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Editorial Note

In compliance with our tradition, we bring before you a potpourri of articles from seasoned researchers. We hope that the papers in this volume will advance the frontiers of historical knowledge. We thank you for your sustained interest in Ilorin Journal of History and International Studies (IJOHIS).

Professor S.O. Aghalino
(Editor)

***Disclaimer:** The views expressed in the articles in this Journal do not necessarily represent the views of anyone affiliated with IJOHIS or of the Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

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**IMPACT OF THE 2015 ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON THE
ECONOMY AND THE PEOPLE OF CROSS RIVER AND AKWA-
IBOM STATES**

Odeigah, Theresa Nfam, Ph.D*

Abstract

One of the most cardinal ingredients of democracy is the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. Credible elections are therefore vital to the existence of good governance anywhere in the world. It is generally believed that democracy through the ballot system, ensures credibility and good governance, and elections afford the citizens the opportunity to elect their leaders. Politics is supposed to facilitate governance but some politicians in their quest for political power have seen electoral violence as a stepping stone to realising their dreams. The 2015 elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States resulted in violence in the various local government areas of the states leading to wanton destruction of lives and property. This study intends to look at the impacts of electoral violence on the economy and people of the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States. The paper adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to view this menace and concludes that the violence that followed the 2015 general elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States, impacted negatively on the economy and the people of both States.

Keywords: Election, Violence, Economy, Democracy, Good governance

Introduction

Elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States, like in most other parts of Nigeria have been characterised by violence. Electoral violence was seen by Rose as a random or an organised act seeking to delay, undermine and influence an election which will be accompanied by violence such as destruction of property, blackmail, fighting, intimidation and threats¹. Electoral violence has caused a lot of damage to the economic development of the people and has therefore become worrisome. In the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States and in most parts of Nigeria, elections are characterised by

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oppression, intimidation and various other vices leading to electoral violence. It is pertinent to note that, in Uyo the Akwa-Ibom State capital, the members of the opposition APC party shutdown some major roads by mounting road blocks along Asong Ama road and at Udo Udoma junction over the 2015 election irregularities. Some of the protesters were angered by the Independent National Electoral Commission's announcement declaring the PDP candidate the winner of the election. In the ensuing violence, there was use of firearms, physical fights, destruction of properties leading to several people being injured and several official and personal buildings destroyed. This occurred when innocent voters went to exercise their franchise and some political thugs unleashed mayhem on these voters and some of them also lost their lives².

The political elite very often engage in bitter and hate dominated electioneering campaigns that undermine the electoral process, and this affects the credibility of the electoral system. Democracy is the most popular and recommended form of government in the world, and there are very few countries that are not practising it. Democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people. The ruling class or the elected representatives of the people are put in position of governance through elections³. Democracy has as a key ingredient which is the participation of the people in the election of their leaders. Through credible elections, good leaders are supposed to emerge for the good governance of the people and to contribute to the economic growth of the nation. One other important characteristic of democracy is the rule of law which basically means that everyone is equal before the law ensuring that the law of the land guides the actions of all and sundry, removing arbitrariness and impurity⁴.

Election

Elections are an integral part of the democratic process that gives the citizenry the opportunity to determine and elect their leaders who will shape the economy of the states. Recurrent electoral violence from 1964 in Nigeria has given us a poor image and culture of violence. The elections conducted by Tafawa Balewa and Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1964 and 1965 respectively were characterised by intimidation, violence and fraud, leading to inter-communal conflicts and death of several people. Electoral violence has interrupted the economic growth and development of several states and the country at large⁵. Elections are a process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organisation or a group of people by the vote or ballot of qualified members⁶.

It has been documented by Sahara Reporters, and also based on empirical evidence through oral interviews with Omang and others, that the

biggest problem to the process of selecting leaders in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States is electoral violence ⁷. Politicians are guilty of electoral violence because a lot of them have thugs and resources they deploy to the youths to cause violence⁸. This is as a result of the quest for power and the inordinate ambition of the leaders or political elite who engage in bitter politics to achieve their aim. On several occasions, this has affected the credibility of the electoral process. The governor of Cross River State that emerged after the 2015 elections was taken to court as a result of irregularities during the elections, before eventually the Supreme Court of Nigeria affirmed him as the governor. The rate of electoral violence in Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States has become alarming and this major impediment to peace has affected the process of development and nation building negatively. In Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states, property worth billions of naira were destroyed, and people were killed as a result of electoral violence in the 2015 general elections. In Akwa-Ibom state when Emmanuel Udom was declared the winner of the governorship poll, the opposition party took to the streets in protest.

Violent 2015 Post-Election Protest in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State



Source: www.nigerianeye.com>2015/04>in-pi.

This also led to death of three people immediately after the announcement of the result of the governorship election⁹. Governor Liyel Imoke was elected as the governor in Cross River State in 2007, after two term tenure. In 2015 Benedict Ayade won the governorship election to the chagrin of his opponents, such as Fidelis Ugbo of the Labour Party and Odey Anthony

Ochica of the All Progressives Congress among others. Several instances of electoral violence were recorded in the 2015 elections. For example, in Uyo Local Government Area, it was reported that the Peoples Democratic Party supporters were involved in a brawl with some APC supporters leading to the death of five of them. This led to reprisal attacks from APC members leaving a number of people injured. These acts of violence can in part be said to be due to inadequate systematic documentation and public knowledge of appropriate education for voters¹⁰.

Violence

Violence has become an easy tool that politicians use to get into elective positions. Violence has been categorized in different forms, into physical, structural and psychological violence. The physical violence comes in the form of physical fights with accompanied injuries inflicted on a person or the killing of a person during political violence, or individual assault, such as shooting, hostage taking, and harassment. Structural violence is a process of social injustice and it could be in the form of using the power of incumbency to surreptitiously subvert the electoral process such as delays in announcing falsified election results. Psychological violence includes injuries or harm done to an individual or group of people in form of indoctrination or various forms of threats or conspiracy inducing fear in the polity. Violence can also be direct or indirect. Direct violence includes actions of violence that hurts or harms a person directly, such as kidnapping, rape and other forms of maltreatment. Indirect violence can on the hand connote harm done to a person indirectly in the sense that there is no direct relationship between the victims and the perpetrators of violence¹¹.

One of the most common forms of violence during elections is the destruction of property, such as burning of shops, cars, houses, looting and stealing. Most of those responsible for these acts of violence, escape to nearby towns and villages to hide from the law enforcement agencies. Most of the perpetrators of violence are hired by the political elite to help them gain power¹².

Elections and Electoral Violence

Elections create the opportunity for the electorate to elect their leaders and also the opportunity for their leaders to be accountable to the citizens, and they have the freedom to make their choice¹³. Many scholars such as Williams, Lawal and Onimisi have looked at the functions of elections in different

perspectives. Williams saw the functions of elections as a mechanism for electing leaders and for public policy. He emphasised that governments that want democracy, must go through the process of elections which will make the government legitimate, because election is the attribute of a true democracy. There are four important assumptions guiding the conduct of credible elections. These are that all citizens have equal voting power; voters should have their voting rights and access to facts, citizens should be free to form political parties, and elections should be decided by the majority¹⁴.

In the 2015 general elections, ethnicity played a major role in the politics. The political division between Cross River North, comprising of Boki, Ogoja, Obudu, Yala, Obanlikwu, Ikom, Etung and Ugep Local Government Areas and Cross River South, comprising of namely, the Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Calabar South local government areas, took a deeper dimension. This was because of the different interest groups supporting their different candidates for the election. The two dominant parties the APC and PDP were mostly the architects of violence during the election¹⁵. According to Etta 2017, the politics in Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states had always been poisoned by the bitter ethnic division between the people¹⁶.

Electoral violence can also be seen as criminal acts following political activities before or after the elections, and these include the use of dangerous weapons, thuggery and the use of force to disorganise the entire polling process. In recent times electoral violence has become almost a regular part of the electoral process, because most elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States have been accompanied by violence and thuggery. Electoral violence is an act of violence perpetrated in the cause of political activities during, pre and post election, and this violence involves thuggery, force, the use of dangerous weapons and destruction of property¹⁷. Electoral violence dates back to the inception of political parties. According to Ficsher, electoral violence comes in different stages, it could be during the pre- election period, the campaigns, voting period, collation of results, post election period and even during the announcement of the results¹⁸. Violence and thuggery have been known to affect any of these stages in the electoral process and politicians and even the electoral umpires have been known to subvert the electoral process by manipulation of these various stages. The problem of biased electoral umpires is more manifest at the level of the Local Governments, because State Electoral Commissions are seen as an appendage of the Executive arm of government, controlled by the state governors¹⁹. Recently a Director with the Independent National Electoral Commission

(INEC), the electoral umpire in Nigeria, pleaded guilty in a Lagos Federal High Court to collecting thirty Million Naira as bribe, from a former Petroleum Resources minister to subvert the electoral process in favour of a major political party. His legal counsel had entered a plea bargain agreement with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of Nigeria so that the property he required with the bribe money is forfeited to the federal government of Nigeria.²⁰

Some scholars have also argued that the major challenge to the enthronement of visionary leadership, at the federal, state and local government levels, is lack of a credible electoral process, and they have advocated for major electoral reforms. According Lawal and Timothy, elections are not just the casting of ballots in electing leaders, but the active participation of the people in governance²¹. A major reason for violence after elections most times, is that results are not acceptable by the losing opponents. Lack of confidence in the electoral process, inordinate quest for political power and poverty can be argued to be responsible for this common problem among the political class. From inception, after the attainment of independence in Nigeria during the general elections in 1964, there was a lot of rigging which resulted to violence in the polity. Since then in the different parts of Nigeria, violence has become a common occurrence during elections.

The 2015 General Elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States was characterised by insecurity, intimidation, snatching of ballot boxes and massive rigging and loss of lives²². In Ntamante also in Boki Local Government area of Cross River State a man from Nkim was reportedly killed by a Labour party mob, and likewise in Kakwagom²³. In the 2015 general elections five people were reportedly killed and fifteen others injured from communal violence among communities. It occurred when members of the two main opposing political parties clashed in Yakurr Local Government area of Cross River State. This violence began when youths loyal to one of the political parties blocked the major roads in the Yakurr Local government area. The incident resulted to a bloody clash among youths. In Akwa Ibom State, places like Ibiono-Ibom, Etinan and Nsit, electoral violence claimed the lives of four individuals and also a state House of Assembly candidate in Ukanafun was killed by thugs, as well as a youth who was killed while trying to snatch the ballot box from the polling centre to an unknown destination during the presidential election.

During political rallies in different parts of the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states, violence erupted and people lost their lives and property. The

violence of shooting was wide spread. This included the carting away election materials, including cards readers. Most of the violence was perpetrated by the youths, majority of them without formal education. They were financially induced to commit acts of criminality by corrupt and desperate politicians in their quest for political power. These acts of violence eventually led to the slowing down of the economic activities in the area as shops and business centres were damaged and people could not go to their farms because of fear and insecurity²⁴.

Causes of Electoral violence in Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States

Power is said to be the capability or influence to control the society. It is this strong desire for power that makes some politicians to instigate and perpetrate electoral violence in their communities. Power to control is a common characteristic of political power and this has driven some politicians to hire individuals as political thugs, making the election period and process unsafe and uncertain and therefore encouraging insecurity. The quest for political power at all cost is therefore one reason for the recurrent electoral violence that has been witnessed in Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States²⁵.

Another major factor that encourages electoral violence is the weak state institutions that are controlled albeit subterraneous by politicians. Some governors for example seeking re-election use government funds to influence the security agencies and even electoral officials, to ensure their success at the polls²⁶. Electoral violence can be attributed to a combination of factors and one of such factors is poverty. Poverty and criminality among the unemployed young people in the area, makes them very gullible to the antics of desperate politicians, who are ready to subvert the electoral process to achieve and come into power. Because of the poverty rate in the area, some politicians use money to entice the youths who are mainly unemployed, to foment trouble during elections²⁷.

One of the causes of electoral violence is ethnic politics, which is very common in Nigeria. In the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, ethnic politics played out in a very bitter form, and there were a lot of divisions among the different ethnic groups. In Cross River State in particular the division between the Cross River North comprising Boki, Ikom, Ogoja, Obudu and Yala Local Government areas and the southern part comprising of Odukpani, Calabar South Local Government areas, took a different dimension. This was because of the different ethnic groups supporting their candidates of the same ethnicity. When the Peoples Democratic Party candidate, Benedict Ayade was declared

the winner of the governorship election in Cross River State with 53,983 votes, his two opponents, Odey Ochicha of the All Progressives Congress and Fidelis Ugbo of the Labour Party vehemently rejected the result. This resulted to violence among their supporters and communities leading to loss of lives and property²⁸.

Another common cause of electoral violence is rigging of elections. Rigging is one of the major causes of electoral violence in Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States. It is often perpetrated by the youths who have special interest in a particular party and have been financially induced to do so. Rigging sometimes comes directly or indirectly. Direct rigging is perpetrated by the youths or party agents carrying away ballot boxes. It could also be by the electoral officers creating artificial scarcity of ballot papers or by causing delay in the arrival of election materials to the various polling centres. Indirect rigging is when the electoral officer, changes the real figures of the ballot by falsification of the election results at the various collation centres. Rigging in Nigeria often occurs not only at the polling centres, but also at the collation centres, because proper monitoring of the ballot is also compromised by corrupt electoral officials with the collusion of corrupt politicians. The Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States in the Niger delta area was a stronghold of the former President Goodluck Jonathan and it became a hotspot for inconceivable manners of violence²⁹.

Lawal and Onimisi described rigging as the conduct of elections often perpetrated by subverting the voting process through organised fraud with the active participation of the electoral officers³⁰. It was reported that in the 2015 General Elections in Okundi in Boki Local Government area of Cross River State, ballot papers and other electoral materials arrived very late and this resulted in falsification of figures at the collation centres, and this brought about confusion and violence in the area. In Akwa-Ibom state, Ekpeyong Ekpeyong a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress alleged that there was rigging of elections in the state and that ballot boxes were hijacked, this also led to the two parties appearing before the Justice Goddy Anunihu panel. The tempo of rigging usually worsens with each new election. In Ini Local Government Area, a person was killed during the same period³¹.

Another factor responsible for electoral violence in the Cross-River and Akwa-Ibom States is illiteracy and poor voter education. The political parties and the electoral umpires have always paid lip service to voter education and enlightenment. Another cause of electoral violence is poor internal party democracy. This usually plays out during the primary elections within the

parties to pick candidates for the various offices, and usually some candidates are preferred even though they may not be the best candidates for the various positions being contested. This also has been responsible for violence even during primary elections resulting in intra party feud and violence which is then carried over into the general elections³².

CASES OF 2015 ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN THE CROSS RIVER
AND AKWA-IBOM STATES Table 1

Place of violence	State	Description of violence
Kakwagom	Cross River	One person killed, many injured and several property destroyed
Nkim	Cross River	One person killed
Yakurr	Cross River	Four people killed and over 15 others injured
Ukanafun	Akwa Ibom	Two deaths from electoral violence
Uyo	Akwa Ibom	Five dead and several seriously injured
Oron	Akwa Ibom	Four seriously injured

Source: Niger Delta Electoral violence updates, [nigeriaelectionupdate-20150324](#)

The table above shows some of the cases of electoral violence recorded during the 2015 general elections. It should be noted that some cases not reported were said to have occurred in the very remote areas of the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States ³³.

The Implications of Electoral Violence on the Economy

It has become very clear that elections in the area study have acquired the culture of violence before or after the ballot. Electoral violence has threatened the economic activities of the area due to fear and insecurity. Poor voter education, lack of internal party democracy among others have been identified as a major causes of electoral violence, it has become therefore imperative that the destruction of property is an act of ignorance by the people³⁴.

One of the implications of electoral violence is the encouragement of cultism in the different towns in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States, especially in Boki. Overwhelming cultic activities have created a lot of insecurity in Calabar and Boki. For instance in Boki Local government, youths were hired by politicians to specifically cause problems during elections and after elections the process of harassment and intimidation continues. These violent activities and the state of insecurity created by it, had disrupted economic activities in the area³⁵

The cost of conducting elections in Nigeria is quite high and this can be attributed to the need to provide enough security to ensure that people come out to exercise their franchise and that there is no loss of lives and destruction of property. Electoral officers, security agents, politicians and the electorate, most of whom are the bread winners of their families are known to have been killed following electoral violence. In the Cross River state alone, there were over twenty six thousand police men and other security agents that monitored the elections in 2015. These police men and security agents had to be paid allowances, these large sums of money used to provide enhanced security and the large number of security agents who had to be paid allowances, could have been used for vocational training for the teeming unemployed youths to eventually improve their employability and entrepreneurship³⁶. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria cost the country a whopping one hundred and eight Billion eight hundred Million Naira. This election has been adjudged as the costliest election in Nigerian history³⁷.

The economic loss due to restrictions of vehicular and human movements during periods of elections is enormous. Because of the history of electoral violence in Nigeria, measures such as limitation of movement and closure of private and public offices are usually put in place as extra security measures to forestall violence and rigging of elections³⁸. Elections have been known to be cancelled following electoral violence, resulting in massive economic loss to the country. Some of the political gladiators in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States go to the extent of making sure economic activities are grounded using thugs to snatch ballot boxes and intimidating the electorate. Many prospective voters are hurt and even killed and at times valuable properties belonging to the losing political opponents are destroyed³⁹.

The 2015 electoral mayhem resulted in some people being kidnapped in unprecedented political fisticuffs that caused some communities to use weapons without qualms. Some thugs went on rampage causing fresh terror in the areas even after the elections, disorganising and disrupting economic

activities causing threat to the lives of business men and women⁴⁰. Farming activities are usually disrupted because of fear and insecurity, leading to economic losses and wastage. Many vehicles were vandalised by hoodlums. Electoral violence is not only a recurrent decimal, but frequent occurrence in Nigerian states. Most times electoral violence is perpetrated by the young people who are in the services of the politicians and these youths are ready to pick up weapons against any opponent because they are idle⁴¹.

As a matter of fact electoral violence has great implications for the economy and the people. This in a way has the capability of truncating the economic growth of the area. Electoral violence has a way of scaring a number of voters from participating in the voting process. This could lead to the election of the wrong people into political positions, which eventually produces leaders without vision⁴². In its most severe form the citizens may be so disenchanted with the whole electoral process to the point that it results in failure of citizenship. This also has great implications for nation building, because for as long as the electoral process does not lead to the expression of people's choice, there can be no meaningful development. Electoral violence can lead to a state of lawlessness, chaos and anarchy, and this is capable of launching the area into uncontrollable confusion⁴³.

Conclusion

Electoral violence in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States of Nigeria has become a common phenomenon due to ethnic politics, poor voter education, voter apathy, lack of intra party democracy, biased and corrupt electoral umpires, massive unemployment among the youths and a poorly trained, equipped and motivated police force. There is therefore the need for very major electoral reforms if we are to nip this problem in the bud. The electoral reforms should be hinged mainly on digitisation and removing arbitrariness and impunity.

Elections in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States as well as Nigeria as a whole cost a lot of money because of the need to provide adequate security. At times because of massive electoral fraud, elections are cancelled out right, leading to massive economic and financial loss. This money would have been used in proving vocational and entrepreneurship training for the teeming number of unemployed youths in the area.

The economic implications of electoral violence include loss of lives and property during and after elections, restriction of vehicular and human movement, declaration of public holidays and various acts of criminality

perpetrated during electoral violence that make it impossible for economic activities to thrive. Electoral violence in the Cross River and Akwa-Ibom States of Nigeria is a major threat to the economic development of the area.

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