral violence of diverse intensity have been the concern of election stakeholders and the international community in recent years. This because any time Nigeria intends to conduct elections the fear of what may be the outcome in terms of violence is becoming worrisome. However, some of the driving forces of electoral violence in Nigeria especially since the return of the country to democratic rule include saliency of communal identities in politics and communal tensions, decline in trust and social capital among communities, culture of impunity, economic vulnerabilities, institutional and behavioural issues such as erosion of trust in the electoral justice system, and lack of internal democracy in political parties (Orji, and Uzodi 2012:13-16).

Another major cause of electoral violence in Nigeria has to do with the process of conducting election which in most cases is characterized by one form of electoral malpractices such as blatant rigging, open vote buying, hate speeches and assassination amongst others (Momoh 2013). This has discouraged a lot of Nigerians especially women and marginalized groups in participating in politics since the emergence of the fourth republic as they perceive politics as a theatre of war and an activity that is meant for the powerful. Besides, the growing rate of electoral violence has remained one of the contributing factors to voters' apathy in most elections in Nigeria.

Moreover, Nnoli (2003) posits that the history of elections in Nigeria has not shown that the masses can look forward to them as a significant force in changing the material conditions of their existence. During these elections moral values of the country were also corrupted by the blatant disregard of cherished rules, norms and regulations by politicians obsessed with winning power at all costs. Under conditions in which the politicians regard elections as warfare, in which the all is fair that brings victory, pervasive indiscipline is inescapable and clarion call for ethical revolution can only fall on deaf ears.

The use of inflammatory language and hate speeches are increasingly used in most campaigns in Nigeria. This has constituted another driver of electoral violence in Nigeria. Most dramatically the former First Lady, Patience Jonathan, stated that anyone who says "*change*", the campaign slogan of the opposition APC, should be stoned. Rally in Calabar, 4 March, captured in a video (available on YouTube). APC filed a complaint against Patience Jonathan with INEC, the police and the International Criminal Court. The threats were made at a meeting hosted by the PDP Governor of Bayelsa on 23 January. Also, on 5 April, the Oba of Lagos (the highest traditional ruler in the state) threatened Igbo residents in the state that they would "*die in the Lagoon*" if they again voted for PDP. Party leaderships may be seen as negligent in its lack of reaction to such inflammatory speech. There was also an increase in the use of religious, ethnic and sectional sentiments and appeals in the campaign in Nigeria accusing the other of dividing the nation on religious grounds (EU EOM 2015:21).

Again, there were several so-called "*death threat*" advertisements by the PDP Ekiti state Governor against the APC presidential candidate Buhari, insinuating he would die while in office if elected. On 1 April, former Niger Delta militant leader, Asari-Dokubo, threatened to return to militancy as the South-South if President Jonathan lost the 2015 presidential election. Ex-militant leaders from the Niger Delta threatened war and the breakup of the nation should PDP not win the elections (EU EOM 2015:21). Though, the Abuja Accord commits candidates and parties to refrain from inflammatory language hate speech, religious incitement, and ethnic or tribal profiling but the enforcement of the accord signed by political parties arguably has little or no effect in some respect.

Besides, poor management of the conduct of elections have also been identified as one of the drivers of electoral violence. For instance, most elections conducted in Nigeria especially since 2003 till date are marred by very poor organization, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, substantial evidence of fraud, widespread voter disenfranchisement at different stages of the process, lack of equal conditions for political parties and candidates and numerous incidents of violence among others which violate critical sections of human rights due to the pervasive state of electoral irregularities that characterized each election. Jega (2005) asserts that the aspirations of Nigerians for stable democracy have been constantly frustrated by among other things, poor administration and the conduct of elections.

In Nigeria, elections have always been hotly contested under party politics that is intemperate and violence-ridden (Akhape 2012, Adekunle 2012). Election has also been associated with political tensions, crisis and violence (Babatunde 2011).

By and large, the implications of electoral violence on the conduct of peaceful elections in Nigeria have been adequately captured by Adebisi (2014) who asserts that one of the disheartening history of Nigeria's electoral process and the nature of violence that accompanied it has far reaching effects on the democratization process, governance and national security. Similarly, Iyayi (2007) asserts that the implication of electoral irregularities in Nigeria is such that elections mind-set is not only largely negative, they are also largely irrational and it has been responsible for electoral violence and rigging in most elections in Nigeria. Nevertheless, scholars on elections studies have further argued that there is a need to identify the causes, types, and manifestations of election violence to enable stakeholders develop a 'strategic design of prevention and management programmes that can forestall recurrence' (Matlosa, Shale, & Motsamai 2010: 7).

Prospects of Peaceful 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

Over the years studies have shown that one of the most difficult yet important stages in the political development of any country is to achieve peaceful transfer of political power from one group to another (Lapalombara 1974). This is because over the years most transfer of political power from one group to another especially in Africa has been characterized by one form of electoral violence or the other.

Therefore, for Nigeria to have peaceful 2019 general elections devoid of any form of electoral violence, all election stakeholders are expected to work harmoniously in making it possible. Moreover, the prospect of Nigerian politicians tilling towards the same line in the forthcoming 2019 general elections is very visible because of lack of sufficient political will to implement Nigerians electoral laws. What is common from the history of the various elections conducted in Nigeria since 1959 is that Nigeria politicians have not imbibed the appropriate political culture that will ensure the political stability of the Nigeria. This is evident in the growing level of hate speeches by both the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC).

Therefore, it can be said here that enforcement of various electoral laws that discourage electoral violence is key to having a peaceful 2019 general elections.

Secondly, the respective political parties especially the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) should learn to accept defeat especially when it becomes clear that they lost in an election. In Nigeria today, it has become a common attitude amongst political parties not to accept defeat even when they lost out rightly but to engage in insignificant litigations that are capable of distracting the political process or may also engage in subversive activities or openly call for a military coup as was the case during the 1983 elections.

Thirdly, the capacity and willingness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies in Nigeria to allow for free and free elections in 2019 have been questioned in some quota. This is because of the influence of the ruling party on them. Also, growing tensions amongst the political class, ethnic groups and within political parties are frightening as the political tension in the country have heighten drawing our inferences from the political atmosphere of the country before the 2011 and 2015 general elections in which there are emergence and re-emergence of various ethnic militias calling for the disintegration of the country like the Niger Delta Avengers and Independent People of Biafra amongst others. Thus, the emergence and re-emergence of these groups have been attributed to the increasing levels of political marginalization that characterised the country since independence.

Furthermore, achieving a peaceful 2019 general elections requires the concerted efforts of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in engaging key political stakeholders like political parties on the need to accept the electoral outcomes especially when it reflect the wishes of Nigerians. However, there has been relative focus of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at the state and local government levels when it comes to civil engagement in Nigeria. Therefore there is the need for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to refocus their activities at the grass root level. Moreover, there is the need to improve the capacity development of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at the state and local government level rather than concentrated their capacity development supports at the national level. This has resulted to the marginalisation of state based civil society organisation which plays a vital role to play in demanding for accountability from political parties, elected officials, the media at the state level (Abubakar, Momoh, Omotayo & Isiaq 2015).

In addition, the media the have also been engaging in a number of political enlightenment programmes before, during and after the 2011 and 2015 general elections on the dangers of electoral violence. Momoh (2019) rightly observe that the media have set the centre stage for political debate amongst political aspirants under the platform of various political parties since the 2015 general elections and the momentum is hitherto sustained during the 2019 general elections where Nigerians were given the opportunity to engage the various aspirants on the need to discourage

aspirants from engaging in any forms of violence rather they should seek redress from the court.

Lastly, punishing of electoral offenders by the judiciary is central to curbing electoral violence in Nigeria (Momoh 2003). Over the years the inability of the judiciary to punish electoral offenders in line with the various electoral laws has not discouraged perpetrators. This explains while some Nigerians will result to violence when every legal avenue to address their grievances failed. To this end, the judiciary should rise to the challenge that every electoral offenders must be punished no matter how highly place they may be in the society. It is against this backdrop that we intends to proffer workable solutions that will help curb the increasing trend of electoral violence in most elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The dimensions and intensity of electoral violence that accompanied most elections conducted under current fourth republic have posed serious threat to the country's quest for consolidated democracy. From the above analysis, we have identified the drivers of electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic such as overbearing influence of ethnic-politics on current democratic process, culture of impunity, winner take all politics, institutional and behavioural issues such as erosion of trust in the electoral justice system, and lack of internal democracy in political parties. Also, we have assess the prospects of conducting peaceful 2019 general elections bearing in mind the roles of various election stakeholders such as INEC, political elites, judiciary, CSOs, Judiciary, media and political parties. It is against this backdrop that we shall make suggestions on ways of curbing the increasing tide of electoral violence that has characterised most elections in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Recommendations

Firstly, the INEC should send a bill to the National Assembly that will accord stiffer penalties for sponsors and perpetrators of electoral violence. This will among other things encourage the spread of information that will unite the country and discourage the ones that will disintegrate the country.

Secondly, INEC should deregister any political party found guilty of electoral violence and its members charged to court to serve maximum jail them of 10 years or a fine of NGN 50 million or both. This will amongst other things serve as deterrence to anybody or political party that will want to engage in any form of electoral violence.

Thirdly, the National Assembly should pass a bill that will establish the Electoral Offences Court. The purpose of this court will among other things punishes electoral offenders and help in addressing the slow administration of justices that is associated with the conventional court system.

Moreover, the mass media should strengthen its existing enlightenment campaign across the country to rural areas on the dangers of electoral violence on the unity and political stability of the country.

In addition, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other election stakeholders should help in developing internal mechanisms that will strengthen internal democracy within the political parties in Nigeria.

Lastly, CSOs should among other things provide regular training for political parties and other election stakeholders on the early warning signs and the dangers of electoral violence on Nigeria's quest for political stability.

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