

Electoral Violence and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria (2011-2019)

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Abstract

Electoral violence has dealt a huge blow to the development of democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria's elections so far have not lived up to expectations due to various forms of electoral manipulations which have denied the country credible, free and fair elections in her politics. Electoral violence has not only marred democratic consolidation in Nigeria but has also violated the fundamental human rights, especially the right to life, of so many Nigerians. Electoral violence between 2011 and 2019 reviewed in this paper was our bench mark. This paper, therefore, examined electoral violence and its effect on democratic consolidation in Nigeria, relying on documentary approach, using data gathered from secondary sources. It analyzed generated data using content analysis. The study was anchored on the basic propositions of Elite theory propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1936). The study found that electoral violence in Nigeria has resulted in the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who have no regard for the principles of democracy which are off-shoots for good governance, rule of law, constitutionalism and fundamental human rights. The paper recommends that Nigerian electoral processes should be more transparent in consolidating democracy, to give the masses the leverage to elect their leaders into various government offices.

Keywords: Election, Violence, Multi Ethnic, Democratic Consolidation, Nigeria

Introduction

One of the fundamental properties of liberal democracy is the intermittent and normal challenge for political power with the administered as free operators practicing their free and liberated election among contending stages. Elections are a noteworthy and critical column in the democratic procedure, since they underscore the standards of political interest, responsibility and authenticity. Majority rule advances in Africa are truly more perplexing than in other parts of the world. The convergence of governmental issues with geography, ethnicity, religion and other character markers are the main considerations in such manner. No place did this drastically and carefully happen than in Nigeria, especially in the buildup to the 2015 general political election. Nigeria's history is replete with narratives of how its electoral process has been marred by massive electoral rigging, violence and the subversion of the desire of the individuals. While electoral brutality has been a consistent subject in Nigeria's history since independence, adding to the breakdown of past endeavours at digging in law based arrangement of administration, the scale and force of political elections related to violence since the arrival to majority rules system in 1999 appears to overshadow what the nation experienced in the past. As the nation arranged for the 2015 general elections, the phantom of violence related with political election inspired a feeling of *deja'vu* with regard to the survivability of the democratization venture in Nigeria (ICG Report, 2015).

The Nigerian elite, because of the long rule of tyrant, have been socialized into a military culture with its sicknesses and ethos. One territory where they display this battle-ready culture is in their campaign discourses and advertorials, which are frequently framed in over the top language, making legislative issues much the same as fighting. It is not phenomenal, for example, to hear party fat cats gloat of their intension to catch a specific prized State during electioneering efforts. The current vote based allotment has likewise been overwhelmed by ex-administration men. Democratization along these lines conveys with it a high portion of military flavour. A valid example is a previous executive of the hitherto ruling party, a resigned military official who once depicted a controversial back up parent as 'the army leader of the western locale' and instructed the then Governor concerning the State to proceed to settle his crack with the said guardian.

With the militarization of the mind of the elite, the monetization and valorization of governmental issues are included, and the ascent of a few political hooligans is prepared to release violence on supporters of rival camps or execute horrifying wrongdoings all in the name of legislative issues (Adekanye, 1999; Danjibo and Olajide, 2007; Omotola, 2007). In the expansion to the above situation are the electoral frameworks that endorse least procedural limit for achieving power. The First-Past-The-Post electoral framework received by the nation makes it conceivable most occasions in choosing authorities to develop without prominent help cutting crosswise over different and wide spectrum of gatherings, making such discretionary triumphs pyrrhic as a general rule, due to the chaperon violence that regularly results. At the point when electoral result produces ethnic avoidance, ethnic activation for violence becomes the inescapable outcome, particularly when shift in control between or among battling ethno-religious bunches covers as ideological groups is more outlandish (Adolfo et al., 2012).

At the marking of an understanding for serene elections by the presidential competitors for the 2015 general political elections, Former President Jonathan appears to confirm the above attestation, when he was cited as saying:

The victor takes all is the issue. In view of our laws, we should think of an idea that will work. We should make it that when a gathering succeeds at the state or national level, in shaping the bureau, parties that performed ought to by law and not by benefit, be made piece of that legislature. In the event that legislators realize they will in any case be a piece of the legislature, when they are battling, they will be aware of their expressions. (Osuntokun 2015, p. 25)

The inspiration for this investigation is a result of the pathologies of electoral violence and its impact on democratic consolidation. The article explored reasons why elections in Nigeria will in general tip the State over the slope into blaze and brutality. To accomplish this target, the article examined the character of the Nigerian state and their extractive and prebendalist reliance on the State for support. It is the persistent prebendal practices, pandemic corruption, leadership deficit and a lopsided federal arrangement that serves as key drivers and catalysts for violence during elections. However, this study seeks to critically examine the nature of political violence and its implication on democratic consolidation in Nigeria within the time frame of study.

Conceptualization of Elections, Electoral Violence and Democratic consolidation in Nigeria

Elections define and stand as an important component of liberal democracy all over the world. This is essentially because elections offer the citizens the opportunity not only to choose leaders of their choice but to effect change of elected official as they deem fit. Elections would, thus, be viewed as one of the rotate and support around which the wheels of majority rule government spin. Nwolise (2007) characterized political election as the way towards choosing the officials or agents of an association or gathering by the votes of its certified individuals. Such a political election might be in a college looking for a bad habit chancellor, a corporate association picking an administrator, an ideological group conducting its primaries to pick its leading figure for a presidential challenge, a country needing to pick its leader, or a global association choosing its secretary general.

Elections, as indicated by Akzin (1960), cited in Nwolise (2007), have technical and social significance. In the specialized sense, they are the procedure through which an office or a post is assigned to an individual by a demonstration of volition that requires the simultaneous articulation of numerous individuals' suppositions.

Electoral Violence

Drawing understanding from Johan Galtung's original work on brutality and harmony, Albert (2007) characterizes electoral violence as "all types of sorted out act or dangers physical, mental and auxiliary planned for scaring, hurting, extorting a political partner previously, during and after a political election with the end goal of deciding, deferring, or generally impacting electoral procedures" (Albert, 2007, p. 136). Thus, electoral Violence can take any of the three components of violence upheld by Galtung. Physical discretionary brutality according to this definition will incorporate the sort of substantial assaults government officials or their vigorous supporters perpetrate on each other at party shows, during political battles, during elections and when results from political

elections are discharged the majority of which come full circle in fatalities. Apparently, the most noticeable and obvious type of violence, physical discretionary violence has stayed a repetitive topic in the five general political election in Nigeria since the re-introduction of multi-party legislative issues in 1999. The 2011 presidential political election witnessed the height of physical electoral violence with more than 800 fatalities beside properties that were annihilated primarily in the core northern states (Orji and Uzodi, 2012).

Democratic Consolidation

This implies a democracy that can stand the test of time. This can be assured, if those values that make democracy worthwhile are fully institutionalized. Kaur (2007) states that democracy becomes sustainable, when there is a credible opposition capable of replacing an incumbent government by offering an alternative outline of politics and strategies that are likely to appeal to the electorate. The concept of democratic consolidation connotes a deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is "so broadly and profoundly legitimized among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" (Ouyang, 2016) Democratic consolidation is an off-shoot of good governance which encompasses accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy, which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes (Eyinla, 2000). In fact, democratic consolidation can be measured by the percentage of voters in a country who consider democracy as an indispensable way of life and are ready to go every length to protect it.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of theory in political discourse cannot be overemphasized as it proffers empirically based general explanatory laws that are scientific in nature through synthesizing and integrating of empirical data for maximum clarification and unification. The elite theory was developed and popularized by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), and Robert Michels (1876-1936) among others (Verma 1975). Gaetano Mosca for instance states that: in all societies, two classes of people appear: a class that rules and a class that is that is ruled. The first class always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages it brings whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is more or less legal, none more or arbitrary or violent (international encyclopedia of the social sciences vol. 9, p. 524-525). This is typical of the Nigerian democratic system where a few persons at the top of the society dominated the process of making a choice in electoral contest. The elites involve a triumvirate of political, military, and business men/women who form overlapping cliques (Mazi-Mbah, 2006). The elite theory therefore underscores the basis of Nigerian electoral violence and democratic consolidation given that, the elites determine who qualifies to vie for any elective positions, political participation is therefore a restricted activity of the elite of different roles, especially the incumbent and of the citizenry during election. The ruling faction of the political elite uses the state power to accumulate wealth in order to strengthen their economic base and render the state power attractive (Ake, 2000)

Electoral Violence and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

The 2011 general elections were adjudged by many observers as the most credible election organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) since 1999. For example, Terence McCulley, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria praised the National Assembly election as the first-ever 'credible, transparent, free and fair general election' in Nigeria, and declared that it provided a 'historic opportunity for Nigeria to consolidate its democracy and further expand its voice on the world stage' (Agbambu and Ajayi, 2011). In the same vein, European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria noted that the 2011 general elections marked an important step towards strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria, although some challenges remained (EU EOM, 2011). The Northern states of the country were thrown into chaos and anarchy after Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was declared the winner of the 2011 presidential election. Human Rights Watch (2011) reported that about 800 lives were lost as a result of the post-election violence. Similarly, the Human Rights Watch (2011) claimed that more than 65,000 people were displaced after the 2011 post-election violence. The Nigerian Red Cross Society released a slightly lower figure indicating that the violence displaced 48,000 persons in 12 states (Omenazu and Paschal, 2011). In the run up to the 2015 elections, the security challenges had become worrisome most especially

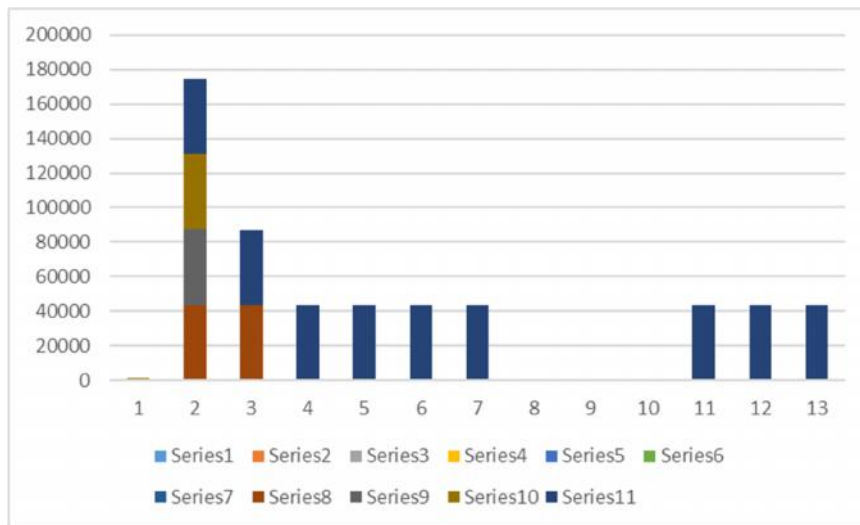
in Northern Nigeria and Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. This is largely due to the meteoric rise in the Boko Haram Insurgency. The CLEEN Foundation Security Threat Assessment published in March 2015 also indicated that 15 states were on red alert level. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its Pre-Election Report stated that at least 58 persons have been killed even before the conduct of 2015 general elections (CLEEN, 2015). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Prof Attahiru Jega introduced the use of Card Readers and Permanent Voters Card (PVC) for the 2015 general elections. The technology of the Card Reader system has ensured credible elections in Ghana, Kenya and Sierra Leone (Vanguard, February 25, 2015). According to INEC, there were 66 reports of violent incidence all across the country. The violence were recorded in Rivers State (16 incidents); Ondo (8); Cross Rivers (6); Ebonyi (6); Akwa Ibom (5); Bayelsa (4); Lagos and Kaduna (3 each); Jigawa, Enugu, Ekiti (2 each); Katsina, Kogi, Plateau, Abia, Imo, Kano and Ogun (one each) (Vanguard, April 12, 2015). The European Union Election Observation Mission reported that about 30 people were killed on April 11, 2015 Election Day as a result of inter-party clashes and attacks on election sites (EU EOM, 2015).

Incidences of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

S/N	Names of victims(s)	Date killed/Attacked	State	Remarks
1.	Mr. Sunday Ugwu	September 9th 2015	Enugu	A case of mistaken identity. The victims was an elder brother of Honourable Nwabuze. The target who is a member of Enugu state house of assembly.
2.	James Ibori	March 29th 2015	Delta	Attack on the governor of Delta state hired assassins.
3.	Momoh Lawal	March 5th, 2015	Kogi	Kogi inter party conflict between ANPP and PDP.
4.	Lambert Dagago	April 26th, 2015	Rivers	The victim died in a fighting that broke out between ANPP and PDP supporter in Ogubolo local government.
5.	Odunayo Olagbaju	December 21th 2018	Osun	The victim was a member of Osun State house of assembly. His death was 'unofficially linked' to the political intra party conflict In the state.
6.	Janet Olapade	August 13th 2018	N/A	A prominent PDP leader stabbed to death by assailant. Mainly youth for preventing them from pasting posters of a chairmanship candidate on her house. This was presumably an inter-party conflict.
7.	Ahmed Pategi	August 15th 2018	Kwara	Kwara state PDP chairman murdered along with his orderly when his car was accosted on his
8.	Victor Nwankwo	August 20th 2015	N/A	The victim was a younger brother of Arthur Nwanlwo, a highly profile politician and founder of Eastern Union Mandate (EUM).
9.	Twenty houses burnt to Ashes	March 12th, 2015	Kebbi	It was as a result of fracas between PDP supporters.

Source: Author's compilation (2019) adopted from Ibeano (2007).

Political Violence in Rivers State (Jan 11- Sept 18, 2019).



Source: *Nigeria Watch* (2019) p. 33.

The figures in the x axis indicate violence while the figures in the Y axis indicate the level of violence implicated in various months in Rivers state in 2019. The numbers in the Y axis are explained as follows: 1: Jan 11th, 2: March 23rd, 3: March 30th, 4: May 10th, 5: June 12th, 6: May 11th, 7: May 17th, 8: May 18th, 9: Sept 16th, 10: September 18th, 11: September 22nd, 12: September 24th, 13: September 30th (Nigeria News Watch, 2019). The figure above portrayed the rate of the nature of the violence in Rivers state between the months of January to September 2019. From the graph, it can be deduced that the highest rate of violence in Rivers occurred on 30th March 2019. There was no case of violence on May 18th, September 9th and September 18th.

As a result of electoral violence, democratic consolidation is affected negatively as people do not participate fully in the election process, the violence leads to destruction of properties including election materials thereby creating a weak election process such as the identified high degree of violence in Sokoto and River state in 2019 general elections. This disrupts the unity of the citizens thereby creating hatred and discrimination amongst them. The consequential effect of this is the unfit atmosphere for a democratic process.

Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

) Bribery and Failing of the Justice System

Nigeria has been experiencing electoral violence due to various reasons. Firstly, electoral violence in Nigeria is caused by bribery and the absence of a fair, lawful and legitimate system. For instance, political leaders who were responsible for the electoral violence that has been taking place are considered not guilty and are still living freely. They did not take any responsibility for their actions, thus, the justice system is failing Nigeria, and this triggers violence when other people vote for them (Ukwu, 2016). Therefore, corruption and the weak justice system are one of the major causes of electoral violence in Nigeria.

) Poverty and Unemployment

The second cause of electoral violence in Nigeria is poverty, as well as unemployment. It is quite obvious that not every individual in Nigeria lives comfortably, in fact, very few of them do. The political leaders take advantage of the neediness of the public and therefore can easily control them by making false promises and attaining their votes. Poverty breeds desperation, thus the political leaders can use that to their advantage. Now the people not getting what they had expected in return for their vote become beastly and violent. Furthermore, young people who are unemployed have nothing to do at home. Therefore, they are recruited by politicians to engage in electoral violence activities (Ukwu, 2016).

Conclusion

This paper discussed the phenomenon of electoral violence and the challenges it posed to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Based on relevant literature, the study conceptualized electoral violence away from the narrow definition based only on physical dimension of violence. The paper then historicized electoral violence by differentiating between elections conducted by a departing political authority known as transition elections which were found to be less prone to violence and consolidation elections conducted when the incumbents is standing as one of the contending parties. These elections have been found to be more susceptible to violence outcomes because of the inordinate bid to retain power or unseat those in power. The article identified the prebendal character of the Nigerian elite and their quest to attain or retain public office by all means which make them intolerant of opposing views as the key driver of violence during election.

The inalienable lose-lose and winner-take-all nature of appointive challenge and the discretionary framework that encourages it, such as the first-past-the-post framework are not amiable to quiet elections in separated social orders. This framework makes it conceivable in most occasions to choose authorities to rise without well-known help cutting cross-wise over different and wide range of gatherings, making such discretionary triumphs pyrrhic in actuality in light of the orderly violence that unavoidably follows. In spite of the fact that the Nigerian electoral framework attempts to deal with this by embedding in the appointive standards that victor of the presidential elections should not just verify the majority of the votes, such champ should likewise win 33% of the votes in two-third of the states in the nation. This stipulation should give such a victor the similarity to a skilled Nigerian command. Be that as it may, this arrangement does not appear to be expansive enough neither has it killed the recognition where chosen authorities are viewed as speaking to sectional and limited interests. The victor takes all is the issue Arising from the above, the paper recommended that Nigerian electoral processes should be more transparent in consolidating democracy as to give the masses the leverage to elect their leaders into various government offices. More so, the government should eradicate ethnicity and regionalism in Nigeria.

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