

The New From the Ashes of the Old: A Critique of Electoral Violence in Nigeria (1999-2019)

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Abstract

Election is the most vital requirement for the sustenance of democracy in modern states. The importance of election can be in the vigor and resource that is being committed into the process. However, certain anomaly has been the process of election in Nigeria. The gradual evolution of electioneering in Nigeria has shown that when the contest for elective positions is perceived as an investment, it must be recouped once one wins an election; and once so elected, there is a tendency for historical larceny from the public treasury. It follows that the dividends of democracy can never be discharged to the electorate because the funds meant for public project/building of infrastructure or rendering of services, is diverted into private pockets as rents pre-bends and reward to godfathers who sponsor the public office holders. More crucial is the fact that, as were the experiences of 1st Republic, every election in Nigeria since 1999 has been marred by violence. This recrudescence trajectory indubitably jeopardizes Nigeria's quest for a consolidated democratic heritage and places Nigeria perpetually underdeveloped; and it needs to be reversed. Consequently, this theoretical and qualitative research looks into existing print and online literature to examine the real or perceived causal factors and effect of electoral violence in Nigeria. It concludes that electoral violence stalled or denied the country of genuine leadership and good governance. Hence, several possible ways as to redirecting the undesirable trajectory, away from electoral violence, but towards peaceful modes and attitudes are suggested.

Keywords: *Election, electoral violence, Nigeria, the new, the old, violence.*

Introduction

The word violence has been viewed from different angles by various scholars from different stand points. Thus for the purpose of this discourse, we are looking at violence associated with electioneering in Nigeria. According to Gilula and Daniel in “destructive aggression” ((Omoyibo, and Asekhauno, 2016), the conceptualization of violence implies the use of physical force to injure persons or property and this is the core of merit definition of violence.

Igbuzor defines election violence as “any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities including pre, during and post-election period and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations or the use of persons or weapons to cause bodily harm or injuring to any person connected with electoral process (Egobueze and Ojirika, 2017). and elections before independence and after had suffered this fate about electoral mal-practices. The history of Nigeria has not told about a country that organizes smooth and successful elections; and her electoral processes have been carried out the in any decent way. History of Nigerian encounter with elections exposes a country interloped from it onset with electoral violence. The standout issues in an election are the high level of the use of force and threat and violence in gaining political power. This contraction raises the crises surrounding the politics of succession and the credibility of electoral processes in Nigeria. Electoral violence is a negative phenomenon in Nigeria and this phenomenon has developed like a deadly cancer in Nigeria political system (Egobueze and Ojirika, 2017).

Electoral violence is one major problem that has affected Nigeria democratic sustainability and achievement of good governance. Absence of proper democratic institution militates against the sustainability of democratic rule in Nigeria. Democracy is a system of government that promotes citizens participation in the entire electoral process, at the heart of democracy lays the concept of election (Ugwuja, 2016). With the return to a civilian regime in 1999, Nigerians went to the polls again though this time there were relatively low violence before and after the voting. Yet the elections which brought retired General Olusegun Obasanjo to power were reportedly marred by widespread fraud, as also were the 2003 elections—which were characterized by violence, corruption and falsification of results (The Transition Monitoring Group (TMA) a coalition of 170 NGOs in Nigeria). Similarly, foreign and national monitors observed that violence, corruption, fraud and manipulation marred the 2007 l3ctions (Kalu and Gberevbie, 2018). It is very unfortunate that the government had over time adopted an arrogant, selfish, parochial and ultimately failed approach to ameliorate the ugly development. The youths who are the leaders of tomorrow are frequently deployed as instrument of political violence in diverse ways which are detrimental to the nation.(Shamsudeeb, 2015)

Without doubt, threat to national security, economic decay, terrorism, political upheavals and military confrontation has been the consequences of electoral fraud and

violence on democracy—although that can undermine the progress and stability of any nation, politically and economically. The vivid disturbances that occur as a result of electoral violence without doubt could undermine the prospect of the harmonious relationship of the various communities that make up a nation (Ugwuja, 2015).

The gradual evolution of Nigeria since independence has shown that the contest for elective positions is perceived as an investment, which must be recouped once they win elections and sworn into office. There is a tendency for historical larceny from the public treasury. It follows that democracy dividends can never be divided to the electorate because money meant for public project is diverted into private pockets as rents pre-bends and reward to godfathers who sponsor the public office holders. This pattern indubitably will jeopardize Nigeria's quest for a consolidated democratic heritage (Onwe, et al 2015). The major purpose of this research is to examine the causes and effects of electoral violence and how it has eaten deeply to the marrow of the country and how it has denied her of good governance.

Conceptual Clarification

Election and Electoral Violence

Election is an integral part of a democratic process that enables the citizens determine fairly and freely who should lead them at every level of government periodically and take decisions that shaped their socio-economic and political destiny; and in case they falter, still possess the power to recall them or vote them out in the next election. This was why Rose and Dye aptly defined election as “a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies; the key to participation in a democracy; and the way of giving consent to government and allowing the governed to choose and pass judgment on office holders who theoretically represent the governed” (Alvaigba, 2016).

Election is the cardinal principle of democracy though not a sufficient determinant of democracy but remains the primary indicator for democratic governance. Election is about competition on how leaders are selected by voting (and/or by appointment/ nomination: howbeit, consensually), to govern the society. Competitive electoral democracy which is by voting as articulated by Joseph Schumpeter is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decisions. It is a method by which the individual acquires the power to participate in decisions by means of competitive struggle for the people's vote. Election defines and determines what democracy is all about. Election empower the citizens/electorates' to decide who governs them and whoever is elected to govern is expected to meet the expectation of the electorate who initiated the mandate to govern. Therefore, the success of acceptable election is based on the existence of autonomous electoral management (Kalu and Gbervbie, 2018). On his part, Ojo defines election as a 'formal expression of preferences by the governed which are then aggravated 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 that have been thrown out'. In support Awopeju 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 government. According to Dye, 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. The conducts of elections to governmental offices are always branded with various preparatory events and political schemes that contenders embrace to surface as its party's contestant, in advance to contesting against other party's candidates in a general election (Segun, 2013).

Elections are regarded as the hallmark of democratic governance in every modern democratic society. This is because elections are one of the ways through which people engage in political participation. Elections have become the most acceptable method by which citizens of an ever increasing number of political systems choose their leaders. The appeal of elections lies principally in the opportunity that it provides for an entire electorate in choosing those that should govern them in a simple and peaceful exercise. Elections also provide the people with the opportunity to indicate their preference among the policies and programs presented to them by the rival leadership elements contesting for political power. It may also enable the people to remove unpopular leaders or force or elected officials to listen to their grievances, particularly between elections. Most elected public officers are always conscious of when their terms are over, they would need to fall back to the people to renew their mandates therefore, the fear that they might be rejected if they fail to heed to the complaints of the people in non-elections years, makes them to pay attention to the views and aspiration of the electorate (Onwe, 2015).

Electoral Violence

Violence could be an instrument employed by non-governmental organizations, individuals and groups to press forward their demands. However, violence when it is endemic and persistent or unmanageable may become an impediment to political stability and economic progress. In our conceptualization, electoral violence political violence are used synonymously; looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping, amid many other vices, are instances (whether these are spontaneous or not) which occur before, during and after every election (Kalu and Gberevbie, 2018).

Etymologically, the word, 'violence' finds roots in French, Greek, and Latin words. For example, the Latin root of the word, violence is a combination of two words—'vis' (force) and past participle (*Lotus*) of the word 'fero' (to carry). The Latin word, 'violare' is itself a combination of these two words; and its present participle, 'violens' is a plausible source for the word, 'violence'—so that the word, 'violence' in its etymological origin, has the sense of 'to carry force' at or towards. To 'violate' therefore, the intention is to inflict injury or damage on an/a object or subject.

'Violence' can be physical or psychological. It is notable that the word, 'violation' is an interesting feature of this etymology; this is because, both terms, 'violation' and 'violence', are of the same source. Remarkably, 'violence' is somehow a 'violation' of something; "force" against something implies, in one way or another, a 'violation' of it (Asekhauno and Omoyibo, 2016).

Violence is a pervasive phenomenon in every society and every sphere of social life; it is not restricted to the political sphere alone. It cuts across every aspect of human existence. In a study by Ayeni-Akeke, it is held that violence, from inception, has been part of human existence, as man from time immemorial have tendencies to exhibit violent acts, especially politics related violence all varies from one political system to another. It has also been noted that violence arises as a consequence of the striving of man, the social being who in the course of promoting some of his objectives, either intentionally or unintentionally upsets and direct to negative uses, instead of strengthening along beneficial line, some of the arrangement that ought to be for the benefit of man. Keane sees the relationship between democracy and violent conflict as exemplified in democratic process (Anikwe, 2013).

Electoral violence is the use or threat of physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals and property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property; and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances tend to modify the behavior of others in existing arrangement of power structures. Anifowose (2015) argues that most violent acts are political in nature and for the definition to subsist; there must be the intent of affecting the political process. To elucidate, he suggests that the political nature may not be immediately apparent. However, the definition seeks to exclude accident and criminal actions for personal gains but includes acts of both representatives of government or dissident. Ladan Bark (2021) also noted that electoral violence during general elections include snatching of ballot boxes to rig and manipulate election result; causing pandemonium in polling station to hinder voters from voting; beating up electoral officers and sometimes killing same in the process when weapons such as gun and cutlass are used during the elections. Electoral violence is one major problem that has affected Nigeria's democratic sustainability and achievement of good governance.

Electoral violence could take two dimensions, which are: pre-electoral violence and post electoral violence. The pre-electoral violence may occur where electoral laws or provisions are seen to favor a particular candidate at the expense of the other. It could also occur when a particular candidate is over ambitious and perhaps sees the signal that he may likely lose the election to the opponent. Post electoral violence on the other hand, may be spontaneous. It may be engineered by individuals who feel cheated, alienated or deprived by the unfairness of the electoral process. This deprivation may be real or perceived. In Nigeria, the purpose of such violence apart from seeking redress through illegal means is also to destroy it. If we cannot have it

(Okechukwu, 2014).¹⁸ Electoral violence generally involves political parties; their supporters, journalists, agents of the government, election administrators and the general population and includes threats, assault, murder, destruction of property and physical or psychological harm (international foundation for election system. This is closely related to the conceptualization of political and electoral related violence in a cross country study of post-World War II political violence, in which Hibb took a broader approach to capture the entire period of election process. Electoral violence must involve specific victim(s), perpetrator (s) and occurs within a time frame and location. Electoral violence also comes with motive(s) and the victims can be people, places, things or data (Orobator, 2015).

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. These forms of violence take place before elections, during elections and after election and could also be intra or inter party (Idahosa and Aghahowa, 2010). Also, electoral violence has to do with violence that take place during elections in fragile democracy resulting from the failure to meet the rising expectation of the electorates. Electoral violence is traceable to relative deprivation as gaps are created between expectation and capabilities. Electoral violence is a component of political violence which is broader in perspective, encompassing or relating to violence that is political. It is according to Ujo “perpetrated in the course of political activities including pre, during and post-election periods”, and may include any of the following thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral process. Electoral violence is an aspect of political violence is specifically referred to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to impending electoral contest or to an announced electoral results (Otoghile, 2010).

Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Electoral violence remains one of the intractable problems the electoral system in Nigeria democracy today. The question is what are the causes electoral violence? Electoral violence is caused by several factors including the following.

Ethnicity and Tribalism The most emphasized political problems in Nigeria are ethnic or tribal problems, and had dominated the country's political arena since the sixties. In fact, it is common to hear an average Nigeria and foreign observers argue that Nigeria's problem take their root in ethnicity or tribalism. Thus, Akinyemi and Ukiwo (2010) said that one factor which has frequently been employed to explain the recurrent crisis and conflict in the Nigerian political system is ethnicity. Ironically, this is the most ambiguous of the factors, which are often cited as the causes of political problems in

Nigeria. It is true that some scholars have used ethnicity as an argument, but it is equally true that this is the factor that stands out as the most pedestrian argument, particularly from its conceptual interpretation and even definition. In terms of party alliance, post and Vickers argue that the election alliances ultimately formed by the parties from the regions explained the fact that general election during the first republic shaped up relentlessly as a North versus South contest. As a result therefore, the polarization that subsequently developed led to a growing tension between the North and South (Fadakinte, 2014). That explains why whenever a southerner emerges victorious in presidential elections the North simmers into violence with numerous lives and properties lost in the process. The 2015 general elections which were popularly adjudged to be free and fair without post-election violence was not all free and credible because General Mohammed Buhari who is a northerner won the election, violence of alarming magnitude could have engulfed the country. It was alleged that there were stories of young northerners telling Christians that they were lucky because had the election gone the other way round they would all be dead (Fadakinte, 2014).

Absence of Internal Democracy in Political Parties When there are no equare level 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, aggrieved political contestants use this platform as a way of orchestrating violence by sponsoring thugs and hooligans who end up disrupting the peaceful conduct of particular election. This was observed between the two major parties of People Democratic Party (PDF) and All Progressive Congress (APC). According to Ogheneakoke (2014), lack of internal democracy, irregularities in registration and technical challenges during elections are responsible for election violence²⁵. A build up to election where candidates that will stand for parties will be selected among the party statement has led to post-election violence in Nigeria. Build up to election in which candidates are not selected through due process at the party's primaries will likely end in violence. According to Peter and Daylop (2016), internal practice of political party determines its public exhibition of democratic principles.

Inefficiency of Electoral Bodies Adeniyi (2012) indicated that electoral violence in 2011 and 2015 occurred at different periods; pre-edition violence, campaign period violence, election-day violence and post-election result violence. He added that during registration period in 2011 and 2015. Some observed irregularities in voters register such as blurred identity and poor technical quality which they suspected might lead to void registration and subsequently denials of voting right²⁷. The inability of the electoral umpire to conduct free, fair and credible elections which involves elections conducted in which the electorates are allowed to vote any candidate of their choice without any form of intimidation or harassment and results announced to cast without any form of manipulation of figures to favor any candidate. When this is lacking,

electoral violence is bound to occur (Sesan and Abdulkahman, 2018). A situation where electoral processes at any stage is shrouded in secrecy or the parties that fielded in candidates for elections are not carried along as expected could be an invitation of political violence. For instance, it has been observed that the ruling party takes undue advantage of their privileged position to select their party members and supporters to serve as INEC ad-hoc staff. The implication of the forgoing is that those ad-hoc personnel strive strenuously to scuttle the whole electoral processes in favor of their party. Other political parties that feel threatened that such irregularities could mar their electoral success always mobilize their army supporters and thugs to protest the perceived injustice. This action nose drives to electoral violence (Chukwudi, 2019).

Ineffective Security Agents During elections, it is expected that the security agents will ensure that election is violent free. In Nigeria, the police have proved to be a very willing tool for use by the powers that be. The Nigerian police have not performed credibility well as every election is usually subject to abuse by the very people (police) who should protect it. The police assist the politicians and thugs to stuff ballot boxes with voter's card. John Odey described the Nigerian police as a symbol of our collective decay. The police arrest and detain members of the opposition party that tends to prove stubborn; they are used to intimidate the opposition (Abah et al, 2012).

The opportunity to engage in violence in Nigeria is also enhanced by the weak capacity of the Nigeria state to provide security and enforce laws. Decades of corruption, maladministration and economic decline have weakened the capacity of Nigerian government to prevent or punish mass violence. Nigeria's weak security and law enforcement capacity reflects on the country's inability to regulate the flow of small arms, curtail banditry and check the activities of thugs and militant groups. It also reflects on the citizen's perception of the country's poorly trained and poorly equipped security agents, as majority of the respondents reported that they feared ex-military officers and local armed groups more than the police. This means that the ex-military officers and local armed groups had greater capacity to restrain the people from violence than the police (Ugwu, 2007).

The Religious factor Sometimes, religious and ethnic organizations are also involved in political violence, for instance in Bauchi state, where 32 Christians were killed and 72 churches were burnt over presidential election results in April 2011. The attackers, even if the official Islamic umbrella body in the North, Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), claimed no responsibility for the violence. Kaduna and Plateau are also very much affected by the killings. Most electoral incidents occur in local government areas with a mixed population of Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Christian natives. Nationwide, places of worship—churches, mosques and temples – are also targeted during political riots. This was the case in 51 (5.57%) of 915 fatal incidents related to elections during the

period 2006-2014 (Orji and Uzodi, 2012). The thoughts of the Muslim cleric are a fair summary of the debates about the agenda of the group from the perspective of outsiders even within the Muslim faith. What is consistent however is that they have both a political and religious agenda: the plan to restore power to the north and a plan to impose sharia law on all Nigerians. Since April 2011, they have killed dozens in Maiduguri, Kano and Jos, bombed the United Nations head quarter in Abuja, multiple bomb attacks in the North. Spokesman for the group, Abu Qaqa has said in an interview with The Guardian, Friday January, 2012 that “they will not stop the deadly attacks until the country is ruled according to the dictates of Allah (Shamsudeeh, 2016).”

Uneven Development and Seat-tight Government Inequitable distribution of social amenities by the government is in the case of the Niger Delta Region. In order to balance it, electorates engage into violence. Electorates engage in the violence in order to win either by hook or crook just to get their own share of the national cake (Willaims, 2018). It should also be noted the electoral violence emanates from attitude of our political gladiators who think that holding political office is their birth right; hence they are not willing to concede defeat. As a result they usually incite their supporters to revolt (Willaims, 2018). This is seen in a situation whereby hardly do election losers accept the verdict of the ballot box. For instance, in all three times from 2003, to 2011, Muhammadu Buhari went to the electoral tribunal to contest the verdict of every election he lost. He never accepted any of the lost election as free and fair. No wonder Jega blamed the post-election violence on what he termed as “Crisis of Expectation.” When choice of the people or kinsman does not win an election, it means the outcome of the election is not credible. This has led to post –election violence in Nigeria as noticed after the presidential announcement of 2011 election while the appeals panel began its work, Buhari withheld his endorsement of the election. His key supporters insisted on taking the results to the tribunal and he wanted to respect the process. However, according to an account in daily trust, Buhari vowed not to congratulate the then president Jonathan until his demands were met. This eventually led to violence in the northern part of the country 2011 (Chukwudi, 2019).

Poverty and Unemployment The high level of unemployment among the youth has made elections to become “do or die” affairs. Politicians are capitalizing on the issue of unemployment to recruits young men into their various camps to support their bids to win in an election. These young people might be collecting little amount of money as salaries from their “godfather” and sometimes with the promise of giving employment after winning election. This has made youth to indulge in tuggery with the hope of being compensated with job opportunity after election ().³⁷ Politicians have found it expedient to impoverish a large number of youth so that they will become willing tools to unleash mayhem during election periods. Some of the unemployed youths also go

into politics with the sole aim to cause confusion since politician and the political system are not after their welfare. Types of Electoral Violence that are peculiar to Nigeria's electoral processes are as follows: Registration of fake names as voters, Bribery of electoral officials and security personnel, Thuggery, Falsification of results, Use of fake voters' cards, The use of private houses as pollen centers, Intimidation of voters, Absence of electoral officials and materials at pollen stations/centers, and Vote buying and using of force on electorates.

Effects of Electoral Violence on Nigeria's National Development

Electoral violence is an evil to the electoral system. It is a big ill and the effects are on the negative side. This affects the country in so many areas such as, people having lack of confidence in their government, kidnapping, political assassination, destruction of lives and properties and equally leads to corruption.

Corruption Electoral violence has engendered in Nigeria, massive corruption permeated the adjudication of electoral petition during the military regime. This led to a situation where judgment are being sought and sold like commercial goods. It was reported that judges lobby the president of appeal court to be assigned juicy states.

Electoral violence is an evil cankerworm. It has in no small measure contributed to the high rate of corruption in the country. Instances of cases of vote buying abound almost in every polling unit; electorates are forced to vote against their choice. It is no longer news to see ill-meaning political party agents with bags of money to be given to whoever would vote their own party or candidates. The just concluded 2019 general election was not an exception. A political party in Ebonyi state, PDP to be specific, adopted the style of a bag of Abakaliki rice plus one-thousand naira for a vote (Sesan and Abdulkahman, 2018). All these unethical election activities engender violence and constitute bane to democratic governance in Nigeria.

Bad Governance Electoral Violence and bad governance in Nigeria is both causative and symptomatic of political instability in Nigeria. It is symptomatic as it reflects an immature political system. It is also causative because it feeds the political crises that manifest regularly. Electoral violence, if not properly addressed, could ultimately lead to escalated violence (Udama, 2013). investment in violence through arming of unemployed youth with small and light weapons and drugs as a driving force to destroy the fabric of any nation for the purpose of electoral violence. A large number of this youth who are unemployed, underemployed and those that are unemployable are used to free money coming from political thuggery and violence during the course of post-election violence (Sesan and Abdulkahman, 2018). a government that is genuinely instituted and constituted by poplar mandate enjoys a lot of support and legitimacy, because it laws are easily obeyed by the citizens who see public office holders as their

representative freely chosen by them. Conversely, an administration that was established through fraudulent and violent electoral process usually lacks such vital ingredient of democracy (Sesan and Abdulkahman, 2018). A survey in the level of corruption in Nigeria carried out in 2003 by the institute of Development Research of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria ranked political parties in the country third in the list of thirty most corrupt public institutions in Nigeria. This is a sad development for Nigeria because political parties are the ideological power house of civilian administration. Indeed it is difficult to think of any social ill in the country that is not traceable to the embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, particularly as a direct or indirect consequence of the corruption perpetrated by the callous political leadership class since independence. The cycle of poverty keeps growing with all its attendant consequences even as the rate of unemployment remains perpetually high (Praye and Kumakor, 2011).

Ethnic Division Electoral violence has fostered ethnic division in Nigeria; the pre-election campaign period leading to the 2015 presidential election was dominated by anti-ethnic speeches. What can be regarded as the genesis of anti-ethnic hate speeches started in 2011 when Goodluck Jonathan declared his intention to contest the president election, the northerners saw it as a breach of agreement (Praye and Kumakor, 2011). It was clear that the northerners wanted a northern contestant and more importantly a northern president.

Ethnic division has also affected greatly our voting pattern. Some of the results of our election present a picture of ethnic lines instead of the candidates not assessing his personality and even past records. In some other cases the decision to vote or who to vote for is taken by the leaders of community. The members of the elite group who by their training or education are expected to promote the political education of the electorate so as to enable them to be more critical in deciding on how to go about their civic duty (voting) but they turn out to be instrumental in making the electorates to be more parochial in their political outlook (Ironmini, 2019). The announcement of the result of 2011 presidential elections witnessed an unprecedented violence in the history of electoral violence in Nigeria. Many people including members of the NYSC were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. The riots were restricted to parts of North West and North East zones (Ikyase, 2015).

Crime and Insecurity It has been observed that the elimination of political rivals is a common strategy for electoral victory by politicians in Nigeria. In this regard, Nigerian politicians tend to kill fellow politicians whom they perceive as threats to their political interests. Thus, the approach of general elections was usually characterized by assassination of politicians for instance, Chief Bola Ige, an Alliance for Democracy (AD) chieftain and national Vice Chairman was murdered on December 24th 2001: Dr.

Henry Marshall of defunct All Peoples' Party (APP) chieftain and national vice chairman was murdered on March, 2003, Dr. Daramola, a gubernatorial aspirant in Ekiti state murdered on August 14, 2006, Ahmed Pategi, PDP state chairman, Kwara state murdered on August 15, 2002 and many others were assassinated. The inherent in this political assassination has serious implications for credible electoral system. It is worthy of note that the elimination of political rivals in this manner robs the electorates their right to choose from a multitude of candidates (Atanda, 2018).

Destruction of lives and Property As a result of electoral violence during election, the post-election periods usually pose massive threat to national security. That is, often times it generates into killings of opposition members and candidates as the case may be. Such killings bring about tensions and fear and often times escalates into serious conflicts (Nwachukwu, 2014). This have resulted into social unrest in the Nigerian state as it can be seen in most states in the just concluded election in Nigeria. Killings and wanton destruction of properties become order of the day⁴⁹. On Tuesday, 17th February, 2015, explosion and gunfire rocked by recalcitrant rented youths destabilized an election rally in Rivers State, killing one police officer and injuring four others while a reporter covering the event was stabbed. The violence erupted at a governorship party rally organized by all progressive congress (APC) for their candidate Dakuku Peterside in Okrika, the hometown of President Goodluck Jonathan's wife, Patience. The further confirmed that over fifty persons were critically lying injured at the Casely Harrison specialist hospital, port Harcourt (Ujo, 2012). The respondents are of the opinion that election violence in Kaduna state is mainly characterized by property destruction: about 34% of the series killings as a major occurrence in most election in Kaduna state. This agrees with the findings of Thompson which indicate that electoral violence was characterized by loss of lives and properties as was the case during the December 2008 political violence in Jos, Nigeria (Ujo, 2012). Electoral violence has become highly disruptive to social life, thereby, causing divisions in families and communities as well as causing antagonisms among and within social groups. The buildup of tension in 2011 election violence degenerated into violent explosion mainly in the Northern states. The epic centers of the riots were Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe and Taraba states (Okechukwu, 2014). Protesters burnt places of religious worships, public buildings and the houses of politicians from the ruling PDP and religious leaders considered to be related to the party, targeted INEC buildings and its personnel, including NYSC members serving as INEC ad-hoc staff and in Bauchi state, ten of them were killed in a gruesome manner. Also, the palace of the Sultan of Sokoto; the highest Muslim authority in the country was attacked and protesters clashed with security forces, all in a total of hundreds of persons were murdered and tens of thousands were displaced (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015). The announcement of the result of 2011 presidential elections witnessed an unprecedented violence in the history of electoral violence in Nigeria. Many people

including members of the NYSC were killed and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed. The riots were restricted to parts of North West and North East zones (Orji and Uzodi, 2012).

Conclusion

The study has examined the effect of electoral violence in Nigeria since independence, revealed the extent of damages occasioned by electoral violence in Nigeria, and causes of electoral violence. It also identified the various types of electoral violence and the effects of electoral violence on the political and overall development of Nigeria. The study further revealed that electoral violence as it could be seen today in Nigeria has affected the country in various ways including fostering corruption in the system and politicians doing anything within their powers in order to turn out the outcome of election in their own favor and when finally assumed such position, will embark on looting the fund of the public sector to replace the money that was spent in the course of campaign and election. Electoral violence has also foster bad governance in that owing to electoral irregularities which has caused the outcome of election in favor of candidates that are not willing or worthy to serve the public and these individuals in turn lack the qualities needed in a leader to be able to lead the people to the promise land and until Nigerians see election and voting as their singular rights to place capable hands in the affairs of governance or remove a bad government so that the dividends of democracy could be enjoyed by all, the issue of electoral violence and bad governance will continue to eat deep into the bone marrow of the general well-being of the people and pull the nation backwards.

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