

Measures Contributing Towards Eradication of Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Forthcoming 2019 General Election

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Abstract:

Electoral violence connotes all forms of violence (physical, psychological, administrative, legal and structural) at different stages engaged in by participants, their supporters, and sympathizers (including security and election management body staff) in the electoral process. The broad objective of the study is to provide contributions towards eradication of electoral violence in the forthcoming 2019 general election. The ex-post facto research design was employed for this study and secondary sources of data collection were utilized through the review of theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the study. The study adopted the Marxian theory of Conflict for its theoretical framework analysis. Findings show that electoral violence manifest in various dimensions which are pernicious and potent in undermining fair contest. To this end, the paper recommends improvement in the security outfit; the security and other security agencies need to be strengthened to enable them perform effectively during the election period. Mass reorientation education of the citizens by the National Orientation Agency, Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations and the Mass Media on the dangers of electoral violence and possible punishments for offenders and Punishing electoral violence offenders; the best way to address issues of electoral violence is to punish electoral offenders. The national parliament should enact laws so that any person found as contributing to electoral violence by a competent court shall have between five to 10 years in prison with fine irrespective of his or her status.

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Introduction

Nigeria can be rightly described as one of the most deeply democratic states in Africa. Taking a look at the democratic history of Nigeria; it is observed that electoral violence has adversely affected the country to the extent of causing major political upheaval and terminating democracy. Ugiagbe (2010) highlighted that Electoral violence has regularly been reported in Nigeria and manifests in the three (3) electoral stages, namely pre-election, during election and post-election in various forms. Electoral violence in Nigeria has two broad dimensions, physical and psychological. Electoral violence ranges from acts of assault, arson, ballot box snatching and stuffing to murder/ assassination.

The election is an irreducible feature of democratic governance. The democracy here is defined as a social system of administering a nation-state where political parties and independent candidates compete for elective positions in a free and fair election atmosphere, and where the citizens are legally empowered to choose those who will run the affairs of the state in a given period. Regardless of the legal framework that guides the electoral process, there is usually a contest between those who want to acquire power and those who are likely to lose power. The contest typically put the toga of violence because some politicians usually want to cut corners. A rapid look at democratic history of Nigeria reveals that of electoral cum political violence that sometimes threaten the country to its very foundation. This progress in part had made democratic consolidation somehow problematic, and on the other hand has made it difficult for Nigeria to be referred to as a democratic state even though operators vehemently lay claim to it. In the point has to made that historically, violence is a major feature of political life everywhere around the world. Merely that politics concerned violence varies in intensity, trends and dimensions from one political system to another. Quote, as a matter of fact, comparative political scientists agree that from time immemorial, violence has been a constant of human societies all over the globe, and in particular, today's globe is awash with violence (Akeke, 2008).

The politicians in Nigeria have over the years 'become more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power: more reckless and greed in their use and abuse of power; and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them. To achieve their inordinate interest, these politicians manipulate the youth to accepting them as the corner stone for their survival in the State. They arm these youths with dangerous weapons to prosecute the elections in their favor. Those already in government use the men of the Nigeria Police to chase their opponent and protect them in order to use the youths to unleash mayhem against their perceived enemies. These youths are hardly arrested nor detained for the havoc they may have caused. The youths therefore, are at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. A recent study suggests that the youths are prosecutors of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria. Many of Nigeria's ostensibly elected leaders obtained their positions by demonstrating an ability to use corruption and political violence to prevail in sham elections. In violent and brazenly rigged polls, government officials have denied millions of Nigerians any real voice in selecting their political leaders. In place of democratic competition struggles for political office have often been waged violently in the streets by gangs of thugs- youths - recruited by politicians to help them seize control of power. At the heart of Nigeria's crisis of governance particularly as manifested in electoral violence is a complex linkage between the State and the Youth, as well as Security apparatus especially, the men of the Nigeria Police that are constantly used to chase the opposition.

The action of the men of the Nigeria Police in Rivers State, Edo State and Ekiti State preceding the 2015 general election defines the role of the Police in violence as well as electoral

conflicts in Nigeria. Some of the youth leaders who are allies to the powerful politicians now dictate and control what happens in their various Communities. The Niger Delta Ex Militants are not left out; some of them sponsor and impose candidates for election. In other cases, in an attempt to win election at all cost, some of the Ex militants perceived to have the capacity to cause violence through the barrel of guns are sponsored for election as flag bearers of major Political Parties. These Ex Militants who have been given amnesty by the Nigerian Government see politics as a legitimate source of primitive accumulation thus; they lord over everybody in their locality, where possible, they maim to win elections for the parties that sponsor them, just for selfish economic aggrandizement. These heinous activities of the political gladiators, the youth and the Police have continued to fan the embers of electoral violence in Nigeria.

In spite of the fact that numerous theories could be used to clarify the phenomenon of electoral violence in Nigeria's political landscape, transparent electoral system that aids to put in place a transparent political transition is what Nigerians are looking after experiencing several years of harrowing military dictatorship. In point of fact, high premium has been globally placed on democratic governance attained through successfully conducted elections that meet international standards set by democracy inclined citizens, and multilateral organizations. As electoral violence with concomitant effect had been the bane of Nigeria's democratic transition, there has been the need to set in motion a machinery to curb the menace. What are the causes of electoral violence? How can we eradicate electoral violence for the forthcoming 2019 general election? To this end, this paper is set out to answer these and other questions.

Conceptual Clarifications

Electoral Violence

Although various definitions of electoral violence have been offered by scholars, ordinarily, the concept implies an act of direct physical force, more or less deliberately employed by people used in an election rigging process or by way of people reacting against election manipulation or frauds. This covers acts connected to attacks on properties, ballot snatching, burning of tyres, kidnappings, assassinations, shootings, riots, and beating of electoral officers during an election process. A broader definition extends the meaning of electoral violence beyond direct physical acts, embracing indirect and systemic forms of violence.

Accordingly, the UNDP (2009) describes electoral violence as: Any 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 or to secure approval or disapproval of referendum questions.

Looking at electoral violence from a more practical point of view, Albert (2007) defines electoral violence as all forms of organized acts or threats physical, psychological and structural aimed at intimidating, harming or blackmailing a political stakeholder, before, during or after election with a view to determining, delaying or otherwise influencing an electoral process. Similarly, Kraetzschmar and Cavatorta (2010) regard electoral violence as acts or threats of coercion, intimidation or physical harm perpetuated to affect the process and outcomes of an election. According to Vyavaharkar (2009), electoral violence can be any physical act or psychological harm to persons or damage to property directed at anyone involved in the electoral process (voter, candidate, party officer, election worker, election monitor, journalist) which may disrupt or attempt to disrupt any aspect of the electoral

process (campaign, registration, voting, counting). The definitions by Albert (2007), Kraetzschmar and Cavatorta (2010) and Vyavaharkar (2009) put forward the idea that electoral violence is not merely a physical combat between parties, supporters and illicit actors, but involves issues that can instil fear among competing candidates and voters. It also relates to tampering with the electoral process and materials which include voters register, ballot boxes and papers, and influence on electoral bodies by the incumbent and opposition parties.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) defines electoral violence –as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, force protection, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination (Fischer, 2002: 8). Electoral violence can be motivated by attempt to change the results of an election, either by manipulating the electoral procedures or by contesting the legitimacy of the results (Laakso, 2007).

Electoral violence connotes all forms of violence (physical, psychological, administrative, legal and structural) at different stages engaged in by participants, their supporters, and sympathizers (including security and election management body staff) in the electoral process (Balogun, 2003). Certain elements, characteristics and acts of electoral violence as encapsulated by these definitions could be applicable to the Nigerian situation. However, as stated earlier, only an empirical analysis of the electoral violence will help contextualize the causes and acts of electoral violence in Nigeria. Firstly, an election must not be regarded as an event but rather a process involving a multiplicity of activities and processes, handled by a set of institutions and stakeholders (Fischer, 2002).

The electoral process includes the registration of voters, conducting of party primaries, campaigning, voting, vote counting, announcement of results, and litigations at the electoral courts/tribunals. Electoral institutions and stakeholders include election management bodies, political parties, civil societies, mass media, monitoring agencies, and international organizations. The fact that an election is a process rather than an event implies that electoral violence can occur at any stage and can manifest in many forms. It may materialize before, during, or after the election itself (Fischer, 2002). Forms of violence also vary significantly. They include riots; acts of physical harm; assaults and attacks on communities or candidates; gender-based violence, mob violence; demonstrations; and terrorist campaigns; and assassinations, either by lone individual or as part of a campaign conspiracy. Violence is designed to influence elections by intimidating voters and striking candidates down. It can thus prevent an election from taking place and force aspirants to leave the electoral process or a victor from taking charge of government (Hoglund, 2009). What need to be understood is that electoral violence involves more than physical violence and includes a psychological and structural dimension. This involves the forms of threats, offensive advertorials to instill fear in participants, as well as the manipulation of or tampering of the electoral laws and institutions.

Table 1.1 summarizes the various components and dimensions of electoral violence.

DIMENSION	COMPONENTS
PHYSICAL	P. Physical assault on individuals during campaign, elections, and when election results are released. Q. Assassination of political opponents or people perceived as a threat to one's political ambition. R. Burning down of public or opponents' houses and cars.



	<p>S. Shooting and killings of individuals.</p> <p>T. Partisan harassment by security agents, arrests, forceful dispersal of rallies, or shooting, wounding or killing of people.</p> <p>U. Kidnappings and hostage-taking.</p>
PSYCHOLOGICAL	<p>V. Bombing of infrastructure.</p> <p>W. Forceful disruption by thugs of political and campaign rallies.</p> <p>X. Destruction of ballot boxes and ballot papers by thugs or partisan security agents.</p> <p>Y. Free-for-all-fights</p>
STRUCTURAL	<p>Z. Threats against and harassment by security agents of opponents of the regime or party, which create political apathy.</p> <p>AA. Shoot-on-sight orders that breed fear in voters</p> <p>BB. Terror inflicted by political assassination, which makes people scared to participate in politics or elections</p> <p>CC. Publication or broadcast of abusive, insulting, or intimidating material or advertorials.</p> <p>DD. Threats to life through phone calls, text messages, etc.</p> <p>EE. Coercion of citizens by government to register or vote.</p> <p>FF. Exclusionary acts or policies.</p> <p>GG. Unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates.</p> <p>HH. Deliberate changes in dates, venues, or times or events to the disadvantage of others.</p> <p>II. Partisan delimitation of electoral constituencies and location of polling booths.</p> <p>JJ. Exclusive fees for collecting party nomination forms.</p> <p>KK. Unfree campaigns.</p> <p>LL. Reliance on money and brute force instead of moral integrity and competence.</p> <p>MM. Restraints imposed on voters.</p> <p>NN. Use of the incumbency factor to give undue advantage to some candidates.</p> <p>OO. Announcement of false or fraudulent results.</p> <p>PP. Lengthy delays in announcing election results.</p> <p>QQ. Absence of (adequate) voting materials and election results forms.</p> <p>RR. Delay in voting.</p> <p>SS. Absence of electoral officers from booths.</p> <p>TT. Partisan behavior of police and other security agents.</p>

Aondowase(2015)

Secondly, the violence that comes prior to the Election Day may be prompted by disagreements over electoral functions and activities such as the delimitation of electoral constituencies, voter registration, and selection of flag-bearers to fill available posts in



various constituencies. This may lead to assassinations of party candidates, attacks on properties and kidnapping, targeting or deliberate destruction of campaign materials, vehicles and party offices. Election Day is often remarkably peaceful given the intensified security presence and planning around voting and vested political interest towards the election outcomes (Vyavaharkar, 2009).

Violence tends to escalate after elections with the aim of influencing the counting and final outcome of the elections. This takes the forms of snatching of ballot papers/boxes and the destruction of election results. The worst part of violence may come immediately after the announcing of results. This happens when losers are not willing to accept electoral outcomes, either because elections were deemed not to be free and fair' or because of perceived or real fraud in the voting and counting process.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria's 5th Republic, 1999 – 2015

Nigerians were dissatisfied with the annulment of June 12 Presidential election. Vociferous groups emerged, pressing on the Military to return the Country to democracy. Faced with this pressure, General Babangida formed an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Earnest Shonekan, The ING was overthrown by General Sani Abacha. With the death of General Abacha on June 8, 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar instituted a Transition Programme with the view of returning the State to civil rule in 1999. Beside other programmes, the Regime set up an Electoral Body known as the Independent National Electoral Commission. The inauguration of this Body crystallized the beginning of the journey to Nigeria's 4th Republic. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) set the rules and time - table for the commencement of political activism, thus, Political Parties were registered and only three Parties, namely: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) scaled through the huddle and were registered. The results of the 1999 general elections indicated that the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which fielded Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, winning in 21 States across the country was returned elected. The All Peoples Party (APP) came second with 9 states, while the Alliance for Democracy (AD), which held sway in the Southwest, had 6 states.

Another general election was conducted in 2003 by President Obasanjo's Regime, and President Obasanjo was returned again returned to power for the second time in an election that was so badly flawed. That election was described as the "most fraudulent election" in the history of Nigeria. In fact, the election results proved and confirmed that proper National Assembly, Gubernatorial and Presidential elections were not conducted in accordance with the INEC guidelines and the Electoral Act. Rather, figures were literally manufactured in Government Houses or collation centres as results for the return of President Obasanjo and the PDP to power. The alleged electoral malpractices of the ruling PDP were regarded as the most sophisticated in the electoral history of Nigeria. Further to the massive rigging were pockets of violence in different parts of Nigeria.

A number of people have argued that there were no elections in 2003, but merely the intimidation of voters and the selection of already decided winners by elites and caucuses. Both internal and external observers were unanimous on the unfairness of the competition in the electoral process which was said to have been manipulated by the so-called ruling party, Peoples' Democratic Party. For example, according to the Human Right Watch's report, between April and May 2003, about one hundred people were said to have been killed and many more injured during federal and state elections in Nigeria and that most of the violence was perpetrated by the ruling PDP and its supporters. Also, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of over ninety Civil Society Groups, in its report on the 2003 general

elections, passed a vote of no confidence on the elections. Some political parties and their candidates decided to challenge some of the results before the various Election Petition tribunals and have gone ahead to do so while others declared “mass action” to pressure a government without popular mandate to abdicate power. Most of them were however denied justice by a corrupt judicial system. It would be recalled that the 2007 general elections reeked off all manner of chicanery characterized by the brazen attempt to disenfranchise the electorate and announce fictitious results in areas where no elections took place, not to mention intimidation of the electorate by the police and military in many places, non-delivery of election materials, hijack of ballot boxes, thumb printing and even foot printing of ballot papers, incarceration and humiliation of independent election observers, bribery of electoral officers in order for them to look elsewhere when atrocious acts of perfidy were being perpetrated by party agents which all resulted in a bogus series of elections which both foreign and local observers described as nothing less than a travesty. Contributing to the above, Marietu opines: Prior to the elections, the political atmosphere was again very tense. Among other mind-boggling incidents, President Olusegun Obasanjo condescendingly declared that, for him and the PDP, the 2007 election was ‘a do or die affair’.

Supporting the above, Ezirim and Mbah argue: The political violence that erupted in all these elections progressively had high ethnic tones as there were ethnic insurgencies during the various elections, such that between June and August 2006, three gubernatorial candidates were assassinated. The run-up to the April 2007 elections was violent, as campaigning in many areas was punctuated with political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political parties. The violence formed part of a broader pattern of violence and abuses that is inherent in Nigeria’s still largely unacceptable political system. Without doubt, the 2007 elections was evidence that the cub of election rigging which was born in 1964 had now become a wild rampaging lion, consuming all it saw and leaving a shaking democracy in its wake. The process was characterized by unprecedented electoral malpractices which led to wide condemnation from local and international observers to the extent that upon inauguration, the then President, late Umaru Ya’Adua condemned the flawed election that brought him to power, thus, decided to set up a committee known as the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) headed by justice Mohammed Uwais to fashion out a transparent system that would ensure the conduct of credible elections and thereby deepen democracy in Nigeria. President Yar’Adua was ready to deliver his promises of the restoration of the rule of law and guarantee sanity in the electoral system before his death in 2009.

Nigeria’s 2011 polls marked the fourth multiparty election in Nigeria. The 2011 general elections were generally acceptable by both local and foreign observers to be partially fair when compared with the 2003 and 2007 general elections which were conducted under the fourth republic. The election however witnessed some violence, the pre, during and post-election period. Akwa Ibom State witnessed one of the worst histories of political violence March 22, 2011. An eye witness report on the matter indicate that many properties which included: 200 brand new Peugeot 307 cars; 500 brand new tricycles; the Goodluck/Sambo Campaign office which was burnt down by the rampaging mob; Fortune International High School owned by Senator Aloysius Etok which was razed down with school children in session and over 20 Toyota Hiace buses belonging to the PDP and Godswill 2011 Campaign Organization, nine Hilux jeeps belonging to the Government of Akwa Ibom State which were either completely destroyed or vandalized. Consequently, the Presidency set up a Presidential Committee of Inquiry to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the violence and

recommend ways of averting future political violence in the State. This was aimed at seeking peaceful means of resolving the conflict.

Further to the above, the release of 2011 Presidential election result by the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) which produced President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP as the winner led to sectarian violence in some Northern parts of Nigeria. Some of the affected States were Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri and Kaduna among others. The post electoral violence that accompanied the 2011 general election resulted in the killing of about ten Youth corps members in Bauchi State.

The March 28th, 2015 presidential election was another milestone of deepening and strengthening democratic institution in Nigeria. The election was highly competitive as over 14 political parties participated in the process. There was structural and administrative improvement on the part of the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). In appraising the election, we shall x-ray some critical factors that influenced the election. These factors include; the use of card reader and permanent voters card (P.V.C), ethnicity, religion, the role of press, security outfit, political parties, electoral body themselves, under age voting, integrity of the contestants and external influences. The introduction of the card reader was a scientific and innovative approach in the 2015 election. It helped to minimize fraudulent practices like manipulation of names and figures and it enhanced voting stability and facilitated electoral statistics with the use of card reader, INEC was able to come up with the polling statistics total number of registered voters, 67,422,005, total number of accredited voters 31,746,490, total number of valid votes, 28,587,564, total number of rejected votes, 844,519, total number of votes cast 29,432,083, INEC (2015).

One striking phenomenon that featured prominently during the 2015 presidential election was the underage voting. In most of the states in the North, it was fully televised that underage children participated in the election. This development was never challenged by the electoral officers neither the results from this areas were cancelled rather there was massive infiltration and inducement to this underage children that enable them to participate in the voting process. Indeed, this is an abuse of the electoral process. The 2015 presidential election, witnessed high level of ethnic and regional cleavages. The two major presidential contenders were former president Goodluck Jonathan of PDP Mohammed Buhari of APC. The campaign was hot and aggressive all the ethnic group mobilized their people for the election, in the voting process, former president won in South-East, South-South while president Mohammed Buhari won in South-West, North-East, North-West and North-Central with 21 states while president Jonathan won in 16 states.

According to Dauda (2015), it was observed that the violence that characterized the 2015 had been predictable. Leading to Election Day there had been violent expressions of political rivalry among stakeholders and agents of political parties leading to the use of thugs, arson, terrorism and other extreme criminal measures. The magnitude of insecurity arising from political activities reached the point that government introduced elements from the armed forces such as the Army and Air force in order to keep the peace during elections. The result showed a slight reduction in the criminal activities during elections when compared to the data from the 2007 and 2011 elections. He further highlighted that the National Human Right Commission, observed that no fewer than 58 people have been killed in election related violence from December 3, 2014 to February 2015. He stated the statistics that in Lagos 11 incidence were tracked with 2 dead people for each incident, an average of 22 people killed over a span of just 52 days. Also during that period in Kaduna state, there were three

incidents and nine killings; Rivers has six incidents, including the detonation of explosives and attacks on courts.

According to his studies, it was also recorded that in Akwa-state, three persons were killed during the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections. In Rivers state, four persons including a soldier were feared dead during the presidential and National Assembly elections in the state. During the governorship and House of Assembly, five persons were feared killed in Benue state, four in Kebbi, two each in rivers and Lagos; and one, each in Plateau, Bauchi and Ebonyi.

Stages of Electoral Violence

One therefore needs to speak of stages of electoral violence, namely: pre-election, during elections, and after the elections (Fischer, 2002). Violence at the pre-election stage occurs prior to the day of election. It involves procedural violations such as tampering with voter's registration database. The type of violence at this stage can disenfranchise qualified electorates. It involves threats and intimidation of potential electorates by illicit actors to prevent registration of voters and the demarcation of constituencies. These threats and intimidations continue as the electoral process moves to electoral campaigns. It involves attacks and the disruption of campaigns of opponents, intimidation of voters and candidates, assassinations and kidnappings.

The second stage of violence happens on the day of election. Paradoxically, the day of elections can see the end of violence and at other times provoke violence (Rapoport and Weinberg, 2004). Violence on the day of election takes the form of burning of ballot boxes, ballots snatching, rigging and diversion of election materials, armed attacks on electoral officers and opponents, destruction of electoral facilities, and voter intimidation. In the post-election stage, violence emanates from disputes over election results, use of force and intimidation by politicians, as well as the destruction of electoral materials and manipulation of final results, particularly in opposition strongholds (Fischer, 2002). At this stage, large-scale violence usually occurs in the form of the protests over manipulated elections (Mehler, 2007). One can equally speak of targets of electoral violence. Thus, Fischer (2002) has identified four targets of electoral violence. The first target is electoral stakeholders which affect voters, candidates, election workers, media, and monitors. The second target concerns election information and includes the destruction of registration data, voter results, ballots and campaign materials. The third target focused on electoral facilities and this has negative activities at polling and counting stations. The fourth target is on electoral events. This includes the disruption of campaign rallies and preventing people to travel to polling stations to cast their votes. Electoral violence involves a broad number of actors and stakeholders that can perpetrate electoral violence. These include political parties and their supporters, journalists (through biased reporting), agents of the government, biased election administrators, rebels, terrorist groups, armed militias, and individual candidates. Their motives and tactics vary but normally have the same impacts which in most cases negatively influence the electoral outcome.

Curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

While electoral reforms are likely to mitigate the situation, one must address the various causes of electoral violence in Nigeria. Addressing the issue of political assassinations, Durotoye (2014) identifies the following reasons:

i. Addressing the Issue of Political Investors

Competing for elective positions in Nigeria is very expensive and politicians rely on political investors for sponsorship. These investors expect returns on their investments once their

candidate wins the election. Since they have put down so much money, they will do everything possible including getting rid of the opponent to ensure that their candidates win. In order to meet the expectations of the investors, therefore, some politicians resort to maintaining killer squads to intimidate the opponent, with political assassination as the last resort.

ii. Curbing the Massive Military Retirees in Politics

The massive involvement of retirees from the Armed Forces into politics offered reasons behind most political killings and inability of politicians to imbibe the principles of democratic governance. Although most of the retirees quickly re-adjusted to civilian life and had enough financial means to corner choice political positions, unfortunately, their only political tutelage was garnered from their participation in military rule which in itself is anti-democratic. Hence, these new sets of politicians and their civilian allies, who had also participated in military rule as ministers or commissioners, have imbibed the culture of intolerance of opposition. This culture, which featured under previous military regimes where there were scores of state-sponsored extra-judicial assassinations, was carried over to the present regime.

iii. Addressing the Politic as a Zero-Sum Game

Politics in Nigeria is a zero-sum game, or what is generally referred to as a –winner-takes-all approach. The apparatuses of the state are routinely used to oppress and intimidate the opposition. The power of incumbency' is almost limitless; so much so that those in the opposition are routinely hindered even from pursuing their daily affairs to make ends meet. The implication of this is that no Nigerian politician wants to be in the opposition. Hence, both the incumbent and the opposition sometimes resort to extra-judicial means. The manipulation of elections and intimidation of political opponents are some examples of these means.

iv. Addressing the Arms Proliferation and Youth's Indolence

Youth restiveness in the Niger-Delta and smuggling of small arms into Nigeria by politicians and ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) returnees have all conspired to increase the rate of political assassination. By March 2004 and August 2006, the police recovered 3,662 illegal arms and 194,259 rounds of ammunition. Unemployed youths who have access to such arms were hired to carry out assassination as a means of livelihood.

v. Addressing the Compromised Judiciary

The Nigerian judiciary is largely compromised and corrupt. Politicians get access to judges through retired senior judicial officers who serve as consultants to those politicians. These retired judges bribe their former colleagues on behalf of politicians to thwart the course of justice.

Recommendations

Electoral violence will remain an on-going issue in Nigeria as the phenomenon has the potential to cause democratic reversal as demonstrated in this study. Considering the multi-faceted nature of electoral violence and its enduring causes, the study recommends the following:

- T. Mass reorientation education of the citizens by the National Orientation Agency, Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations and the Mass Media on the dangers of electoral violence and possible punishments for offenders.

- U. Punishing electoral violence offenders; the best way to address issues of electoral violence is to punish electoral offenders. The national parliament should enact laws so that any person found as contributing to electoral violence by a competent court shall have between five to 10 years in prison with fine irrespective of his or her status.
- V. What is more, political parties, their agents should shun all forms of electoral and political violence and should embrace peace, order, discipline as a means of improving democratic institution and deepening democracy.
- W. Improvement in the security outfit; the security and other security agencies need to be strengthened to enable them perform effectively during the election period.
- X. Institutional strengthening of all agencies related to the elections, especially, the Nigerian Police Force to be discipline, combat ready, equipped and corruption free.
- Y. Fifty Per cent (50%) cut for emoluments of elective positions; there should be 50 per cent cut in the salaries of elective positions in the legislative and executive arms. This will make these positions less attractive and will reduce intense battle for these positions.
- Z. The winner takes it all syndromes that are the zero sum game is not ideal in our democratic project because it is willful, violent breeding, parochial, discriminatory, elite based, unethical, and individualistic.
- AA. Finally, war against poverty; there should be war against poverty to discourage electoral violence. Some irregularities in the electoral process such as vote selling/buying emanate as a result of poverty in the country especially amongst the youths who are vulnerable due to unemployment. Declaring poverty as a national threat to free and fair election would also entail finding the requisite political will to deal with the phenomenon of electoral violence. The Nigerian state should introduce poverty alleviation programmes tailored toward addressing the needs of youths who are most susceptible to electoral violence. Where these measures are already in place, it is necessary to improve, sustain and effectively implement them. Of particular note, the federal government of Nigeria should send a bill to the parliament making it compulsorily for corporate such as banks, multinational and communication companies to sponsor sports to engage the youths efficiently.

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