

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This paper primarily appraised the implications of electoral violence for national security in Nigeria. After a comprehensive evaluation of relevant data gathered in this study through secondary source, our findings revealed that electoral violence is real in Nigeria and such violence is a primary source of socio-economic and political instability in the country. Electoral violence in Nigeria is caused by many factors which are largely political and economic in nature. The study revealed further two broad dimensions of electoral violence which are physical and psychological in nature. The physical dimensions of electoral violence include physical assault, arson and destruction of lives and properties while the psychological dimension of electoral violence include emotional trauma from physical assault, constant feeling of political insecurity, emotional pains, unforgiving spirit by the affected persons for those who were responsible for the violence. Such psychological torture makes post-election conflict reconciliation and resolution very difficult to achieve. Electoral violence equally negates peaceful coexistence, law and order amongst the populace and militates against the consolidation of democracy. Electoral violence in Nigeria has thus generated democratic deficits rather than dividends under a largely unsecured political environment. The paper recommends legal and institutional reforms, and attitudinal transformation of the character of political actors in Nigeria to bring credibility to the electoral process in the country.

Keywords: Electoral Violence; Military; National Security; Political Parties

Introduction

In Nigeria, just like most other parts of the world, the conduct of election constitutes one of the vital pillars of representative democracy. First, election serves as the primary means of making political choices and a credible avenue for determining the winners and the losers between two or more amongst many contestants. As noted by Williams (1999), the freedom to choose leaders in an open political contest which allow the participating political parties to sell their manifestoes to attract popular votes is what distinguishes democracy from dictatorship. Election equally serves as a platform through which political leaders are held accountable for their stewardship by retaining and rejecting good and bad government respectively. Apart from serving as a formal expression of people's preference for a particular government or candidates which are then aggregated and transformed into a collective decision about who will govern or who will not, election symbolizes popular sovereignty and the expression of the opinion of the people as a social contract pact between the state and the people who are the ultimate decider of who holds political authority. While there is general understandings that election alone does not make democracy work optimally, multi-party elections are necessary pillars of

representative government and political stability in every country that embraces functional democracy.

In spite of the centrality of elections to the stability of democratic governance in Nigeria, the country's democratic experiences have always floundered over the failure of the electoral commission to organize credible, free and fair elections in most instances thus leading to electoral violence in Nigeria. The history of electoral security implications. In since independence is largely dotted with violence and negative security implications or many instances, flawed or failed elections have either precipitated political disputes or aggravated simmering tension into an outburst of conflict that undermines national security. Apart from indirectly leading to the Nigeria civil war between 1967 and 1970, electoral violence has led to lost of many lives and property while societies are further polarized in a way that often reverse fragile democratic consolidation as witnessed in the 1965, 1983, 1993, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria (Raji,2011). For instance, there were official figure of 16,000 deaths from disputed elections in Nigeria between 1965 and 2011(Election Watch, 2011).

Intense and long drawn disputes over the electoral process and election outcomes in Nigeria raise questions about the legitimacy of the winning parties and their candidates. In some instances, throughout the duration of their terms in office, there is delay in the resolution of legal disputes on such controversial elections which sometimes extends beyond the tenure of such disputed government. Apart from receding the confidence of the voters in the electoral process and multi-party democracy, electoral violence by extension have been documented to have led to other forms of violence which are largely rooted in ethno-religious conflicts that have unleashed varying degrees of violence on the polity and the populace thus undermining the national security. Electoral violence in Nigeria are equally characterized by political warfare in which almost all the parties involved, out of sheer desperation to win, bring forth their capacity for destruction sometimes to the level of parity of balance of terror (Egwu, 2002). Apart from its negative security implications, electoral violence often leads to political instability directly or indirectly.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The incidence of electoral violence has become an issue that has engaged the attention of many scholars, who in their writings have noted the nature, dimensions and causes of such negative tendency in Nigeria's political environment. As noted by Kurfi (1983), the conduct of elections in particular and electoral administration in general derives their relevance from the theory of representative democracy as direct democracy does not require election of representatives. However, owing to growing population in the modern society, it has become very difficult (if not totally impossible) to involve every citizens in governance unlike what obtained in the ancient Greek city states of the early century. Under the representative democracy, the people are governed indirectly through their representatives who are periodically elected. In spite of the relevance of election to democratic sustainability, the process of electoral administration in Nigeria has generated a lot of controversies and complications which frequently leads to violence. Giving reasons why electoral contest often lead to violence in Nigeria, Ake (1995) linked the problem to the perception of the state power by the political elites as an end in itself

rather than being a means to an end because the control of such power has been used by many unapologetic political elites to amass state wealth for personal gains through Prebendalist politics or politics of patrimonialism. Such political environment of Privatized and commercialized politics is characterized by politics of patronage rather than politics of service under a zero-sum political dividends outcome, where the winners win everything and the lose loses all without being proportionally represented or compensated in government. As posited by Ake (1995), every one seeks Prebendalist political power by every means, legal or otherwise and those who control power try to keep it by every means. The ensuring political competition under such unhealthy political exploitation is often reduced to violent through "a do-or-die" competitive strategy. Contributing further to the causes of electoral violence, the author under reference identified the correlation between electoral violence, political goals and level of financial investment in the electoral process. As opined by the author, the extent to which violence is introduced to the electoral process depends on the premium that a political actor placed on his political career and his political goals which in turn influence his propensity to invest in his political career leading ultimately to intense political competition. The political actor's total resources that he is willing to invest to capture power at all, less, or no costs is largely linked to these levels of political and investments propensities. Where the propensity for political ambition is very high, many political actors, in order not to lose such elections which is often funded through their live savings and sometimes through loans from other sources tend to prefer efficiency norms (whether normal or abnormal) to legitimacy or legal norms in order to realize their political goals. The desperate political actors are thus more inclined to do whatever means that will make them realize their goals of winning elections rather than doing what is legal and legitimate and be defeated, a move which the opposition frequently counters in many cases through violence. Perhaps in tactics support of Ake's position, Alemeka (2011) posits that the Nigeria's electoral process and governance system largely rests on the logic and practices of organized criminal enterprise which employs unholy secrecy, corruption, coercion, cooptation and violence to defend personal and group political aspirations to achieve their inordinate political ambitions at all cost. Madu, (2002) posits that electoral violence is caused by the frustrations of the larger percentage of the exploited Nigerians who have been marginalized in the power struggle with the manner political appointment are eschewed in favour of those within the power equation while leaving vast majority in poverty. Electoral violence has thus been employed as a means of settling issues and registering of people's frustrations to the government because they believed that violence is the only way to attract attention to such economic and political marginalization.

Williams (1999) linked electoral violence in Nigeria to the dissonance connection between critical but unreliable, manipulative and partial electoral structures and non-credible electoral processes which prevents transparent processes that are needed to generate free and fair elections. As noted by the author, the Electoral Commission (EC) and other public institutions: police, judiciary, news media and national orientation agencies, amongst others that are charged with the conduct of elections have been largely politicized and stage-managed, especially in favour of the parties in power which appointed them. Such political environment of partial umpires has made many electorates

to lose faith in the electoral structures, processes and justice administration leading to disputed results and electoral violence. Peter (2008) discussed the correlation between elections and democratic sustainability in Nigeria believing that electoral violence which snowballs into legitimacy crisis is one of the major impediments of an enduring democracy in Nigeria and other developing states. The author opined further that sustainable democracy subsists where there is a strong party system which manifest when competing parties obey the tenet of internal and external democratic values and electoral rules by putting in place credible internal electoral process for party primaries and popular elections. The author's line of argument is that most political parties that exist in Nigeria's democratic space are often hijacked by political "godfathers" or power fixers who manipulate the sentiment of the masses for their selfish interest (of acquiring personal and selective group economic accumulation and political influence far above genuine services to the people). Such discrete economic accumulation and manipulations in favour of selected cronies has been known to have generated poverty and intense frustration and then aggression which are directed by the affected persons to cause political instability through electoral violence. Raji (2010) identified electoral violence as a natural part of political process. Since election is competitive in nature, it thus has major characteristic traits of low level conflict. First, election is characterized by incompatible goals amongst the contestants because they are all interested in an office for which only one of them can occupy at a time. The electoral contest is also characterized by disagreement (another major hallmark of conflict) because there is no consensus amongst the contestants on who should step down for the other. Election, even where transparently conducted is characterized by other major characteristics of conflict bordering on apprehension and tension amongst the contestants and their supporters, especially before the result is announced on who the winner and the loser will be. The beginning of election therefore signals a clash of interest and political bidding which only one party can win. The characteristics trait of low level conflict in every election clearly justifies the position that violence, which is an advanced form of conflict, is inherent and intertwined with any electoral process. A little push and slight mismanagement of the process would naturally aggravate such process into violence. What often tone down such potential violence is the transparency of the system, adequacy of the legal framework, the civility and patriotism adopted by the political actors to resolve election matters amicably.

Anifowose (1982) posits that electoral violence cannot be linked to a single cause as there are usually multiple causes of which the primary contributing factors are largely rooted in unfavourable historical relationships and other forms of differences amongst the Nigerian populace which often translate into violence by variety of catalysts including perceived political and economic marginalization, religious differences, boundary disputes, marginalization of minorities, amongst others. The author also provided a number of theoretical explanations for causes of electoral violence in Nigeria. Such explanations could be grouped into three broad but mutually reinforcing propositions. These are the psychological (Frustration-aggression) and relative deprivation theories. Also included is the Group conflict theory. The psychological explanation of electoral violence has the central premise that aggression is always the result of frustration, especially in an electoral contest where the will of greater majority are largely suppressed

through election rigging. Given the requisite conditions, individuals or groups who feel frustrated in the attainment of their political desires often direct their aggression to whom they feel was responsible for thwarting those desires. Relative deprivation (Structural hypothesis) theory gives a socio-cultural explanation for electoral violence by examining the social context under which election takes place. Thus when groups feel alienated from the political process and there is a further feeling of the sustenance of such alienation, ethnic mobilization to stop such perceived marginalization could result into violence and counter violence as groups increasingly resort to desperate measures to stop further alienation through stage managed election victory. The Group conflict theory sees violence as a resultant effect of power tussle and struggle amongst various ethnic (As different from work) groups within the society to collectively benefit from dividends of democracy. Since the resources to bring about individual democratic dividends are very scarce, people often shift their personal loyalty to their ethnic camps to compete for these resources leading to the domination of one group by another with its attendant result to violence which manifest most during elections.

Whatever may be the differences in the opinion of scholars on why electoral violence persists, it's quite clear that they all agreed that free and fair elections conducted without incidences of election rigging and other forms of electoral fraud and in which eligible voters are free to vote for the candidates of their choice without any coercion or intimidation are the foundation of sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Such solid electoral foundation is buoyed further by an impartial and independent judiciary and painstaking contributions of other electoral stakeholders to the success of the conduct of elections.

Historical Overview of Electoral Administration in Nigeria

Nigeria's political history could largely pass for a good study in political crises. As noted by Omitola (2011), the history of party politics in Nigeria has largely been characterized by conflicts while violence has been identified as the seeming prevailing language of dialogue amongst political parties in Nigeria. The first election in Nigeria took place in Lagos and Calabar in September 1923 following the introduction of the elective principle in Nigeria by the Clifford constitution of 1922 (Peter, 2008). The Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), led by Herbert Macaulay, won the three seats for the Lagos and Calabar Legislative seat. However, the conduct of the first election was free from political manipulations and complexities that could generate violence. First, the political representation was marginal (Only three seats were contested), the electorates were few as restricted franchise was introduced. Only one political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was involved and thus was devoid of intense political rivalry. The policing was strong while the conduct of the election by the colonial administration was very fair and less troublesome (Peter, 2008). However, the test for the survival of the democratization process in Nigeria began as a process of decolonization and transfer of power to the Nigerian political elites in 1954 from the colonial master when general elections ushered in a new set of indigenous political office holders. The result of the elections as documented by Olawale (2010) showed that the Northern People's Congress (NPC) won overwhelmingly in the Northern Region capturing 84 out of the 92 seats that were allocated to the Region. In the Western Region, the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) won 23 seats while the Action Group (AG) won 18 seats and the

Commoners Liberal Party (CLP) won 1 seat. In the Eastern Region, NCNC won 30 seats and the United National Independent Party (UNIP) won 12 seats (Adware, 2011).

Three political parties namely, the NPC, NCNC and the AG also came out as the dominant parties which contested the 1959 federal elections in the North East and the West respectively (Adewale, 2011). The voting pattern that emerged from the results of the elections clearly followed the pattern of the election result in 1954 where each party won overwhelmingly in their respective regions saved the NCNC which made an in-road into another region as indicated in the party's victory in the Western Region where the party won more seats than the AG which has its traditional strong hold in the Western Region. However, it is instructive to note that both the 1954 and 1959 elections which were conducted by the colonial administration were reasonably free and fair and was devoid of major electoral crisis but the pattern of election results laid credence to the fact that the pre-independence political parties were largely formed to promote parochial sectional interest while issue of political ideologies were largely disarticulated in the Nigerian politics. The inclination to ethnic politics in Nigeria started since the day of agitation for independence when Anthony Enahoro moved for the independence of Nigeria in 1959, a move that was opposed by the North primarily because the region was not ready for independence politically and administratively due to dearth of manpower to propel the region to meaningful development (Peter, 2008). The love for parochial and sectional rather than national interest laid the foundation for troubled election after the exit of the colonial masters who had earlier remained a fair umpire in the conduct of free and fair elections in Nigeria.

The 1964 election was conducted under two major political alliances owing to the fact that each party was largely restricted to their regional domain and needed the cooperation and collaboration of other parties to form a broad based national government (Raji, 2010). These alliances were the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) which was an alliances between the NCNC, AG and some minority parties including the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), the Borno Youth Movement (BYM) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). The UPGA was led by M. I. Okpara, the then premier of the Eastern Region. The Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) coalition was made up of an alliance between the NPC, led by Sardauna of Sokoto and the then Premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello and the NNDP which was formed by the splinter group from the AG was led by Samuel Ladoke Akintola, the then Premier of the Western Region. The campaign for the 1964 elections was characterized by political bickering, thuggery, arrests and imprisonment of political opponents, such as the arrest and imprisonment of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and many of his political supporters for treason by federal government. There were also incidences of denial of permit to hold political campaign in many areas outside the political and geographical strength of the competing political parties. The offices of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEC) and the police were flooded with catalogue of genuine complaints of harassments of political rivals without adequate remedy and police protection. In spite of these complaints, the electoral commission went ahead with the conduct of elections on the 30th December, 1964. The political confusion and election violence that were generated from the 1964 general elections and the 1965 regional elections that were largely rigged in the South-West truncated the first republic leading to the military take-over of the civilian

government in January 15th, 1966. The Military handed over to a civilian government in 1979, thus ushering in the second republic. Five political parties contested the 1979 elections. These parties were the National Party of Nigeria, (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) and the People's Redemption Party (PRP). It is pertinent to note however that the political colouration of the second republic was not a clear departure from the ethnic politics of the first republic which eventually led to the resuscitation of the old ethnic political rivalry and new political geographical rejuvenation. Thus the old AG reincarnated as region, Obafemi Awolowo. The Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), an off-shoot of NCNC was led by Nnamdi Azikwe. The National Party of Nigeria (an off-shoot of NPC) was led by Adisa Akinloye. The Great Nigeria's Peoples Party (GNPP) was led by Waziri Ibrahim while the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) which was the reincarnation of the old NEPU was led by Aminu Kano and the party had its support base mainly in the old Kano and Kaduna states. The UPN maintained its strongholds in Yoruba land and Mid-Western state (now Edo). The NPP commanded more influence in the Eastern region of old Anambra and Imo states and the North central state of plateau. The GNPP had its strongholds in the old Borno and Gongola states, while the NPN controlled the greater parts of Northern region and also spread its political tentacles further into the Eastern parts as it captured substantial seats in both the House of Senate and the House of Representative in the Eastern minority areas of old Cross River and River states. The NPN also captured a few national parliament seats in Anambra, Imo and Oyo states. Furthermore, both the UPN and NPP made significant in-roads into what was hitherto regarded as the monolithic North each capturing sections of minority areas of the North, four senatorial seats in plateau state for the NPP and two each from Kwara state (Yoruba speaking section) and Gongola state. The two parties also secured 23 national assembly seats from cross Rivers, Anambra and Imo state (Chris, 2009).

The voting pattern during the 1979 election produced a strong block voting thus enthroning a quadric-polar election equation with the emergence of the strong impact and political successes of the minority parties (apart from the three dominant regional parties) on the political scene. Thus the out-of-base election successes of the major political parties was a significant political development and some positive departure from the election results pattern that prevailed in the immediate pre and post independent political competitions which conferred electoral victories of political parties mainly to their geographical base. Such relative election successes for all the parties that contested the 1979 elections reasonably reduced political violence and thus quieting the temper of political atmosphere. There was however an electoral legal crises between the UPN and the NPN bordering on what constituted the two-third majority of the Nigerian state (whether its twelve two-third or thirteen states) which was eventually resolved in favoured of the NPN.

This relative success of the election process which produced some measures of free and fair elections in 1979 was seriously reversed in the 1983 general elections. The foundation of electoral violence and democratic reversal in the third republic started when many of the elected officials attempted to succeed themselves in the 1983 general elections in spite of their poor performances in office. An attempt by many political

office holders to perpetuate themselves in office through self-succession strategy caused internal and inter party crises within and amongst the six registered political parties respectively (Nigerian Advanced Party (NAP) was registered in 1983).

Invariably, virtually all the parties were eventually engulfed in one form of internal crisis or the other as dissident members began to emerge owing to stage managed internal elections or non conduct of primary elections. For example, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) under Obafemi Awolowo stage managed the internal primary in favour of the five serving UPN governors who were returned unopposed to re-contest for their offices through affirmation rather than through the conduct of primary elections which made some members like Busari, Adedokun Michael Afolabi, Akin Omoboriowo, Olaiya, Fagbamigbe, amongst others, to defect to the National Party of Nigeria (Peter, 2008). During the inter-party general elections, there were bandwagon effects with the NPN led federal government being accused of perpetuating wide spread election irregularities, including rigging, ballot box snatching, intimidation of political opponents in many states. The declaration of Akin Omoboriowo (before it was reversed) and Omololu Olunloyo as the winners of the gubernatorial elections in Ondo and Oyo states respectively led to widespread election violence in the South-West which led to the killings of many citizens including Olaiya Fagbamigbe, author and former astute supporter of the UPN before the 1983 general elections. The widespread of electoral violence in the second republic was also one of the reasons attributed to the second military take-over of government in December 31, 1983.

The fourth republic which was aborted by no other person than its architect, President Ibrahim Babangida also has its fair share of electoral violence. Worried by the danger posed by threat to Nigeria's unity and collective existence as a result of previous political bickering, the Babangida's administration moved to break the country's political ethnic cleavages by registering only two political parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Kingibe, 2012). The two parties contested elections into local government, state, national assemblies and governorship elections between 1991 and 1992. The parties had national outlook and this was a plus for the political process under the Babangida's transition programme. Conversely however, there was also a big minus as the two militarily decreed parties were not peoples-oriented because they were created in the image of the military command structure. These short comings notwithstanding, the elected officials were sworn in and were functioning when the presidential election was conducted on June 12, 1993. The Babangida Administration conducted a free and fair election which was won by M. K. O Abiola (Omuoha, 2000). After eight years of political experimentation and incessant policy summersaults, the military could not manage the achievements recorded by the successful conduct of the presidential election as the election was annulled by President Ibrahim Babangida without cogent and convincing reasons. The annulment of the election sparked off intense electoral violence especially in the South-West region which felt cheated with the cancellation of the presidential election result. About 1,000 lives were lost (TMG, 1997). The Babangida regime could not perpetuate itself in power after the election following a monumental civil unrest and external pressure from many advanced democracies in the world and such pressure made Babangida to vacate office for an Interim National Government (ING).

However, the contraception called the ING which was headed by Ernest Shonekan was toppled by General Sani Abacha, then the Chief of Defense Staff and Minister of Defense on November 17, 1993 (Raji, 2010). All the political structures established during the Babangida's transition programme were scrapped and the elected officials sacked. But rather than resolve the election logjam in favour of the acclaimed winner of the June 12th presidential election, M. K. O. Abiola, another tortuous political transition programme was put in place by Abacha who also tried to perpetuate himself in power. That inordinate ambition triggered off another round of political violence and intense opposition to the draconian regime of General Sanni Abacha. The government confronted such affront to its regime with draconian policies that included the bombing of individuals who were in the opposition which led to the death of many people, including Kudirat Abiola, the Wife of the acclaimed winner of the June 12th presidential election, M. K. O. Abiola, while vocal voices, like Wole Soyinka, Chief Anthony Enahoro, Bola Tinubu, amongst others, were forced into exile. General Abacha's draconian regime was curtailed by his sudden death on June 8, 1998. General Abdul Salami Abubakar took over as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. Unfortunately, before the regime could settle down, M. K. O. Abiola died in government detention and his death sparked off another round of political violence, especially in the South-Western part of Nigeria leading to a conservative death toll of 988 people (Election Watch, 2011). It was difficult for the government to diffuse the political tension because many supporters of Abiola accused the regime of masterminding his death with the connivance of the international community. In spite of this challenge, Abdulsalami Abubakar's government was able to organize a short but successful political transition programme that lasted for less than a year. Elections were conducted between 1998 and 1999 at the end of which elected government under President Olusegun Obasanjo were sworn into office on May 29, 1999.

The elections which brought the people's Democratic Party (PDP) into office at the federal level was relatively conducted under a free and fair election atmosphere but this did not go without an allegation of isolated cases of election rigging. However, mega election rigging which has been the primary norm of many political competitions in the past was generally absent during the 1999 elections. In comparison to the 1999 elections, the 2003 general elections conducted by the incumbent administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, where the then President was seeking re-election for another four-year term, was full of electoral malpractices which many observers describes as one of the most fraudulent elections conducted in Nigeria (TNG Report, 2010). In the run up and during the 2003 general elections, violence took an unimaginable high proportion. During this period, politically motivated assassination became very rampant. Some of the major politically related assassination that took place during the run off to 2003 general elections included the killings of Felix Ikebuwu, Eze-Odimegwu, Okonkwo in Anambra, Chief Bola Ige (Osun), Ahmed Patigi (Kwara), Barrister Abigail and Barnabass, Igwe (Anambra) amongst others. The situation in 2007 elections was no different because in the run-up to the election, the tempo of political assassination also increased. In 2006 alone, three gubernatorial aspirants were assassinated including Olu Daramola, gubernatorial aspirant from Ekiti State, Funsho Williams from Lagos state (Raji, 2010). In fact, international election observers reported

that 2007 election was the worst in the Nigerian history (TNG Report, 2010). For instance, the EU observers observed that the 2007 state and federal elections have fallen far short of basic international and regional standards for credible elections. The exercise was marred by poor organization, lack of essential election materials, missing names and the disqualification of many eligible candidates from electoral contest (which were later reversed by the court). Widespread procedural irregularities were also observed. Significant evidence of electoral fraud, particularly during the result collation process was observed. Many voters were disenfranchised at different stages of the election process. There were also numerous incidents of violence at polling boots. As a result of these election challenges, the outcome of the 2007 election did not lived up to the international corporate election governance standard while the hopes and aspirations of many Nigerian electorates to have a credible election were also dashed (TNG Report, 2010). The 2011 elections did not witness reasonable departure from the previous election disputes as the elections produced one of the worst violence in the history of the country's democratic transitions. Even though the conduct of the actual elections were adjudged by most local and international election observers as largely free and fair, the pre-election period was bedeviled by unprecedented election violence where at least 90 people were killed and 209 injured weeks before the elections (Election Watch, 2011). The 2011 election also marked the beginning of the introduction of terrorist activities into a civilian inspired transition programme to settle primordial political scores as bomb blast rocked the INEC office at Suleja and the PDP campaign rally at Minna, both in Niger state, killing 23 people eventually (Election Watch, 2011). There was also post election violence mainly in the Northern parts of Nigeria in 2011, especially in Bauchi and Adamawa states where over 1,000 people including nine National Youth Corps (NYSC) members who served as election officers during the elections were killed. Other states where post election violence took place in 2011 apart from these two states were Sokoto, Zamfara, Niger, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano and Akwa Ibom states.

The riot from the 2011 elections in spite of its credibility from both internal and external elections observer reports as being sufficiently free and fair in conduct and outcome was a reflection of frustration and anger primarily directed at people considered to be collaborator with the ruling PDP government and its Presidential candidate, Goodluck Jonathan to undermine local Northern interest which wanted Muhammadu Buhari, the Presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). What was eventually found out from the conduct of elections in Nigeria since the commencement of representative governance in the country in 1923 was that many of such elections were characterized by violence because of the tendency of the aspiring politicians and incumbent political parties to stage manage the election process in their favour. However, it was observed that all the elections conducted under the colonial administration and virtually all those conducted under the military government (saved the Abacha regime) were observed to be transparent than those conducted under the civilian administration.

Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

There are many causes of electoral violence in Nigeria (Omitola, 2011). One of the causes is the complex nature of the Nigerian federation and the complications arising from its operational diversities. The negative tendencies of the Nigerian federation and its operations are not unconnected with the extreme centralization and concentration of much power at the federal level, which have led to mutual hostilities amongst different ethnic nationalities to control such power. The mutual suspicions have continued to compound the initial problem of structural imbalances and unequal competitive ability for the control of national resources amongst the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thus, with time, Nigeria's federal system has largely been reduced to a resource re-distributive platform to reward various groups laying claims to it. However, the resultant political competition for access to these resources often become fierce and violence whenever there is any electoral competition, knowing very well that any region that wins the election controls and could re-distribute the collective resources to whosoever it wishes.

Another fall-out of the unfavourable nature of the Nigeria federation that has contributed to electoral violence in Nigeria is the issue of identity crisis as a result of the proliferation of sub-federal administrative boundaries of identities which often serve as a platform to struggle for federal resources allocations, especially in a contest that discriminates against settlers and non-indigenes. Such discrimination leads to more crises as groups engages in fair or foul electoral contest in order to win elections at all cost in an atmosphere of the "end justifies the means" while political contest is seen in most instances in Nigeria as war by other means. The successive attempts by the military governments to foster political restructuring and territorial reconfiguration and fragmentation of many Nigerian homogenous groups into different local governments and states have bred more distrust amongst such groups rather than stemming the tide of violence during political competition. This is because rather than assuaging the fears of the so-called minorities, military government has actually created more minorities that are brought together or separated more disillusioned, disenchanted and marginalized in the new coerced community. It is not surprising that such people resort to fiercer electoral contestation to gain control of such artificially created political community forcefully joined together under an atmosphere of distrust. Electoral violence in Nigeria is caused by the attempt of many politicians to use their incumbency power to stage-manage elections in their favour having seen the signs of been rejected by the people due to poor performance and weak accountability record in office. Many of such politicians, especially at the local and state levels often instruct their supporters and loyalists that have been deliberately planted at the electoral commission and local constituencies to deliver their areas for the party in power at all cost. Such unethical mandate frequently, especially at the state level under the State Electoral Commissions (SEC), results in the manipulation of elections which are regularly rebuffed by the opposing parties through violence.

The proliferation of small arms and ammunitions, especially in the hands of political thugs is a pointer to the link between arms and electoral violence. Some of the thugs use the weapons to scare away eligible voters during elections or cause intense mayhem with the weapons. The high rate of poverty in Nigeria is another contributory factor to electoral violence in Nigeria. The extremely poor Nigerians which constitute

almost 70% of the population (UNDP Report, 2011) are easily mobilized as combatants for political rigging, election violence and hired assassins. Such jobless and highly impoverished electorates tie their economic survival to those of their political financiers. A perceived electoral failure by their mentors is thus seen as an open signal to impending personal economic doom for the thugs, and must be prevented by all means including the use of election manipulation and political violence to sustain their political godfather in power. Lack of party discipline in political competition in Nigerian has also contributed largely to electoral violence. For instance, the conduct of primary elections in many parties are devoid of reasonable adherence to rules and regulations of the party and constitutional guidelines on internal election processes as anointed candidates of political power fixers are often imposed through manipulated consensus arrangements. Many of those candidates that were scheme out of contest often go to any extent, including the sponsoring of violence to undermine such unpopular internal political process. Many security personnel who are supposed to apprehend election riggers and perpetrators of other electoral vices often collaborate to rig elections for a favoured candidate which in most instances favour the incumbent governments at the federal and state levels. The wrong perception of politics as a business venture is another disheartening factor in the perpetuation of electoral violence in Nigeria. The age long utilitarian perception of politics as a means of creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people has suffered a setback especially after Nigeria's independence. Many of the current Nigerian politicians see politics more as a means of appropriating state resources for personal gains at the expense of community service to the people. Some aspiring politicians go to the extent of selling their personal belongings, including cars and houses to finance their elections.

Consequence upon their desperations not to lose their electoral investments, aspiring politician often adopt foul means to suppress their opponents while the defrauded losers launches counter offensive through violence to claim their stolen mandate. Post election violence also does occur due to the inability of the judiciary to resolve electoral disputes in a fair, timely and transparent manner. From the evidences that abound from the examination of electoral violence in Nigeria, one cannot agree less with the UNDP report 33 that electoral violence in the country cannot be linked to a single cause and thus requires multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches to resolving them.

Implications of Electoral Violence for National Security in Nigeria

Electoral violence which serves as a threat to national security occurs at four major stages (Omitola, 2011). These are the identity (registration), campaign, balloting, and result (outcome) stages. Electoral violence at the identity stage occurs during the registration process. Some of the electoral anomalies that serves as potential threat to national security include issuance of fake voters registration card, moving registration exercise from the officially designated point to unapproved centre by electoral officers due to financial inducement by interested politicians, underage registration, insufficient provision of registration materials, insufficient time for registration, registration apathy by the electorates until the closing of registration, non-display of voters registration list for possible objections, multiple registration, non-registration of eligible voters due to

logistic problems. Pre-election violence could also occur during the registration process when refugees or other conflict-induced immigrants are unable to establish or re-establish their identities with their immediate communities on their returns and are thus prevented from registration. These sets of people often cause violence at the registration centre for the denial of their right to participate in the electoral process. Pre-election violence can also occur during the campaign stage. Campaign violence occurs as rival parties seek to disrupt opponent's campaign, intimidate voters and candidates while the parties in power also use threats (such as demanding for voter's registration cards before salary is paid) to force people to register.

The tone of political campaign is often riddled with provocative abusive language, character assassination, threat of physical combat between political rivals, amongst others. Balloting violence is perpetuated on the Election Day when political rivalries are re-enacted at the polling booth. Some of the issues that could precipitate violence on the day of the election include vote buying, vote rigging, issuance of fake ballot boxes and ballot papers, stuffing of ballot boxes with multiple printed ballot papers, ballot boxes snatching, multiple and underage voting, intimidation of political opponents from voting, disqualification of legitimate voters from voting, shortage of election materials, especially ballot papers, starting the voting process late and closing early, falsification of election results at the collation center or at the point of announcement by INEC officials, missing names in the voters register, influencing others on whom to vote for at the polling booth, attempting to count authentic vote as "rejected" vote, amongst others. The outcome stage of electoral violence represents the point of dispute over falsified or supposedly falsified election results. Some of the element of election falsification includes returning votes that are more than the number of the registered voters, variation in the total number of certified votes scored amongst election stakeholders; party agents, the police, state security services and the INEC. Electoral violence also does occur at the outcome stage due to the inability of the judiciary to resolve election disputes in a fair, timely and transparent manner. Thomson (2011) identified two broad dimensions of electoral violence. These are physical and psychological violence dimensions. The physical dimensions of electoral violence include physical assault, arsons and destruction of lives and properties during electoral contest. The psychological aspect of election violence include the emotional trauma of physical assault, constant feelings of political insecurity, emotional pains for the lost of loved ones in electoral violence and high sense of hate and unforgiving spirit for those who were responsible for the loss. Such psychological torture makes post-election violence reconciliation efforts very difficult to achieve. From different scholarly propositions, one distills that electoral violence amongst various groups in Nigeria is influenced largely by the desire of one community, group or individuals to gain the control of the national resources and the attempt to gain or retain the power of the distributing authorities at the detriment of other tribal rivals and an attempt by such distributing authorities to even move further to capture the political and economic terrains of such rivals, an attempt that is often resisted by the rivals through violence.

Electoral violence in Nigeria has many impacts on national security. First, the violence inhibits private and public peace and security. The rampant use of dangerous weapons during election leads to loss of lives and property. Such loses affect

development as many productive forces (people) and institutions are destroyed. Electoral violence also disrupt socio-economic activities as businesses and movement of people are sometimes curtailed through the imposition of curfew as exemplified in plateau state in 2002 due to electoral violence at Angwan Rukuba between the PDP and the ANPP supporters, during the conduct of primary elections for the Jos North local government. Electoral violence weakens domestic economy and it reduces government's ability to invest on productive venture because much of the needed resources for such venture are diverted to security votes to maintain peace thus exposing many citizen to excruciating poverty which in turn generates new form of economically induced violence. Electoral violence leads to political instability. Where it is not properly managed, such violence could lead to a state of anarchy, confusion and military takeover of government as witnessed on the 15th January 1966 when the military seized political power owing partly to the electoral violence in the South-Western Nigeria. Such take-over is riddle with more threat to security as the military often violate the fundamental human rights of individuals through summary trial, detention without bail and execution without a formal prosecution, thus further threatening the security of lives and property in Nigeria. The result of the flagrant use of arms and ammunition by political thugs leads to the intimidation, injury and sometimes killing of political opponents.

Some of the political thugs eventually transited to armed robbers who terrorize the society within national and between international boundaries, leaving such society prone to persistent security threat. Furthermore, electoral violence scares away local and foreign investors apparently due to lack of security for their investment thus increasing job insecurity in the country. Due to electoral violence, many innocent Nigerians have been displaced from their places of residence into a refugee camp where a new form of health, economic and social security threats (exposure to hunger, diseases, and prostitution, amongst others) are prevalent. There have been incidences of many political thugs transiting into child soldier and terrorist groups and they are frequently used to terrorize the environment. The engagement of African youths in act of thuggery and other delinquent tendencies such as bodyguards to many political "god fathers", which thrive on the periodic dole out of financial and material gains by the "godfather" destroys the youth which instead of making virile Nigerian youths agents of national growth and development had built into such youth the culture of violence that is characterized by riotous form of livelihood in many facets of public life. It is even difficult to make good future leaders out of such Nigerian youths who have imbibed the culture of wild life, political imperfection, bribery and political manipulation thus endangering future political stability in Nigeria.

Electoral violence has the risk of transiting into dangerous and destructive communal conflicts thereby further polarizing the society into a state of disintegration. Even though such violence is sometimes triggered by political differences it is often hijacked by ethnic militias and misguided elements who use such disputed elections to launch their hidden agenda of planned annihilation and extermination of their perceived political enemies. For instance, the Hausa-Fulani claims that the 2008 Jos North local government electoral dispute which claimed over 1600 lives (Election watch, 2011) was used by the indigenes as a platform to eliminate the Hausa/Fulani community in Plateau State while the indigenes also accused the Hausa/Fulani of persistent exploitation and

domination of the Plateau indigenes in their own land. These accusation and counter accusation which largely emanated from disputed elections led to mistrust and constant suspicion amongst the two ethnic groups. And such suspicion is largely responsible for the fragile peace that is currently being witnessed in Plateau state. Electoral violence has also introduced fake dimension to security networking and peace keeping operation in Nigeria as many of the recruited fighting machineries in the Jos 2008 election crisis were caught wearing fake police and military uniforms. People were therefore confused on whom to run to for protection. Election induced violence have been known to have reduced the highly essential positive defensive group spirit (*Esprit de corps*) and the essential unity in strategic operational organization within the rank and files of the security agencies that were deployed to fight election crimes leading to further threat to national security. For instance, there were serious allegations of divided loyalty to the military authorities in Jos electoral crisis as many peace keepers deployed to keep peace in Jos were accused of tactically supporting their kits and kin in the crisis thus promoting tribal loyalty far above their official loyalty to the military authorities. The sophistication and the quantum of arms and ammunitions that are used by political thugs also points to reasonable measure of proliferation of light and advanced weaponry in Nigeria and this worrisome development raises national security concern in the country. Such rampant and reckless use of arms makes it difficult for the security forces to isolate and control political violence, especially where such violent is carried out under ethnic identity. The proliferation of illegal arms and ammunitions to fight ethnic course is one of the major reasons why election crisis in Jos is very difficult to control than many other places.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our discussions clearly showed that electoral violence in Nigeria is caused by many factors. Elections conducted under the colonial administration and military governments in Nigeria were more transparent than those conducted under the civilian administrations. It was also pointed out that by their very competitive nature, election, especially in ethnically fragile and factionalized states often generate negative extensive political activism and participation to control the leverages of political power. Such hard-line political contest often creates stress on the nascent political institutions in Nigeria leading to disputed elections in many cases. The paper also revealed that poorly conducted elections are primary causes of political instability in Nigeria.

There is need to have financial and appointive independence of the electoral commission to make the body more independent for the conduct of free and fair elections. The President who in virtually all instances stands for re-election against other candidates is charged with the responsibility of appointing the INEC chairman and other functionaries of the commission while the President equally decides and approves the financial needs of the body. Such overwhelming appointive powers often make the incumbent President and the party to have overwhelming influence on the INEC officials to stage manages the electoral process in their favour to the detriment of the opposing parties. There is need for decorum in the campaign language of aspiring politicians to reduce political tension. There is also the need for a mobile political mass literacy school to enlighten the citizens regularly about their fundamental human rights and privileges from and obligation to the government, to liberate them from political ignorance,

intimidation and culture of political apathy and violence. Many of the political thugs are often ignorant of the fact that they are being used only to be dumped after the elections. Such sensitization programme could reduce act of thuggery and other delinquent behaviour from politics. The political mass literacy programme could be subsumed into the national orientation programme of the country. The enrolment of the above suggestions into the electoral process in particular and political process in general could greatly reduce electoral violence in Nigeria.

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