Electoral Violence and Democracy Implication for National Security and Prospects for Conflict Mitigation: The Case of Nigeria Since Independent

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Abstract

This paper historiography approach and analyzed the reoccurring election crisis since independence and the threat it poses to national security in the country. No doubt election is a major tool for choosing political office holders. It is hoped that it should serve as a veritable and equitable means of ensuring transparency, accountability and mobilization of the populace for political participation at all levels. Sadly, elections in Nigeria have been characterized by rigging, snatching of ballot boxes political intimidation and killings before, during and after elections. The results has often been the enthronement of inept and unpopular government and it has given rise to crisis of legitimacy, breakdown of law and order and general threat to national security. This research identified lack of visionary political leadership, poverty and corruption as road blocks to democracy. In an effort to finding ways of adopting liberal democracy to the nation, the paper maintained that the democracy that would work in Nigeria must be adopted to the country's numerous culture, traditions and

historical circumstances. To mitigate electoral violence in the future, the research emphasized the significance of a new political culture of tolerance and accommodation, bargaining and compromise, conflict and consensus which should be displayed by the political actors.

Introduction:

The declaration of universal human right recognizes periodic free and fair elections as essential component for improving the legitimacy of a government and strengthening the social contract between the governed and the government. (UDHR, 1948). However, as vital as elections are to building strong democracies, the international peace institute IPI (2012), affirmed that elections remained the only element of the democratic and legitimization process. And where other structural institutional, and normative democratic conditions are not presence to defuse tensions that might arise before, during and after election process, elections can present windows of susceptibility to risk of violence conflicts. Considering their competitive nature in certain circumstance, elections can promote ethic, religious, and other societal differences, allowing politicians to leverage on them for partisan purposes, thereby triggering violence. The amount of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria has become so high that if nothing is done, the country may one day go into flames that may consume its citizens. This however necessitates urgent solution in order to mitigate future electoral violence in Nigeria and as well secure her national security. How can the country mitigate electoral violence and all the short coming associated in the electoral process? How can the nation consolidate democratic rule and minimize or reduce the numerous forces that fight against it?

In an effort to respond to the above question, this research through national and regional analysis X-rayed the dynamics of scenarios of election related crisis. Based on these scenarios, the paper develop a set of recommendations for politicians that can be practically implement before the elections are fixed to begin in the foreseeable future. This study tends to investigate how electoral violence affected the survival of democracy and national security in the country through the historical methods of analyses. For the purpose of this narrative, this research is dichotomize into five section. The number one section is the introduction: the

number two section concentrates on the conceptual clarification; number three deals with the historical perspective on electoral violence; the forth section of the work deals with national and regional analysis of post-election violence scenarios with a view to identifying factors that encourage electoral violence and affected national security in Nigeria: finally, the fifth section deals with perspective for violence conflict mitigation in the country's democratic environment and the enthronement of an enduring and sustainable democratic order in the country; and the work concludes with recommendation for the way forward.

Conceptual Analyses

It is vital for us to identify in this section some important concepts that should stand as a guide to our discussion. Elections are no doubt important means of deciding those to represent the citizens in different public office positions in the society. Elections grant citizens the influence over policy making process. (powell, Jr. 2000). The aim of election is to give the incumbent a seeming appearance of popularity, acceptability and galvanize the citizens for participation in development (Moveh: 2008). According to (Dye 2001) in liberal democracy, elections not only serve as an instrument of accountability, transparency and promotion of legitimacy, but should be seen as a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies.

Election and Democracy

The choice of a leader through popular vote defines and determines what democracy is all about. Going by this claim, there is the need to comprehend the link between election and democracy. According to Akhakpe (2006), election is fundamental to the effective functioning of modern representative democracy and democracy is the only means through which the people have the opportunity of accepting or rejecting the people who occupy leadership positions. The freedom for people to organize themselves into political associations to compete to form a government, exercising their civil rights and obligations in an election as picture of what a political system should be, going by Sand brook's (cited in Adejumebi, 2000) description, apathy captures the organic connection between democracy and elections. For this connectivity to be productive, acceptable and ensure successful elections, some regulatory rules, mechanisms and important democratic institutions such as an elected parliament whose election is overseen by an

independent electoral commission, an executive that is answerable to parliament, an independent judiciary, an independent human rights commission, a well quipped police force and the Army must be put in place. These would no doubt go a long way to mitigate electoral violence in the future.

The Concept of Violence

In general terms, the concept of violence is connected to any form of action which result in destruction, pain or suffering to an individual or group of persons. On the part of Galtung (1969), while conceptualizing violence in the term of harmful influence, opined that the end product of violence is its deprivation of health of the individual by means of killing. Furthermore, Galtung categorized violence into psychological, physical and structural violence. He went further to opine that physical violence begins with either slight and/or hard assaults in form of fighting. While psychological violence has to do with a situation where citizens are constantly apprehensive of what will happen in a given threatened situation. According to Albert (2003), in such situation, the people are left without a defense as the security operatives cannot guarantee or safeguard the life and properties of the masses. However, structural violence appears in the form of an organized coercion of citizens by government to register or vote or be denied certain national facilities, use of the incumbency factor to give undue advantage to some candidates, exclusionary acts and policies, partisan behaviour of law enforcement agencies to mention but a few. (Nwolise 2007:155-179)

Electoral Violence

So far there is no universal or generally accepted definition of what electoral violence is all about. Nevertheless, from the spectrum of available definitions it is possible to gather what could serve as a working definition for the purpose of this study. According to Balogun (2003), electoral violence has to do with all forms of violence carried out by either political contestants, their supporters or sympathizers at different stages in the process of election. These stages or forms of violence could be categorized as pre-election, Election Day and post-election violence. This could also take the form of intra-or- inter-party fighting among political actor. Some scholars are of the opinion that greed; electoral abuses, ringing of election like the just concluded 2023 presidential election by the independent. Electoral commission in favour of the ruling party The All

Progressive Congress (APC), abuse of political power by the incumbent; alienation, marginalization and exclusion as causes of electoral violence. In a wider spectrum electoral violence is an element of violence. It simply has to do with any form of violence that is linked to any form of political activity.

Political Violence

The idea of political violence simply refers to the totality of violence that has to do with the process of politic. This could result from within or outside the country, and manifest in various forms. Political violence has been defined as considerable destructive use of force perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or group of individuals with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and whose objective effect is of political importance, to modify the behaviors of others in the existing arrangement of a power structure within a particular territorial enclave (Anifowose, 1982, Edigin and Obakhedo, 2010).

National Security

One more basic concept in this discourse is national security. The idea of national security could mean different thing at different times to different individuals. According to Adebayo (2011) national security is "a measure that ensure peaceful co-existence and development art large" He went further to opine that where security exist, there is a probability of absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension over loss of life, liberty, property, goal and values, among others. On the other hand, Akhakpe (2012) also emphasized that security is of vital importance for development started that security could take the form of human security, nation security, cyber security, food security, economic security, and so no. national security concern the appreciation and development of state apparatus of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally. On the other hand human security implied protecting the citizenry from hunger, disease, poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, to mention but a few. It is pertinent to note here that human security remain the most effective instrument for national security and not the building and amassing of arms and ammunition for warfare that will eventually destroy the state. The fact that economic freedom is an important aspect of national security and the reason why several African states are unstable economically; politics is partly due to lack of adequate human security.

It is therefore defective to approach the question of national security from the perspective of the arm forces of the nation. The ultimate basis for national security essentially lies in freedom from, disease, ignorance, joblessness, and arbitrary power. This however is a radical approach to national security as champion by the neo-marxist scholar like Nnoli (1995) who amongst others related national security to the satisfaction of basic human needs. Despite the huge budgetary allocations to security agencies for the proper maintenance and management of internal security in the country, it seems to have been an exercise in futility. This is the reason why several scholars have argued convincingly that Nigeria's security management is bedeviled with incorrect diagnoses and very poor institution building in the polity (Asuni, 2007, Aghedo and Oarhe, 2009 and Usman 2010).

Historical Survey of Nigeria's Electoral Violence

The historical analysis of election violence in Nigeria would focus mainly on consolidated election than on transition election. All the general elections conducted in the country since 1954 can be generally grouped into two: consolidation and transition elections. Transition elections here implies the general elections conducted by a departing political power which include those conducted by the departing colonial masters in 1954 and 1959, and those conducted by the various military administrations in 1979, 1993, and 1999. Relatively, consolidation elections are generally elections carried out by a civilian administration and are aimed at consolidation of civil rule; these include the 1964/65, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011, elections. All these elections put together the one of 1965, 1983 and 2011 witnessed significant incident of post-election violence. This post-election violence analysis is predicated on the premise to ascertain the extent to which Nigeria as a democratic nation has built and consolidated democratic culture and values as one democratic government succeeds the other. Through available records, transition elections are regarded to be relatively more peaceful than consolidation elections. This is not to sweep under the carpet the prevalence of electoral violence in transition elections conducted by the military, but obviously the intensive and magnitude of violence is less perhaps due to the intimidating presence of the military might. (Nwachukwu and Ozodi; 2012). At this point, this section brings to the fore the magnitude of electoral violence in all the consolidation elections conducted since the year 1964.

Nigeria's political history since 1st of October 1960, is overflowing with instances of electoral violence and has been described as been overshadowed by series of abusive and unaccountable governments. Elections over the years were not regarded as important practices through which democratic institutions can be strengthened and facilitate peaceful transition of power, but they were perceived as a violent means of obtaining the spoils of democracy (Sule,2009). The twine fundamental problems of lack of visionary leadership and inequitable system of political succession to power have continued to present deadly obstacle to national survival, development, and growth in Nigeria's economy.

The problem of poor leadership and inequitable system of political succession manifested in the western region during the first republic in the form of factional struggles and controversy over census figures. These two matters were responsible for the western region crisis between 1962 and 1965 which brought in its wake series of constitutional crisis, which pervaded the country's political environment and served as foundation for the military to take over power in 1966 (James S.C, 1986).

Nigeria's number one constitutional crisis was fired up by the 1962 factional struggles within the Action Group (AG) for the control of the legislative assembly in the Western Region. What were the causes? With the federal election of December 1959, national council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) formed a coalition government, which sawthe emergence of Tafawa Belawa as the prime-minister, Nnamdi Azikwe of NCNC, as the president of the country, while Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the Action Group (AG) who was elected into the federal house of representatives remained as leader of the opposition as well as a party leader. In 1962, during the annual convention of Action Group, Akintola, the premier of western Nigeria was accused of having mismanaged the resources of western Nigeria. Akintola reacted and staged a walk out on the convention to the greatest surprise of Awolowo.
To ensure discipline and acting under the rule of party supremacy, Mr. Akintola was not only expelled from the Action Group, but the party persuaded the western governor, Mr. Adesoji Aderemi to sack Akintola. As Aderemi refused to carry out the orders of the Action Group, Adegbenro was appointed by the party to take his place. This was not acceptable to Akintola who in turn dismissed Adegbenro the

new governor who also refused to vacate his position. Akintola however continued to stay put in powers as a result of the support base he enjoyed from his crowd of followers and sympathizers. However, he was smart to form a new political party known as the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which established a full alliance with the Northern People Congress (NPC). According to Oluleye, (1985:22) this was the genesis of political battle within Akintola's domain. As at the time Adegbenro convened the western house of assembly and made an attempt to muster the support of members for a vote of confidence on his new government, a serious fight occurred among the law maker in the house. Reacting to the sad incidence, the federal government declared a state of emergency in western Nigeria for a period of six months. The western Nigerian government was eventually suspended and in its place a sole administrator Adekeyojo Majekodumi, was appointed to oversee the business of government. Consequently, the military was deployed to maintain law and order in the region. Meanwhile, numerous Action Group leaders were arrested and detained. Unfortunately, Awolowo the leader of one faction of the Action Group along with other prominent Action Group members, such as, Anthony Enahoro, Micheal Omisade, Grace Ikoku and Akanbi Onititri, were incarcerated by an order of detention, having been alleged of plotting to topple the federal government.

Awolowo, though denied the charges, the federal government pressed on with felony charge and by September 1963, he and some of his supporters were sentenced to several jail terms ranging from two to ten years. The deployment of soldiers into the crises had its consequences for the survival of democracy in the country. Scholars described it as an unnecessary show of force and the entry of soldiers into the conflict prepared their minds for eventual seizure of political power by the nation's military Akpan (2003). The Coker led commission that was set up to investigate the allegations leveled against Akintola in its report released on December 1962 also cleared and restored him back to power.

The second phase of constructional crisis was the controversy over the 1962/1963 census figures. The census of 1962 was carried out to determine the number of federal seats each region was entitled to. It was carried out mainly due to the structural defects of the old federation which gave the northern region majority population over the southern region. This had often resulted to frictions among

the major ethnic groups. (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) the first census figuresof(1962) was out rightly rejected by the federal parliament on the ground of alleged inflation of figures in the Northern region. However, a recount of 1962 showed that the North had 29,777,986 people, the west 12,811,837 and the east 12,388,646. The census figures meant that the North had more seats than all the other regions put together. This did not improve matters and a compromise, the federal parliament consented to accept the new figures in the interest if national unity. Party leaders were only interested in the political advantages which the inflated figures could offer in improving their representation in the federal parliament.

Consolidation Election of 1964

The third phase of constitutional crisis was unleashed by the federal election of 1964, which was characterize by incident of murder and arson. Historically, Nigeria's' elections could be traced to the 1964 general election which was the first after the exit of the British colonial administration. According to Nwankwo (2002) the general election of 1964 was a significant landmark in the political history of the country due to the blow it dealt on the unity of the country in the coming years. There were realignment of the political forces in the 1964 federal elections in which Action Group (AG) and NCNC the two prominent southern-based parties went into alliance with the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) to form the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) for the sole purpose of wrestling power from the Northern people's congress (NPC). The Northern People's Congress on the other formed a pact with the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the Mid-West Democratic Front (MDF) to form the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). However, with the formation of NNDP in the west, the solidarity of the south was weakened. Several members of the NCNC, a coalition party in the government of the west had many of its party faithful defecting to the new party, while NCNC reduced the opposition. The UPGA strategy was to Boycott the election on the ground that there would not be free and fair election. The actual cause of the problem was the irregular method of nominating candidates for the elections. According Aderibigbe, (2006) there were reports that some electoral officers hid themselves and would not be found by the UPGA candidates who wanted to file their nomination papers. There were also reports that some UPGA candidates were

kidnapped in the northern and western regions so that they would not be able to file in their nomination papers.

However, this strategy failed as most of their candidates in some constituencies contested the election and eventually NPC won with a great number of votes. On the other hand UPGA rejected the results, while the NNA that single-handedly carried out the elections, accepted the result. Thus there followed a national stalemate. Pressure was mounted on the president by the UPGA to nullify the entire exercise. The president however declined to do so. As tensions became very high it was obvious that in 1964 there would be a change by force. On January 4th 1965, the president announced to the country that a ''broadly based national government'' had been formed to ensure unity and continuity of the federation. Thus Tafawa Balawale was called to form a new government.

A fourth dimension of constitutional crisis was experienced in October 1965, during the western regional election. The election was marked by massive rigging. In the final official count, Akintola's party was said to have won seventy-four of the assembly's ninety-four seats. Although the majority of people clearly rejected Akintola's government at the polls and voted massively for the AG party but he was returned to power. Mischievously, through gross electoral malpractices in which many opposition candidates and electoral officers were kidnapped or disappeared mysteriously on the day of election. The declaration of Akintola as winner of the election marked an era of post-election violence in the country. The election sparked violent demonstrations, confusion and chaos throughout the region. According to Nwankwo (2002), that "the situation was desperate and the people resorted to massive destruction, arson and looting. The plain fact was that they did not want the government they had". Since the ballot paper failed to give them the correct verdict as regards voting, the opposition who did not take it lightly went on full-scale rampage: killing sympathizers of Akintola's government, houses and cars were burnt down. According to Anifowseose (1982), protest in the wake of the regional elections in some areas led to widespread violence and inter-communal rioting that claimed over two hundred lives. As anarchy, chaos and violence were loosed upon the western region in an un-presented scale, the opposition party formed a parallel government and published its own election result. As at December 1965, the western region was still ungovernable but a state

of emergency which would have ensured peace was not declared. While the western region was in political disasters, the north and the middle belt crisis were out of control. Unhindered movement between the north and east was hampered as fear became the order of the day in the country. The prime minister of the nation's responses to these crisis and those of the immediate past (the census and election fiasco of 1963 and 1965) was very inappropriate. According to some observers his preoccupation with the organization of commonwealth conference in Lagos at that time portrayed him as being politically insensitive to national challenges.

Expectedly, this state of affairs set the stage for military takeover. Thus on January 15th 1966, they strucked and the fledging nation's democracy was truncated by the actions of its very own actors. From 1966, the Nigerian military held sway until 1979, when they handed over power to another democratically elected civilian government headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

Consolidation Election of 1983

The Shehu Shagari led civilian government conducted a civilian to civilian election. The re-election of the incumbent in 1983 saw the resurgence of many of the rigging techniques of the 1964 and 1965 in connivance with the electoral umpire, Federal Election Commission (FEDECO) and security agents. According to Aderibigbe, (2006), the declaration of this result engulfed several states of the nation in what could be regarded as the highest level of social unrest in the history of Nigeria. But again, like its first republic counterpart, there was a repeated story of massively rigged elections through violent means. Once again the military took over the seat of power on December 31, 1983, thus the theatre was set for the second wave of military intervention in Nigeria's political history. The Nigerian military from then held onto power until May 29, 1999, when a civilian administration was restored. This is not to conclude that attempts were not made to democratize the country's political system. It is pertinent at this junction to point out that between independence in 1960 and 1999 when civilian government was restored, the country produced only two democratically elected governments. However, both were over-throned in military coup de' tats before successfully completing a second term in office. The Human Right Watch. (2007) was emphatic,

when it stated that as at the year 2000 AD, the Nigeria's military had ruled the nation for nearly 30 years of its first 40years of independence, excluding the three months of short-lived Interim National Government (ING). Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the country has not taken serious measured to develop and strengthen an enduring democracy. The results has always been incidences of fraudulent election practices aimed at favoring the ruling party.

Consolidation Election of 2003

The general election of 1999, which brought Olusegun Obasanjo to power, were characterized by widespread frauds. In comparison however, the polls recorded was abysmal. The elections of 2003 were more pervasively and clearly rigged than the defective 1999 elections and far more deadly. 2003 elections were flawed by fraud as well as serious incidents of violence that were said to have left at least over a hundred people dead and many others injured. According to Human Rights Watch (2004)," members and supporters of the ruling part were responsible for the several abuses, though opposition parties also engaged in political violence." Most deaths occurrences took place when opposing groups of armed gangs fought each other in attempt to control an area and displace supporters of the opposing political party. Furthermore, Human Right Watch did a documentation of how ruling party politicians in the Niger Delta region of the country mobilized and funded armed groups to help rig elections in their favour. The general election of 2003 (including the primaries of the different political parties) will go down in history as the most fraudulent and equal only to a coup d'etat against the good people of Nigeria. In some areas, the election resulted to violence where people were killed and many more injured. Irabor (2012) opined that most of the operators from all sides of the political spectrum have escaped without facing the full wrath of the law. These acts of impunity perpetrated especially by politicians of ruling parties without facing justice is putting across the signal that violence is an acceptable component of the conduct of general elections in the country.

Consolidated Election of 2007

The scenarios described above eventually set the stage for the 2007 elections that brought Umaru Musa Yar'adua and Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan as president and vice president respectively to power which were characterized by such extensive violence and frauds of which both domestic and foreign observes concisely

described as the worst in the history of the nation since independent. According to Human Right Watch's interviews conducted with voters and various observes on the April 2007 election reveals that the general election of April 2007, organized by the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the chairmanship of Maurice Iwu was described as the worst election ever held in Nigeria as a result of unspeakable abnormalities which characterized the entire exercise. For example, the United State of America (USA) based National Democratic Institute (NDI) indicated in its post-election statement that; the electoral process did not meet Nigeria's expectation. (NDI, 2007). The Human Right Watch (2007) which supervised the election in its official report established that the unsuccessful Nigeria's April 2007 pools shed a severe and public light on forms of violence, corruption and criminality that have come to shape the nation's political system and on the extent to which official and institutions at all levels of government accept, encourage and participate in those abnormalities.

Consolidate Election of 2011

The consolidated general election of 2011, though was an improved one but it introduced a new round of violence. Elections were held in most areas of the country under peaceful atmosphere with a few reported cases of violence, hijacking of ballot boxes by party agents and reports of misconduct of law enforcement officers particularly in the south-east Nigeria and the volatile Niger Delta region. In South-eastern part of the country the incumbent's stronghold, where official results in the presidential election in some rural areas recorded close to 100% turn out, elections were also characterized by allegations of vote buying ballot box stuffing and inflation of results were most noticeable. This general presidential election separated the nation along ethnic and religious lines. As election results filtered in on April 17, and it becomes obvious that the strongest opposition party led by Mohammadu Buhari had lost, his supporters took to the streets of most northern towns and cities to protest what they claimed to be the rigging of the results of the elections. The protest resulted into serious sectarian killings in northern states of Nigeria. Muslim faithful's targeted and killed Christians and members of ethnic groups from southern Nigeria, who were perceived to have supported the ruling party by burning their places of worship, shops and houses.

In predominantly Christian communities in Kaduna state, mobs of Christians retaliated by killing Muslims and burning their Mosques and properties. According to reports by the Christina Association of Nigeria (CAN), no less than One Hundred and Seventy Christian faithful were murdered in the post-election violent, scores of hundred more were injured and thousands were internally displaced. CAN further reported that more than three hundred church buildings were set ablaze or destroyed by the Muslim rioters across ten Northern states.

National, State/Regional levels of Analysis of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Since the country's return to democratic governance in the year 1999, election periods have brought about uncertainty and volatility, resulting at times in violence. The analysis shall focus on national, state/regional levels scenarios that X-ray the risk of election. Linked violence: It entails reviewing trends evidence at the national and state levels, in order to comprehend the dynamics of political conflicts that could happen in years to come and find ways to mitigate possible election violence in the country.

National Level of Analysis

At the federal level, some of the factors that might violently undermine the elections include intimidation, the influence of non-state actors, clashes between farmers and pastoralists; ethnic and religious violence, militant and cult groups in the south-south, Boko-haram movements in the North, hostage-taking, INEC logistics setbacks, inter-party and intra-party conflicts, party zoning and consensus candidacies. Apart from the above factors, other present-day national situation and underlying forces will likely have considerable impact on the elections, including the crucial role of the media, the falling price of oil, the crisis in the North East, disenfranchisement of voters. The role of the media in preventing electoral violence cannot be over emphasized because it has the tendency to galvanize the populace towards disputing false rumors that are capable of causing violence. The use of the social media and the "traditional" media such as local radio to create awareness could help mitigate electoral conflicts. The falling price of crude oil in the international market adversely impacted the economic situation in many states, most especially in the Niger Delta where militants often blow up oil pipelines, which sometimes led several oil companies to downsize their workforce. This could be an important political factor

for future elections that could result in violence as peoples livelihoods are altered as a result of the factors pointed so far. Similarity, the fall in crude oil prices has reduced the value of the Nigerian currency. Fears that this could eventually lead to a freeze in the circulation of cash could cause increasing tensions. Nationally, the conjecture was that the above scenarios could lead to actual disenfranchisement of voters and invariably contribute to violence following the 2015 general elections. Disputes could arise regarding distribution of permanent voters' cards if distribution is unequal among states and local government Areas, particularly in the northern region where violent unrest is prevalent. Furthermore, the announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in December 2014 that the estimated 1.5 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) would not vote unless the electoral laws was changed, which seems highly unlikely, could further exacerbate tensions. The 2015 election has come and gone but thanks to Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who without a fight honorably handed over power to the All Progress Congress (APC) led by Mahammadu Buhari, with a note of congratulation. Thus the nation did not see much violence apart from a few reported cases of pre-election and election conflicts. This is not to conclude that the factors responsible for election violence are no longer in the polity.

Remote Causes of Electoral violence

Observers and scholars of high repute have identified the remote causes of electoral violence in the country to include communal identities in politics and communal tensions, culture of impunity to mention but a few. Communal identity and political conflicts had considerably influenced electoral contest and the entire process of politics. Communal tension and political conflicts erupts due to the nature of Nigerian politics, which according to Joseph (1991), is nothing but a "Prebendal politics". When there are so much resources in the country it makes the ownership of state power a means to the end of controlling state resources, individuals groups, communities. States driven by vaulting ambition seek to seize state power in order to control the resources of the state. In most cases this is what spikes off electoral crisis. On the other hand, communal tensions can erupt and degenerate into electoral violence as a result of the game of politics of exclusion which disqualified persons perceived as non-indigenes from partaking in the political process. Culture of impunity has rendered the judicial system and law enforcement agencies ineffective as electoral offenders got away free, while the

victims received little or no redress (Orji and Uzodi, 2011). Members of the security forces and highly placed politicians implicated in violations of civil and political rights and including electoral violence, are also not usually held responsible for their crimes. So far no competent tribunal has been established to deal with such violators and this consciousness of the possibilities of getting away with acts of violence has continued to promote the continuation of electoral violence in the country.

Regional Level of Analysis

Factors that Promote Electoral Violence in Nigeria: An Overview of the Region of Niger Delta

A particular state of emphasis in this region is Bayelsa State. The issue of state, youth and electoral violence is our key point here. It has been observed that at the very heart of electoral violence in Nigeria's polity, there is a complex linkage between the state and the youth who are usually the executors of violent activities. This has been a common occurrence in Nigeria's fourth republic for several political actors to openly recruit and arm the youths to unleash terror upon their opponents and ordinary members of the public during election periods. Unfortunately, many lives have been lost in the process. Before the advent of 1999, civil rule, scholars have established that the Nigerian economic crisis of the 1980's alienated and marginalized the youths, thereby worsening youth restiveness in general. However with the commencement of a new democratic period and attendant rise of the electoral violence and youth restiveness in the country's democratic context. The crucial question to ask is: what role has the state played in either averting or encouraging the high cases of electoral violence over the years. As examined in the theoretical underpinning of electoral violence in democratic context, empirically we shall analyze the situation in Bayelsa State with a view to investigate the factor that influence as the youths to resort to violence, with respect to the process of election. The states subsumed in the analysis with the Niger Delta are: Bayelsa, Rivers, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Imo and Delta are: But as earlier indicated, Bayelsa state is our focal point in the region of the Niger Delta.

Evidence from various general election in Bayelsa state revealed how the incumbent government of the state subverted the electoral process by exploiting the youths. In particular, the government of the state through the incumbent

People's Democratic Party (PDP) used violence as an instrument by arming an arm of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Tompolo and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by "general" Africa. Most of these ex-militants acknowledged the roles they played in various elections in an interview by the human rights watch, where they noted that most of them were promised cash and jobs opportunities for their followers in great quantities. (HRW, 2007:81). There were widespread complaints among these youths that rather than fulfilling their promises, their sponsors including the governors, simply dump them once comfortably deep-seated in office. As noted in an interview conducted by the HRW (2007), some of the youths felt deceived by the kind of agreements they made with the politicians. They felt that having participated in rigging the elections, they deserve a prize. The result of these broken promises was a rapid decay of relations between several aimed groups and their former sponsors. However the use of unemployed youths, cultists and members of security agencies to terrorize political opponent characterized the periods of general elections. The prevalence of the remote causes of electoral violence noted above if not checked on time are likely to cause more crisis in future elections in the state.

North East

In the North East region, the analysis focuses on Bornu State, which was placed under a state of emergency on May 2013. In November 2014, the house of representative did not extend the state of emergency. The primary concerns for election violence in the eastern region involved the main question of whether elections can be held, given the widespread violence and crisis throughout the North East in the past decades. The North East has experienced wide spread crisis due to violence from Jama'atu Ahln Sunna Lil Dawa'ati Wal Jihad (JAS) this activity had implications for the 2015 elections for several reasons. For one, both ruling and opposition parties blamed each other for failing to reduce the violence. In Borno state citizens created the civilian joint task force in an attempt to act against JAS. In this area, it was envisaged that there could be low levels of trust between security agencies and communities, which had the potential to cause low voter turnout in the event of elections taking place. These were the conjectures of 2015 elections which made elections not to be held in some areas that were heavily prone to Boko haram insurgency and the result was general disenfranchisement. The JAS crisis has also caused substantial displacement of individuals especially

in Borno. There is a possible scenario of violence in event of the disenfranchisement of consideration proportion of the voters in the future especially in Borno state where the returning indigenous people who are faced with uncertainties of surviving the peace do not only encounter the difficulties of hunger but might be cut off completely from INEC officials due to problems of logistic. Most of the access roads are heavily mined and unless INEC officials are airlifted, there is every likelihood that lots of voters would be disenfranchised and the opposition might regard it as a ploy to deny them electoral victory and this would possibly generate conflict that might eventually result to violence in forth coming elections.

North West

In the case of the North West region, the following analysis focuses on Zamfara, Kaduna and Kano states. Primary concerns regarding possible electoral violence in this region involve ethno-religious tensions, perceived lack of internal democracy; interparty tensions, and the possibility of postponed elections due to JAS activity in nearby states. In both Kaduna and Kano states, ethno-religious tensions could lead to electoral violence as ethnic groups are highly polarized in both states. In Zarnfara state, high levels of inter and intra-party tensions have the potential to cause violence as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) attempts to regain power from the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Zarnfara state. Former cases of defection from ADD to PDP have caused violence. The possibility of postponed elections could heighten tensions as it could be seen as an abuse of power by current government official. As the possibility of postponement of elections it ruled out since Boko haram has been defeated to an extent by the Nigerian military, lack of internal democracy, ethno-religious tensions and inter party tensions could degenerate into electoral violence as ethnic groups are highly polarized in Kaduna and Kano states respectively. (Nigeria Peace Security Working Group: 2015:2-6).

Prospects for Conflict Mitigation and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

In this section, it is important for us to consider the type of democracy that should be at stake in Africa. It is a truism that democracy has some universal values among which are: press freedom, liberty, respect for the rule of law and constitutionalism. Yet the socio-economic and environmental conditions cannotbe

ignored at this stage of the development of the continent. Poverty, unemployment and famine are ravaging the continent of Africa. Deducing from the above scenario, Ayeni (2010), opined that "hungry, illiterate and poverty stricken people cannot comprehend the true meaning of democracy in the midst of environment degradation and poverty which has denied them access to life sustaining resources and coupled with a winner have all kind if politics'' in which the loser is vanquished. This is the primary issue that has eroded democratic culture in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

Roadblocks to Democracy

Political leadership over the years has been the major obstacle to democracy in Nigeria. According to Achebe (1984), the problem with Nigeria simply is that of leadership. Poverty is the fundamental cause of political, social and economic conflict in the country. It makes it hard for the citizens to take independent decision in electing those who will pilot their affairs in government. Paradoxically however, despite the fact that the country's economy is said to be growing, the proportion of citizens living in poverty is increasing at an alarming rate. Corruption remains the most important hindrance to democracy, economic and social development in the country. Corruption is not only the cause of poverty but most fundamentally it remains the main cause of the colossal waste of the nation's resources. At the national, state and local government levels, there have been allegations and claims of financial misappropriation of public funds meant for development which were diverted into private bank accounts of politicians and public office holders. The administration of local government in the country has been characterized by stealing, looting and misappropriation of funds, and lack of transparency and accountability. (Newswatch, April, 2nd 2012).

The Search for Sustainable Democracy System

Having pointed out the primary challenges to democracy, the way forward entails adapting liberal democracy to the nation's diverse cultures and traditions. We should allow for power sharing among political interest groups with diverse' aspirations to power at the center. The democracy that would work in Nigeria should be adapted to the nation's historical circumstances. According to Joseph (1987), the winner takes-all system has the tendency of dividing Nigeria and must give way to government of national unity. Nigeria should develop a new political

culture of tolerance and accommodation, bargaining and compromise, conflict and consensus which should be embraced by the political actors. This brand of political culture would no doubt mitigate conflict and sustain future democracy and the corporate existence of the country.

Blue Print to Electoral Violence

To eradicate or reduce electoral violence to it barest minimum, Nigeria needs a proper and sound political education taught at all levels of education, because it is the means through which political culture, values and behavioral patterns of society are imbibed and internalized. Our institutions and education planners as agents of socialization and social change should design the curriculum in such a way as to include the abhorrence of all forms of violence. This will go a long way to shape our political culture and socialization process both now and in years to come.

To mitigate future electoral violence, the understanding of the legal basis of electoral governance such as knowing how the country's electoral body INEC, and the enabling legal frame work operates, that is the spelt out amendment of the 1999 constitution, the 2010. Electoral law act and other related regulations and rules is very important (Obakhedo: 2011). This legal basis of electoral governance should operate at the levels of law making, application of the law and the adjudication of the same, and should include a provision that will stamp out the culture of impunity making it difficult for electoral offenders no matter how highly placed to escape the full weight if the law. According to Joseph et al: (2005) in the absence of the above, the climate and culture of impunity is capable of tendering useless the best rules or regulations put in place. The establishment of electoral malpractice Tribunals as recommended by Justice Mohammadu Uwais Electoral Reform Committee be implemented and electoral offenses cases should be discharged without undue delay.

Recommendation and Conclusion

To address some of the issues this study has raised, we hereby put forward the following recommendations. Adequate security funding should be provided by the federal and state government to law enforcement agencies to enable them arrest and persecute electoral offenders. The Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) should ensure that political parties and their members abide by the provisions if the constitution. The Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Electoral Act, and the political party's code of conduct, most especially those provisions that are connected to campaigns, political rallies, processions as well as involvement of party supporters in election violence. Civil society groups should initiate and encourage civil and voter sensitization programme that would promote peaceful democratic culture and mitigate electoral violence in the country.

In conclusion, in this work we have attempted to find ways of mitigating electoral violence in the country and the threats it present to national security and concluded among other things that adapting liberal democracy to Nigeria's diverse cultures and traditions is imperative. To mitigate electoral violence in the future, there is the need to evolve a new political culture of tolerance and accommodation, barging and compromise, conflicts and consensus which should be embraced by the political actors. The paper also emphasized the importance of political education, such that encompasses a good understanding of the legal basis of electoral governance. Conclusively the submission of the study is that visionless leadership, corruption and poverty must give way for a new political culture and this will mitigate conflict, sustain future democracy and the corporate existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the "Giant of Africa".

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