



Democracy, governance and electoral violence in Nigeria: the 2019 Rivers state example

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine governance in a democratic society and its interface with electoral violence. Of late, governance has come to mean democracy that depends on the provision of basic needs for the people such as security, shelter, etc. However, this system of democracy has been intercepted by illegitimate governance, and thus, raised debates among scholars and policy makers. The paper therefore postulates that the electoral body and polarization of the body could be blamed for the illegalities to conduct free and fair elections. The work adopted a historical approach to the research and used qualitative sources of information. The study also applied frustration Aggression theory which anchored on the assumption that aggression is always the consequence of frustration and constant struggle for political power in a democratic environment. The study found out that the illegitimate method to win election has led to bad governance which on occasions, exacerbate agitation of even - development in modern democracy. The paper concludes that a policy should be formulated and implemented to make the electoral body such as the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) truly Independent that is free from executive manipulation. The study recommends that once the electoral violence is minimized in a manner acceptable by the populace, governance has the capacity to jump start human development.

Keywords: Democracy, Election body, Illegality, Policy makers, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

Democratic institutions are tools for facilitating the democratic process for the election of public officeholders. According to Gberevie (2014), the democratic institutions like (INEC), should establish the necessary frameworks and election ethics in order to hold fair and free elections that are based on the principle of one man, one vote.

The electoral body must be honest, competent, and non-partisan that can conduct credible elections. In a liberal democracy, the principle of elections, “ex ante indeterminacy” by which is meant is the possibility of today’s winners becoming tomorrow’s losers, and today’s losers becoming tomorrow’s winners”. Thus, distinguishing attribute of the principle of democratic elections lies, in the possibility and prospects of the

electoral defeat of incumbents holding elective public political offices (Przeworski, 2021).

Okeke (2015) asserts that a fair electoral process must have some basic structures, which include: statutory provisions establishing the electoral bodies; delineation of wards and constituencies; registration of political parties; registration of voters; recruitment and training of ad hoc staff; procurement of election material; logistics; screening of candidates; provision of polling and monitoring agents; accreditation of voters; actual voting; counting of votes and provision of avenues for settlement of disputed result.

Ogheneakoke (2014) posits that elections are the hallmarks of democracy and they also serve the purpose of peaceful change in government and confer political legitimacy on the government. As election



is an irreducible feature of democratic governance, electoral politics and elections are often laced with factitious violence, which often compromises the integrity of elections. For instance, the return to democracy in 1999 has multiplied rather than diminished the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria. In fact, since the military finally relinquished political scene by handing over power to civilians, after a cumulative 37 years of authoritarian rule, almost all the general elections (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019) conducted in Nigeria were fraught with violence (Verjee, Kwaja, & Oge, 2020). Consequently, the perverse electoral politics in Nigeria facilitate the development of securitized youths. The implication of the foregoing is that the securitization of youths often takes place when the politicians, hiding behind security challenges in the country, recruit youths as bodyguards and arm them, but in turn, use them as political thugs to perpetuate electoral violence and protect them from interrogation by the state security institutions.

Thus, there is a growing academic discourse on electoral violence and political violence and democratic stability for instance, Paris (2017) argued that democracy is a panacea to political violence; in fact, it is one of the measures the United Nations (UN) often advocates in their intervention efforts in war town countries. However, Keane (2018) argued that democracy rather than been a solution to violence, is a major driver of political violence because elections which are cardinal features of democratization often generate violence in democratic countries. As Stralls (2016) noted, this form of political violence is likely to persist at least for some time in many democratic countries. Similarly, it has been argued in other scholarly circles that elections have become another contributing factor to the outbreak of civil wars in modern Africa (Bekoe 2018). This has mad African states

natural case studies for research on electoral violence – its nature, forms, causes and consequences. For instance, in 2008, Paul Collier and pedro Vicente conducted experimental research on electoral violence in the Nigeria 2007 presidential elections whose result seemed to advance a theory that violence is “systematically associated with the weakest party” employed as an effective means to influence votes in their favour during elections. Hence, they argued that “voter intimidation may be a strategy of the weak analogous to terrorism” (Collier and Vicente, 2018).

This study is motivated by the above debate regarding perpetration of violence as a means to rig elections with no exception of the 2019 general elections: The River State Example.

Thus, the major purpose of this work is to examine the governance in a democratic society and the electoral violence involved in the election process.

The paper also investigates the factors responsible for election violence and irregularities for electoral system in Nigeria. More so, the study is to analyze challenges confronting INEC as an institution. The work will attempt to provide suggestions on how electoral violence can be tackled and the body more credible.

2. Methodology

The study applied qualitative political research and descriptive method adopted to analyze the approach. In using this method, the paper investigates the curse and consequence of electoral violence in a modern democracy. The secondary materials were sourced from printed materials such as textbooks, journals, conference and seminar papers for the purpose of research analysis.

In doing so, the rich literature reviews, theoretical exploration mainly from other related works formed the relevant information for further study on the work.



3. Literature Review and Conceptual Discourses

Election

Election is the cardinal principle of democracy, though, not a sufficient determinant of democracy, but remains the primary indicator for democratic governance in any society. The capacity to choose one's ruler, it is believed, to be vital, in driving a government forward after scarring internal or external battles. Sadly, though, the conduct of vote-casting is usually not as easy as it may initially look, with several experts and researchers classifying them as turning points for violent acts. Elections have become a climax for violence and uncertainty in many states in Nigeria (Ikyase & Egberi, 2019).

Bamgbose (2011) avers that election depicts the process involved in the conduct of elections either at the public or private level. He, further, stated that electoral process at the public level is the process of planning and conducting elections to choose representatives of the people in public offices of governance such as the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government at state and national levels. Similarly, Robert (2021) contended that electoral process at the private level includes all the processes involved in the successful conduct of elections into other types of groups other than those of government such as associations and clubs. Ojo (2021) further defines election, as a "formal expression of preferences by the governed, which are then aggregated and transformed into a collective decision about who will govern, who should stay in office, who should be thrown out, and who should replace those who have been thrown out."

Awopeju (2011) explains that election is a procedure that allows members of a given society to choose representatives who will hold positions such as leaders of local, state and national governments. Dye (2001) opines that election is an important

mechanism for the employment of administrative governance in democratic social order, a major involvement in a democracy; and the way of giving approval to a regime.

Electoral Violence

The concept of electoral violence is made up of two distinct concepts in one, which include electoral and violence. In this section of the conceptual discourse, the two concepts are defined and then reviewed in the context of the subject matter of the current study.

The concept of violence has been examined by scholars in diverse perspectives which all relates to either positive or negative views towards achieving a given goal or end. Bamgbose (2011) opines that violence is an act of aggression that leads to inflicting injury on persons, destruction of properties and causing pandemonium within a given social gathering, community or society.

According to Anifowose (2011), "violence or the threat of violence is a universal phenomenon." It implies that conflict is ubiquitous, general, widespread and common. He further, accentuated that individuals and groups throughout history, have, in one form or another, resorted to violence or its potential use as a tactic of political action. Thus, electoral violence constitutes the main thrust of political violence. To that extent, it precipitates and triggers political violence.

Against this background, Anifowose (2011) asserts:

"The phenomenon of political violence is of particular relevance to Nigeria political history". This is demonstrated by the turbulence in Tiv and the 1965 post-electoral violence in Western Nigeria. He made it dear that the electoral violence, which later, snowballed into political violence in those periods led to



*the demise of the First Republic
in Nigeria.*

This research work serves as an additional literature to the ones written by some eminent scholars such as Remi Anifowose, Ted Gurr, Dollards, etc. on the subject matter. They all epitomized that violence had been used by groups seeking power, by groups holding power, and by groups in the process of losing power. They underscore that violence has been pursued in defense of order by the privileged, in the name of justice by the oppressed, and in the fear of displacement by the threatened.

Ladan-Baki (2016) opines that violence predominantly refers to an intention to cause injury. The question is how to recognize the intention, which is often a pure result of the subjective projection of interests and concerns. For example, the World Health Organization summit on violence in 1996 prepared a formulation that defines "Violence" as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation" (WHO, 1996).

Having understood the concept of electoral and violence, this review of literature turns to the review of thoughts of authors on electoral violence. Robert (2021) stated that electoral violence depicts acts of aggression, thuggery, and other similar acts theater displayed in the course of the electoral process. Balogun (2003) explains electoral violence as any form of violence that arise at any stage (pre, during and post-election) from differences in opinions, feelings and engagements of electoral processes. Ladan-Baki (2016) also noted that electoral violence during general elections included the snatching of ballot boxes to rig and manipulate election results; causing pandemonium in polling stations to hinder voters from voting; beating up electoral officers and sometimes

killing same in the process when weapons such as guns and cutlasses are used during the elections.

This preliminary claim can be supported by the NELDA (National Electoral Democracy and Autocracy) project, which showed that between' 1945 and 2010, one-fifth of electoral rounds organized throughout the world faced electoral violence with human casualties (Ogeneakoke, 2014) . The truth is that many politicians elected to. the office, their supporters, and political activists have altered their perception of electoral competition in a form of zero- sum logic with direct consequences for their opponents (in terms of access to offices, goods, services and other benefits).

Democratic Consolidation

Okeke (2015) argues that democratic consolidation is an offshoot of democracy as a political system, and is refers to a set of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its affair. Emphasizing the relationship between democratic consolidation, Chief Security Officers and political development in a nation, he argues further, that the support for Chief Security Officers in their advocacy role for competitive politics is one of the hallmarks of a true democratic society.

The democratic consolidation in Nigeria has, been characterized by determination of the nation's political actors to squarely face the challenges of vagaries of democracy (Ipinoyomi, 2015). For instance, he alluded to the tendencies of political bookmakers who envisioned doom and destruction as aftermath of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The elections have since been conducted, won and lost and the unpredictable Nigeria State did not break up. This is a symbol of democratic consolidation.

Democratic consolidation further evinced itself, when there was a change of baton in the governance in Nigeria, after the candidate of the All-Progressive Congress



(APC), Retired General Muhammadu Buhari, defeated the sitting President of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Peoples Democratic Party in the 2015 Presidential election. In democratic configurations, all this present the portrait of democratic consolidation, particularly from 1999, when the country returned to the path of democracy, after the long period of military aberration (Okeke, 2015).

Another index of democratic consolidations is the freedom of speech. The regime of Goodluck Jonathan did allow the citizens in the country to express some provocative views about his government and were not even molested by government, knowing that the hunting of some of such characters in the past ended in wild goose chase (Eziukwu, A. 2018). The civil society has the liberty to assemble and engage in the political system, citizens can retrieve information from multiple alternative sources that are protected under the rule of law. This gives a brief understanding of what democratic means in the context of democracy consolidation. When the sanctity of an electoral outcome is usually upheld in a polity, it is indicative of democratic consolidation. As a matter of fact, the sanctities of the previous electoral outcomes in Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999 were upheld. Though, some of these electoral outcomes were challenged at the law court due to irregularities perceived during the electoral process.

Guillermo (1992) notes that the overall change from an authoritarian to a democratic regime contains, not one but two transitions: the first leads to the “installation of a democratic government,” and the second to the “consolidation of democracy,” or to “the effective functioning of a democratic regime.”

The term “democratic consolidation” shall carry a specific and precise meaning: expected regime stability. In this sense, we can take a democracy to be consolidated as soon as we reach the conclusion that its

probability of breakdown is very low, or the other way round, that its probability of survival is very high. In other words, democratic consolidation “reaches closure” when all relevant observers - including “major political actors,” “the public at large,” and also the academic experts - “expect the democratic regime to last well into the foreseeable future” (Valenzuela 1992:70).

Guillermo O’ Donnell (2016) claims that a democracy is consolidated when power is alternated between rivals, support for the system is continued during times of economic hardship, rebels are defeated and punished, the regime remains stable in the face of restructuring of the party system, and there exists no significant anti-political system.

Przeworski (2021) states that “democracy is consolidated, when under given political and economic conditions, a particular system of institutions becomes the only game in town; when no one can imagine, acting outside the democratic institutions, when all losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost.”

On democratic consolidation, Robert Dahl (2001:18) says:

“Democratic consolidation studies speak about reaching the goal of democratic continuity, maintenance, entrenchment, survival, permanence, endurance, persistence, resilience, viability, sustainability, or irreversibility. By contrast, negative formulations invoke the necessity of moving beyond democratic fragility, instability, uncertainty, vulnerability, reversibility, or the threat of breakdown. “Democratic consolidation” should refer to expectations of regime continuity—and to nothing else. Accordingly, the concept of a “consolidated



democracy" should describe a democratic regime that relevant observers expect to last well into the future—and nothing else”.

Some scholars have identified pillars of democratic consolidation to include: constitutionalism, the rule of law, the professional civil service, the role of the political institutions in engaging citizens, enhancing the legitimacy of fair elections, and promoting public accountability, transparency and participation of citizens in the governmental affairs of their nation (Straus, S. 2016) .

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts Frustration-Aggression theory of post-colonial state to examine how collective violence and conflicts undermine democratic experiment in Nigeria’s fourth republic focusing on 2019 General Elections.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

Given the emphasis of electoral violence in Nigeria and the constant struggle for political power in a democratic environment, the theory of Dollard et al. (1939), Frustration Aggression is adopted for the purpose of this research. This theory was developed in 1939 by Dollard and colleagues. The frustration-aggression theory is anchored on the assumption that “aggression is always the consequence of frustration.” This theory primarily focuses on aggression, as Dollard theorized that “the occurrence of aggressive actions always presumes the existence of frustration and contra wise, and that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression” (Dollard et al., 1939).

Frustration aggression reflects the reasons for electoral violence because men who want to live beyond their social means do not accept their limitation in defeat and these results into violence as the last resort in order to live beyond their social means.

Frustration aggression theory addresses the pre-election and postelection violence. In cases of pre-election violence, frustration and aggression comes into play when a certain aspirant is power hungry and possibly realizes the indications that he/she may possibly lose to the rival, thereby adopting vehemence for their own personal gains (Tamuno, 1991). In post-election violence, persons who feel cheated on election outcomes, isolated or disadvantaged by the injustice of the electoral practice are likely out of frustration, transfer aggression on other individuals through violent acts.

The relevance of the frustration aggression theory to this current study shows that political actors resort to violence as a means to achieving their aims and exercising power, out of feelings of frustration that leads to aggression, especially when the results of the election would not favour them. This theory helps in understanding the psychological behaviour of persons in the use of violence to achieve selfish interest. Electoral candidates adopt violence when they fail in their bid to win elections, thereby employing thugs to execute their selfish intentions (Ladan-Baki, 2016). Therefore, the frustration aggression theory provides an explanation for electoral violence that has been occurring in Nigeria.

The theory stipulates that events surrounding electoral violence in Nigeria are as a result of fear of defeat exhibited by electoral candidates, which triggers frustration and then transfer of aggression, through the employment of human mercenaries in perpetrating violence in pre. during and after elections. Therefore, to achieve peace, fairness and transparency of elections in Nigeria, the theory specifics the need for enlightenment on the importance of citizens coming out to vote in their masses in support of a free and fair election, making their votes count and as well provisions for well-equipped security



personnel that would safely guard life and properties of voters during elections.

Historically, elections in the country have been an exercise in futility. Broadly speaking, the past efforts towards democratization have collapsed due to fraudulent practices (Okannu 2015). The political elites and institutional failures of the various electoral bodies were responsible to this menace. The electoral body is not independent of the executive (Oyesola 2019). Infact, since the political history of Nigeria, the electoral bodies are tied to the executive, as such, making it very difficult to be truly independent in dealing with their functions. According to Ugoh (2004), most of the post-independence elections in Nigeria were held with bloodletting, an imprecation that organizing a hitch-free election is impossible.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings Nigeria and Electoral Violence: The Rivers State Cases

With 91 registered political parties by the electoral management body (INEC), 69 of which are presenting candidates for the presidency. Despite huge figure of presidential candidates, the competition for the presidency is really a two-horse race. It pits incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All-Progressive Congress (APC) against former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Politicians are all too willing to exploit simmering ethnic, religious, and regional divisions to gain political advantage. They stoke community tension and even target their rival supporters. Not only do average Nigerians bear the brunt of such violence, the knock-on effects to the credibility of Nigeria's political processes is hard to understate (Council for Foreign Relation, 2019).

Both Buhari and Atiku are Muslims from the northern part of the country, which somewhat lowers the risk of bloodshed

(Crisis Group Africa Reports, 2019). Yet, the election faces significant dangers of disruption, some familiar, others' recent and more worrisome. In 2019, the violence that erupted during the rally of All Progressive Party Congress resulted into destruction of over 500 million Naira worth of public utilities (Falade, 2021).

Rivers State

Despite the various security agencies in Nigeria's assurances of improved security, the elections for governor and state assemblies were bloody in many states of the federation. (International Centre for Investigative Reporting; ICIR, 2019). Several people were reportedly killed either by unidentified hoodlums or by security personnel themselves. In fact, seven persons, including police officers and government officials, were reported dead between Friday, March 8th and Saturday, March 9th, in Rivers State within the areas that frequently prone to violence during election times. However, some reports, however, put the number of dead at four (Falade, 2019).

Rivers state, the oil-producing Niger Delta, has seen several fiercely fought elections, replete with vote buying, rigging, ballot box, snatching and blocking of roads to hinder access to polling stations, as well as kidnappings and assassinations of candidates and prominent supporters. The state recorded the most election-related fatalities of any state, during the gubernatorial election (See Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Politically Motivated Killings and Damage to Property Before, During and After the 2019 General Elections in Rivers State, 2019).

On polling day, INEC reported that Rivers state witnessed almost 66 of the incidents of violence targeting polling stations, the commission's officials, voters and election materials countrywide. The 2019 election in Rivers State has not been totally dissociated from the factors fueling the electoral violence in the state.



The state remains a major theatre of the national contestation between the All-Progressive Congress (APC), although, the party's candidate has been officially disqualified by INEC, yet party has consistently declared their support to Biokpomabo Awara, the governorship (AAC) in Rivers State. The fierce battle between the two parties stems from the state's internal politics, particularly the bitter rivalry between Nyesom Wike, the incumbent governor, and Rotimi Amaechi, his predecessor who served from 2007 to 2015. The two former allies parted ways in 2013, when Amaechi defected from the PDP to the APC. The acrimonious 2015 gubernatorial race deepened the rift, as Wike, running on the PDP ticket; defeated Amaechi's backed candidate Rotimi Amaechi, who became the federal transport minister and Buhari's re-election campaign chief, played a key role in ensuring Buhari's victory at the centre (Falade, 2019). In the process, a group of armed gangs and cults were formed (The Fund for Peace, April 2018), These groups have penetrated the state's Emohua, Ikwerre, Khana, Ogba, Egbema, Ndoni and Ahoada local government areas (Crisis Group interview, Port Harcourt-based civil society leader, Abuja, 2019). As in previous elections, many of them are offering their services to politicians to intimidate opponents and rig the polls (The Fund for Peace, 2019). Often, these groups could contribute significantly to election violence, particularly in remote riverine villages with little or no law enforcement or where the overstretched federal police fear to tread.

Although, the state government's establishment of a new security organization known as the Rivers State Neighborhood Safety Corps Agency in March 2018, and the federal governments clampdown on the agency's recruits, may have added to the risk. The agency's stated objective is to supply federal security agencies with intelligence to help fight

crime and improve public safety (ICIR, 2019). Some opposition leaders had expressed fears that members of the organization, who feel beholden to Wike, may harass his opponents; or that the governor could deploy them to obstruct and disrupt the expected heavy deployment of federal security personnel in the state during the election. On 15 March 2018, Wike signed Neighborhood Watch Safety Corps Law No. 8 of 2018, a group similar to those in several other states like Lagos, Oyo and Kogi states respectively. Governor Nyesom Wike thereafter gives assent to Rivers State Neighborhood Watch Safety Corps Law (This Day, 16 March 2018).

Wike defeated Awara, who received 173,859 votes, to score with 886,264 votes. Wike, however, was allegedly prevented from being declared winner IN EC. According to Awara, who claimed-that Lawrence Chuku, a representative of his party, was denied entry to the collation centre after the outcome was announced and stated:

"I want the people of Rivers, especially my thronging followers, who are suffering from what they are witnessing, to maintain hope. Victory is assured. We are going to recover the mandate that was taken" (Sahara reporter, June 24, 2019).

On the whole, the total number of deaths recorded during the election was 105, while 120 people were seriously injured in Rivers State during the course of 2019 general elections (Fund for Peace, 2019).

Causative Tendencies of Electoral Violence in Undermining Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Lack of Internal Democracy within Political Parties

This happens when there are no levels playing ground or internal democracy within and among political parties.



Especially, when the party leaders are not carrying out their responsibilities and duties during elections, the aggrieved political contestants use this vacuum as a way of orchestrating violence. Desperate and power drunk politicians often sponsor thugs, unemployed youths, stark illiterates and hooligans to disrupt the peaceful conduct of a particular election. This was observed between the two major parties of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All-Progressive Congress (APC) as a result of level playing ground with political parties. According to Ogheneakoke (2014:18), "lack of internal democracy, irregularities in registration and technical challenges during elections are responsible for electoral violence".

Inefficiency of the Electoral Commissions

Animasaun, A. (2019) stated that the inefficiency of the electoral commissions in conducting its duties and responsibilities also contributed to incidence of violence during the 2019 general elections. As a way of curbing this problem in subsequent elections, through the Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC) engages all political parties via their stakeholders in discussions on rules guiding the conduct of free and fair elections as a means to achieve a peaceful and credible election outcome. However, in situations where the commission fails to call all political parties together in a meeting, there is likely to be violence because political parties will not be able to inform their candidates on rules of engagement.

Inadequate Security Personnel

In instances where a security agent (police) tries to support a particular party to rig an election in a polling unit, there is likely to be election violence. This leads to feeling of grievance from opposition parties, thereby resorting to violence as a means of disrupting election outcomes (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, U. 2020).

Patronage and Clientelism Political Systems

This is a situation whereby the formal political institutions are superseded by informal relationships based on the exchange of resources and political loyalty; political supporters seem willing to perpetuate election violence in support of the candidates they prefer.

Forms and Character of the State

Osaghae (1989) identifies the form and character of the state as implicating factors towards electoral violence in Nigeria. He asserted that states that are totalitarian such as most African states, where the exercise of powers of the state is based on the use of force; capturing the political power translate to capturing all other things. When these states embrace democracy, the character of the state remains and is still evident. The result eventually is unhealthy rivalry and competition for power during elections which ultimately translate into electoral violence.

Zero Sums Electoral Competition

Olarinmoye (2008) averred that electoral corruption is the consequence not just of the greed of god fathers and politicians but the rationality of zero-sum electoral competition which demands that political parties in Nigeria resort to individuals such as god fathers to effect electoral success through activities that distort the electoral process. Thus, the stakes of election are often seen as opportunities to engage in corruption and economic rent-seeking. This, in turn, leads to highly factionalized politicians, often along religious, sectarian, or ethnic lines or along party political divides, where control of the state leads to the reinforcement of class divisions or economic opportunities along lines of social difference.

Evidently- enough, the electoral body, INEC, has not conducted a credible election. In fact, from the fourth republic till now, none of the electoral bodies including INEC has conducted credible



elections. Every effort to conduct free, fair and credible elections were thwarted by politicians who see the election as “a do or die affairs”

Therefore, the 2019 election in Nigeria was not without recorded violence despite over militarization of the polls. The INEC, today requires a policy backing for total independent mainly in the appointment of the chairperson as to achieve its objectives and redeem its image.

With the necessary political will, this development would help stamp out the culture of impunity so that perpetrators of electoral offences can be prosecuted and be held accountable for such offences. There must be evidence of prosecution of violators since a climate and culture of impunity will undo the best rules or regulations. It is based on the above that scholars have argued that government should ensure that the Justice Mohammed Uwais Electoral Reform Recommendations are fully implemented through ‘legislation by the National Assembly. Politically, and in terms of development, leaders who emerge as products of violence-prone elections are not likely to be the people’s choice, and are not likely to consider the peoples’ opinion on policies and issues that affect their daily lives. While such leaders lack legitimacy by procedure, they may spend their entire term in office trying to secure legitimacy by results which may lead to necessary people-oriented policies because aggrieved citizens that had suffered mandate theft may withdraw into their cocoon, and from the arena of the state. In this regard, a state that have agenda of development and yearns for sustainable national development should educate its citizenry, about the inherent dangers of allowing an entrenched culture of electoral and political violence as part of the features of the political system. Unless this is achieved, the problem of electoral violence remains perpetually intractable in Nigeria.

Although the 2019 general elections fell short of the level of success as seen in the 2015 election, but they did solidify the historic, peaceful, and democratic transfer of power that took place in Nigeria that year.

The danger of electoral violence has increased by persistent social and economic inequality, ethnic and religious conflicts, and structural flaws including corruption and underdeveloped governmental institutions. INEC receives uneven public support and praises for conducting a credible election in 2015, the conflicting concerns have been raised about the conduct of the 2019 general election. Indeed, both communities and supported the success shown in the 2015 but same communities condemned the institution in the 2019 poll (United States Institute of Peace Special Report, 2019).

Thus, to varying degrees, the 2019 election in Nigeria’s was not without recorded violence despite over militarization of the polls (Ebere & Berwind, 2019). In Nigeria, all of the elements of Timothy Sisk’s expansive definition of electoral-related violence have occurred: Acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arise in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of elections - such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll and to influence the outcomes: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office.

The majority of the 36 states in the nation have violence concerns, according to civil society, research, and other groups. For instance, a coalition of civil society organizations known as the Civil Society Joint Action Committee issued a warning about potential unrest in twenty states (Verjee, Kwaja, and Oge, 2020). While issues could arise practically anywhere in the country, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and Adamawa appear to be



particularly high on the list of concerns with varying degrees of severity. According to the geopolitical information firm SBM Intelligence, there were more electoral violence(s) in 2019 than in recent elections, with sixteen states being particularly vulnerable. Hence, “(SBM Intelligence, 2019).

For the nation to be able to achieve this and strengthen democratic institutions and deepen democracy, politicians, their supporters and the electorates alike should/shun all forms of electoral and political violence. After the sustained process and strategy of political education, apprehended perpetrators of electoral violence should be punished according to the existing law.

5. Conclusion

The paper has tried to explore the electoral body, INEC in Nigeria and reason not to conduct a credible election since 1999. The work exposed the challenges and factors that underlined the body which include appointment of the chairman by the president, corruption among the officials, politicians taking the elections as their business, the fear of losing elections, etc. In fact, evidence has shown that none of the electoral bodies including INEC has ever conducted credible elections since independence. Every effort towards conducting a free, fair and credible elections were thwarted by politicians who see the election as “a do or die affairs.” Infact, these politicians applied violence during the election period by increasing persistent social and economic inequalities, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as structural flaws. Besides, the make use of thugs’ security agents, and formation of illegal agents to cause violence in areas dominated by the opposition parties which, on occasions, resulted into deaths, destruction of properties, and unlawful detention of opponents’ supporters.

Summary of the work

There is a galaxy of ways that Nigeria could use to curb electoral violence and strengthen democratic governance. They include: constitutional amendment; electoral reform; pressure from civil society groups through agenda-setting; change in the character of the elite; political education etc. firstly, the most important of them which forms the fulcrum of this paper is political education. All others rest on its effectiveness. It has been argued at several fora that the significance and utility of political education cannot be over-emphasized. This is because political education as it were is the conduit-pipe through which the political cultural values and behavioural patterns of the society are imbibed and internalized. Since education has been identified as the launch-pad of a nation-state’s development agenda.

Political Education constitutes a herculean task for the several agents of education in Nigeria; namely: the family; peer groups; schools (primary, secondary, and tertiary); religious institutions; civil society organizations and the fourth estate of the realm.

For schools as agent of socialization and social change, the need to abhor all forms of violence must be incorporated into our school curriculum. The political education that the pupils and students would receive will both in the short and long term deepen our political culture and socialization processes.

Therefore, Nigerians should know the dynamic mature of our politics, and the emerging trends that shape the political culture and determine the direction of political socialization, and in relation to electoral violence, should learn, imbibe and internalize the political sociology of electoral behaviour education. This would help the nation to either make or mar its emerging democratic order.



Secondly, the citizens also need to know and appreciate the workings of the nation's election management body. (INEC) including the enabling legal framework. This framework outlines the amendment of the 1999 Constitution, the 2010 Electoral Law (Act), and other related regulations and rules to enhance the integrity, relevance, and adequacy of the institutional reform of INEC. That understanding must include citizenship education that encompasses a good understanding of the legal basis of electoral governance with a very useful model that operates at three levels: (a.) rule making; (b.) rule application, and, (c.) rule adjudication. This legal basis stipulates the punishment to be meted out to electoral offenders no matter how highly placed. Thirdly, legally and constitutionally too, an Election Malpractice Tribunal should be established as recommended by the Justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais' Electoral Reform Committee. The Tribunal would enable cases to be discharged expeditiously.

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