Electoral Process and Management in Nigeria: Towards a Non-violent General Election

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Abstract: - Election is a vital instrument of democratic governance. For election to achieve its objectives as a mechanism for smooth transfer of power and exercise of peoples’ sovereignty, it should be free and fair; devoid of any form of electoral cum political violence. Nigeria constitution and electoral laws outlaw electoral violence and stipulate penalties for offenders. Notwithstanding the legal provisions against electoral violence, incidences of electoral violence have continued to manifest in local, state and federal elections in Nigeria. The paper examined the salient features responsible for electoral violence in Nigeria and its effects with a view to suggesting appropriate measures for reducing the rate of violent incidence during elections in Nigeria. The methodology of the paper is qualitative and descriptive. Data for the study were generated through documentary and structured oral interview. The generated data were subjected to contextual-descriptive analysis. The findings among other things demonstrate that pervasive poverty and illiteracy; winner-take-all syndrome; excessive monetization of politics; political godfatherism and low civic education contribute to electoral violence in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper suggests capacity building for electoral bodies; zero tolerance to corruption; strengthened security agencies; strengthened civil society; poverty reduction and youth empowerment; less monetization of politics as measures to counter electoral violence.

Key words: electoral violence, electoral process, free and fair election, non-violent election, election

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a mounting worldwide appreciation that reliable and violent-free election represents a major factor in democracy, democratization and good governance. Elections in democracy are indispensable components that allow smooth transition of power from one government to another and play crucial task of ensuring representation of popular will and legitimization of political system. Election has been perceived as an irreducible attribute of representative democracy where political parties and autonomous candidates contend for elective positions in a free and fair environment in which the citizens are legitimately empowered to contribute in selecting those that will man the affairs of the state within a given period. Democracy as guarantees by the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria and electoral laws prohibit securing of political positions through violence and undemocratic means.

However, contrary to provisions of the constitution and electoral laws of Federal Republic of Nigeria which prohibit any form of electoral or political violence, it is worrisome that there have been many incidents of electoral violence in the annals of Nigeria’s political development since independence. For instance, section 131 of 2010 Electoral Act prescribes a fine of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of 3 years for (a) threatening a person with violence or injury to compel that person to vote or refrain from voting (b) preventing any political aspirant from free use of media vehicles, mobilization of political support and campaign at an election; while section 128 prescribes a maximum fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both for inciting others to act in a disorderly manner at an election. Section 119 of the Electoral Act 2010 stipulates a maximum fine of N500,000 or imprisonment for 12 months or both for any person who act in a disorderly manner or be in possession of offensive weapon at a political meeting while section 94(2) prescribes a maximum fine of N2,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of 2 years or both for unlawful possession of a weapon at political rally or voting centre. Section 96(1, 2) stipulates penalty for threatening any person with violence during any political campaign. In the case of individual, the penalty is a fine to the maximum of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months but incase of a political party it is a fine of N2,000,000 in the first instance and N500,000 for any subsequent offence. Snatching or destruction of any election material base on provision of section 128 attracts 24 months imprisonment. Notwithstanding these severe penalties against electoral violence and other previous anti-electoral violence provisions, the general elections conducted at federal, state and local government levels since 1960 such as 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections were characterized by different degrees of violence which left scores dead and many others injured.

Human Right Report (2007) demonstrated that prior elections in Nigeria show a pattern of political violence and politically motivated killings. According to the Human Rights Report (2003), the spate for this excruciating high intensity of violence was set in the years leading up to Nigeria’s 2003 elections during which hundred of people were killed in political clashes or targeted killings, without any grave official reaction in terms of investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators. Similarly, the 2007 Report of Coalition for Violence Free Election maintains that elections conducted in Nigeria between 1999 and 2003 were marred by prevalent electoral violence, including political killing. There...
were allegations that individual political candidates as well as some political parties employed armed gangs to bring about electoral violence. IFES and the Nigeria Alliance for Peaceful Election (NAPE) Report (2007) obviously demonstrated seventy-seven (77) cases of political violence between January 13 and February 13, 2007. The occurrence ranges from clashes at political rallies, to kidnapping of opponents and killings. In its second report covering February 14 to February 28, 2007, the rate had increased to one hundred and forty-four (144) incidents of which nineteen (19) were cases of intra-party conflicts, twenty (20) cases of verbal pestering, intimidation and threat to life, and eight (8) attacks on candidate by opponents or their supporters. The 2011 and 2015 general elections also recorded some cases of electoral violence across different parts of the federation with some resulting in severe bodily harm and death. The August 18, 2018 bye-election in Port Harcourt Constituency 3 in River State was marred by heavy gunshot, thuggery, violence and snatches of ballot papers (Olaniyi and Nwisi, 2018). According to INEC, the bye-election was suspended owing to wanton destruction of the electoral process. During the bye-election, electoral officers and electorate were beating, harassed and injured by political thugs who invaded polling booths with dangerous weapons. Similar incident happened during the August 11, 2018 bye-election into Lokoja/ Kogi Federal Constituency in Kogi State.

Consequent upon the negative implications of politically motivated cum electoral violence on political participation, credible elections and socio-economic lives, there has been a rekindled interest and reflection among scholars and policy makers on the imperative to suggest pragmatic measures on how to promote violent free elections. Thus, this paper examines the causes of electoral violence in Nigeria, its effects and appropriate strategies for reducing the spate of violence during elections in the country. The study is of essence in view of the forth coming 2019 general election in the country which its preparation by the electoral body and political class is already building up and heating the polity.

II. METHODOLOGY
The methodology of the study is both qualitative and descriptive. Data for the study were generated through documentaries and structured oral interview granted to 130 stakeholders in political process in Nigeria. The documentaries include relevant materials from electoral bodies, civil society organizations that champion free and fair elections, prominent scholars’ works published in journals, internet, books and conference papers. The distributions of those interviewed are as follows: Independent National Electoral Commission (10); State Independent Electoral Commission (10); Civil Society Organizations (20); political parties (30); security agents (10); the electorate (50). The data generated via the administered interviews and reviewed germane documents were analyzed using contextual-descriptive analytic process.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The theoretical framework employed in this paper is Structural Model of Electoral Violence associated with scholars such Marx and Engels, V.I. Lenin; Ross (1993) and Galtung (1990). Structural theory links electoral violence to economic and social institutions that exist in any given society or social setting. The theory posits that violence is a creation of how a society is structured and organized. It looks at social challenges such as political and economic exclusion and marginalization, unfairness, poverty, exploitation, inequality, insatiability and electoral misuse as the sources of electoral conflict cum violence. The structuralists, therefore, attribute electoral hostility to fight for dominance over economic and political resources by contending groups, parties and individuals. Violence is employed by these actors as an instrument for attaining electoral gain by inflicting fears and harm on the perceived political opponents. In a state of affairs where existing structures are skewed in favour of one faction while putting the others at a disadvantaged situation, where cultures are exclusive; where holders of political powers or privileges are unwilling to acknowledge the rights of others, the predisposition for electoral and political violence exist (Scarborough, 1998). Structural theory has the capability to explicate how the socio-economic, religious and political structures of Nigeria stimulate violence and conflicts during elections. Politics in Nigeria is perceived as profitable activities and as such political elite engage in do or die competition and manipulation to secure political power. The socio-economic structure has made it potential that the rich are getting richer whereas the poor are getting poorer. The unemployed youths for want of pecuniary gain are ready tools for political thuggery and bullying. In fact, structural theory provides good bases for the elucidation and understanding of electoral violence in Nigeria because of its basic assumptions that are germane to socio-economic, cultural, political and religious configuration in the state.

IV. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS
Election is an integral part of democratic development that enables the citizenry establish fairly and freely who should lead them at every echelon of government occasionally and take decisions that shape their socio-economic and political destiny. This perhaps was why Rose (1978) and Dye (2001) described an election as a foremost instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies; the key to participation in a democracy and the way of giving sanction to government and allowing the governed to decide and pass verdict on public office holders who hypothetically represent the governed. Nonetheless, there is no agreeable definition of electoral or political violence. To understand the concept of electoral violence, it is crucial to begin by conceptualizing violence. For Robert and Obioha (2005) and Tamuno (1991), violence is the unlawful use or threat of force. It could be perceived as the exercise of physical force to wreak injury or cause damage to a person’s property.
Implicit in this definition of violence are two basic issues; the use of force and the abuse of another person’s fundamental rights (Albert, 1994). Again, violence could take different forms of manifestations: it could be socio-economical, psychological, sectarian and even political. Electoral violence is a restricted aspect of political violence that is associated with the course of elections. It is a sub type of political violence in which political actors adopt compulsion as an active way to move ahead their interests or gain specific political interest. This form of political violence occurs before, during or after elections. Electoral violence includes acts such as elimination of political opponent or fisticuffs between contrasting groups of supporters and threat, bullying and terrorization of opponent, voters, or election officials. Threat and intimidation are forms of compulsion that is just as potent as acts of violence can be. Electoral violence entails an array of activities geared towards subverting the will of the people to without restraint exercise their choice. According to Ogundiya (2003) electoral violence consists of all sorts of riots, demonstrations; party clashes; political assassination looting; thuggery; kidnapping etc. spontaneous or not, which occur before, during and after election. It could be regarded as election provoked crises employed to alter, modify or maneuver by force or compulsion the electoral behaviour of the electorate or voting patterns or in all probability turn around electoral choice in favour of particular individual, groups or political party. Embedded in the above definitions, is that electoral violence is a means to an end, geared wholly towards influencing the voting behaviour of the electorate as well as changing electoral outcome in favour of an individual, groups or party with the use of force, which often results in deadly injuries, death and wreckage of property. Therefore, electoral violence as used in this study refers to all forms of threat and/or use of physical force employed to disorganize the electoral process, destroying materials as well as to intimidate the electorate with the ultimate aim of either retaining political power as long as possible or wrestling political power from its incumbent holder.

V. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND REVIEW

Prominent scholars in the Social Sciences and other disciplines have made scholarly attempts at offering some theoretical explications of the nature, cause and consequences of electoral violence. This subsection attempts to examine some of the models and their fundamental tenets

Realist Theory

Realist model highlights inherency and traces the starting place of violence or conflict to an imperfection in human personality which is seen to be egotistical and engaging in the pursuit of personalized self interest defined as power. The theory originates from orthodox political theory and shares both theological and genetic doctrines about an evident weakness and distinctiveness intrinsic in human nature. Thus, the starting point for the explanation of conflict or electoral violence is the individual level. Realism believes that individuals have an inbuilt yearning to get hold of authority at all costs. These instinctive and immoderate pursuits of power have a propensity to promote violence during election. Realism believes that competitive process between actors is the natural expression of clash by parties engaged in the pursuit of scarce and competitive interest (Deutsch, 1973). This theory has three constituent parts: Descriptive Realism which sees the human race as an arena of conflict; Explanatory realism which seeks to confirm that there is heritable defects which push humanity into unconstructive behaviour and that violence is unavoidable; and prescriptive realism which builds on the arguments of descriptive and explanatory realisms to say that decision makers (individual, groups or nations) have a ethical rationalization to protect their critical interests and ensure self-preservation using means necessary. Therefore, electoral violence, in the view of realists, is expected because man is essentially selfish and will take on any means to reach his economic and political interest. In other words, materialization of violence during election is a normal expression of man’s excessive search to get political power using any means necessary.

Psycho-Cultural Theory

This theory emphasizes the role of ethnically induced violence and conflict. It shows how enemy’s imagery is created from entrenched attitudes about human actions that are learned from early stages of growth. It contends, therefore, that even though there are different forms of identities, the one that is based on people’s ethnic origin and the culture that is learned on the basis of that ethnic origin is one of the most important ways of explaining violent conflict (Ademola, 2006). Identity is thus seen to be the drive for socio-political and electoral conflict or violence that takes long to decide. Psycho-cultural theorists dispute that political violence or social conflict that take long to resolve become a possibility when some groups are discriminated against or deprived of satisfaction of their vital and psychological needs on the basis of their identity. Thus, an ethnic group that feels marginalized in an electoral process may resort to the use of arms or violence to seek redress or have access to political power. This is typically the case in multi-ethnic state like Nigeria where politics have ethnic dimension. The minorities that feel politically and economical excluded or dominated tend to take up arms against the government or the political class seen to be accountable for their deprivations. Theorists in this area see the acknowledgment and protection of identity as the most important even though there are other equally key needs for physical security, belongings, political and economic empowerment and self esteem. Social conflicts that take long to resolve are identity-driven and grow out of the feelings of weakness and memories of past persecution. A history of humiliation, oppression, victimization, feeling of inferiority and other forms of experiences which wear away a person’s self-respect and self-esteem and lead people to resort to vengeance constitute part of what has been refereed to as the pathological dimension of ethnicity.
Structural Theory

This theory has two core sub-orientations. The first is the radical structural theory represented by the Marxist dialectical school with exponents like Marx and Engels, V.I. Lenin, etc. The second is the liberal structuralism represented by Ross (1993) and the famous work of Johan Galtung (1990) on structural violence. Theory like Marxism, in its argument on historical materialism present conflict and violence as typically tied to economic structures and social institutions. The chief argument of the structural theory is that violence is built into the particular way societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems such as political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, exploitation, inequality, greed, electoral abuses, marginalization, as source of electoral violence. Structuralists uphold that conflicts occur because of exploitation and unjust nature of human societies, domination of one class by another. This case is made by radicals like Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, Joseph Lenin and Mao Tse Tung, who blame capitalism for being an exploitative system based on its relations of production and the division of society into the proletariat and bourgeoisie (Ademola, 2006). The structuralists, therefore, attribute electoral violence to the control of economic and political resources by rival groups, parties and individuals with irreconcilable interests. Groups, parties and individuals tend to take up violence during election as a means of threatening, harassing and victimizing opponents, electorate and officials in order to gain electoral favour and power over authoritative allocation of value in the political system. According to Khotari, a former Director of the United Nation’s University’s Programme on Peace and Global Transformation, resource is a foremost cause of violent-conflict between individuals and groups within political systems and between nations. As he put it “the control of resources lies in the heart of the deepening crisis in the world today. According to Scarborough (1998), in a situations where existing structures are slanted in favour of one group while putting the others at a disadvantage, where cultures are seen as exclusive; where holders of certain powers or privileges are reluctant to recognize the rights of others; or where people find it hard to identify with the political and economic ideas of a political regime, the chances are that conflict and violence will emerge and escalate if nothing is done to correct such anomalies.

Frustration –Aggression Theory

The Frustration-Aggression theory which John Dollard and his research associates firstly developed in 1939 and has been extended and modified by scholars like Berkowitz (1962) and Yates (1962) appears to be the most common account for violent behaviour stemming from failure to fulfill needs. Theorists who rely on this explanation use the psychological theories of motivation and behaviour as well as frustration and aggression. In an attempt to elucidate aggression, scholars point to the distinction between what people feel they want or deserve to what they truly get and the difference between projected need and satisfaction and tangible need satisfaction. Where expectation does not meet attainment, the penchant is for people to tackle those they hold accountable for frustrating their aspiration. This is the fundamental argument of Gurr (1970) on relative deprivation thesis where he contends that the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result. The key enlightenment that frustration-aggression theory provides is that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as realists and biological theorists assume, but that it is the product of frustration and that in a state of affairs where the rightful desire of individual or group is denied either directly or indirectly, the feeling of disenchantment may lead such persons or groups to communicate their anger through violence that will be directed at those they hold answerable or people that directly or indirectly related to them. Therefore, electoral violence can manifest as an expression of individual or groups displeasure with those in authority who have deprived them of their rights or who have not live up to the expectation of the individual or group in terms of providing their basic requirements for life. In other words violence in the electoral process can arise out of frustration caused by unemployment, marginalization, imposition of candidates; inequality and unfair treatment of politicians as well as the electorate.

VI. CAUSES OF ELECTION RELATED VIOLENCE

Some salient factors have been identified as being responsible for election-related violence in Nigeria. These factors include:

Pervasive Poverty and Illiteracy: Pervasive poverty and illiteracy have a strong relation with the susceptibility of the youth to conscription into political thuggery and engagement in violent acts. The jobless youth, some of them illiterates, for want of material needs are straightforwardly mobilized by political godfathers, political parties and candidates to execute reprisal, threaten, harass or slay political opponents. Some youth in Nigeria who lack knowledge of the menace of political thuggery or rather restive, as a result of redundancy, take recourse to gangsterism and thuggery service for the politicians in return for patronage.

Winner-Takes-All Syndrome: The electoral mindset of zerosum politics and high premium on political power by politicians exaggerate the extreme use of violence in gaining access to political power. The do or die frame of mind pushes politicians to engage the service of armed youth and other diabolic measures for the purposes of unleashing havoc on opponents or the electorate so as to win political power at all costs and take authoritative control of allocating public resources and values.

Lack of Political Ideology: Poverty of ideology on the part of political parties and candidates lead to factionalism as well as defection of politicians from one party to the others. Most political parties in Nigeria lack strong and unifying ideological underpin. This dearth of philosophy creates inter-
party and intra-party schism, which at times, graduates into violence. The parties and their candidates rather than campaigning on issues attack personality and raise emotion, thereby making the political atmosphere tense. Sometimes, the split degenerates into use of hate speeches and powerful struggle for the control of party machinery and instrument of state.

**Lack of Discipline and Dedication:** Lack of discipline in the form, spirit and execution of electoral process by the electoral commission generates doubts among the political class on the probability of free and fair elections. Uncommitted efforts and late preparation for elections coupled with impunity of undisciplined electoral officers lead to non-free and fair election, which is unacceptable. The recruitment, selection and appointment of electoral officials without adequate capacity building generate negative outcomes. This according to Human Right Watch (2003) questions the integrity of the electoral commission and increase the belief that politicians will attempt to secure victory through intimidation, violence and rigging.

**Excess Monetization of Politics:** Deployment of money to influence either the party primaries or the general elections results in godfatherism and political hostility. Although politics is expensive, excessive use of money by politicians either to induce the electorate or electoral officials reduces politics to a battle ground for money bags. This monetization in the face of pervasive poverty and illiteracy lure the youth into the service of political big weights who equip them with arms and patronage for the purpose of political thuggery. The godfathers who monetarily invested in the elections of their godsons usually turn against the godsons if they attempt not to be submissive after winning the elections.

**Weak and Corrupt Law Enforcement Agencies:** The general elections conducted in the country have exposed the weakness of the law enforcement agencies principally the police in checking electoral violence and malpractices. The police, in some cases, were overpowered by the better-quality armed thugs and, at times, for material need provide protection to them and aid in electoral malpractices. The brutal and unrefined ones among the police intimidate and harass opponents to the ruling party. The military particularly the army have also been indicted for being involved electoral irregularities. This was reported to have been the case in 2014 governorship election in Ekiti State in which it was alleged that the army was used by the Federal Government to rig the election in favour of its preferred candidate. According to the Executive Director of Human Right Monitor in Nigeria, Festus Okoye, “The police displayed an act of incompetence and collusion in rigging the 2007 election”.

**Corrupt Electoral Process:** Soyinka (2007) observed that electoral commissions in Nigeria, both at state and federal levels are neither independent nor corrupt free. Accordingly, he stated that the commissions clear ground around the anointed so that they could have smooth victory, and do no believe in tasking the officers or see the need for counting ballot papers. There have been reported cases and allegations of electoral officials in Nigeria taking bribes and colliding with political parties and candidates in order to subvert the electoral will of the masses. The EFCC have prosecuted some electoral officers of INEC who were involved in electoral irregularities in 2015 general election while some are still under investigation with some admitting collecting money from the then ruling party for the purpose of influencing the outcome of the election. Politicization of recruitment of both adhoc and permanent electoral staff weakens the confidence on the expected unbiased umpire. As such, the commission is viewed as instruments of rigging and vote manipulation especially by the ruling party or government.

**Political Godfatherism:** The phenomenon of political godfatherism in Nigeria politics has taken a hazardous and negative dimension. The godfathers who invest in power for security and pecuniary gain cut the paths and upstage the system to provide mastery of the terrain for the neophyte: godson. There are cases of godfathers attempting the use of their wealth and connections, including armed thugs, to secure victory for their godsons. The godfathers, at times, fall apart with their godsons when the expected political profits are not forthcoming. The result is a rift between the godfathers and the godsons who usually employ every stratagem to ensure survival and maintain relevance.

**Low Civic Education:** The level of political consciousness, mobilization and sensitization in the Nigeria lacks permeation. Most people in rural and local communities are uninformed of the electoral process, their duties and obligation. Enlightenment and sensitization campaign on the electoral process, duties and obligation as well as menace of violence is not wide spread. Consequently, those that feel alienated from participation in governance may resort to violent to register their protests and disgust.

**Absence of Electoral Violence Evaluation and Research Programme:** There is no effective and efficient functional in-built mechanism either in INEC or government departments for identifying, monitoring and where possible mitigating and preventing electoral violence. This affects negatively the capability to monitor, gather and analyze information on election-related violence in the state.

**Lack of Commitment and Diligent Prosecution of Offenders:** Although there is plethora of severe penalties prescribed against electoral and political violence, much has not been done to diligently prosecute electoral offenders by electoral commissions and government. Some electoral offenders owing to their political affiliations and personality seem to be untouchable. This category of persons indulges in obvious violence and yet walks free in the street. Moreover, the corrupt practices in the judiciary also cause some influential electoral offenders to obtain favourable judgement and exonerate from the alleged offence through material inducement of the judicial officers.
VII. EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

The leading identified consequences of electoral violence in Nigeria include:

Death and Bodily Harms: Electoral or political violence results in inflicting of bodily injury on opponents and unsuspected electorate. In extreme cases, this results in death of some individuals. There have been reported cases of political assassination; shouting and explosion in political gathering and poling booths. During the 2015 general election, the elections in River State witnessed series of politically motivated killings and injuries owing to fierce political battle between the Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress in the state. Human Right Report (2007) demonstrated that prior elections in Nigeria show a pattern of political violence and politically motivated killings.

Political Apathy: Political indifference tends to increase in an atmosphere where the citizens are not sure of the security of their lives and votes. Electorates in volatile and hostile political environment always stay away from political activities for fear of being harmed in the process. They assume that the cost of losing their lives is higher than the cost of abstaining from violent characterized political process.

Erosion of Electorate’s Sovereignty: Political or electoral violence erodes the power of the electorate to determine their leaders and hold them accountable. In some cases, electoral violence is motivated by the need to have undue electoral advantage and manifests in the form of ballot paper and box snatches, as well as forceful manipulation of electoral results. In this circumstance, it is no longer the electorate that determine their representatives but political thugs and their political sponsors. The electorate are deprived their power to grant mandate to their preferred candidates and the candidates that emerged in such process may not be responsive and accountable to the people.

Proliferation of Arms and Violence Practice: Electoral violence leads to proliferation of arms and spread of violent acts in society. Political thugs are armed with small scale arms and explosives to execute their operation during elections. These arms which in most cases remain in their custody after the elections may be used to commit other heinous crimes such as armed robbery and kidnapping, rape and other forms of sexual harassment. IFES and the Nigeria Alliance for Peaceful Election (NAPE) Report (2007) obviously demonstrated seventy-seven (77) cases of political violence between January 13 and February 13, 2007. The occurrence ranges from clashes at political rallies, to kidnapping of opponents and killings.

Corrupt Practices: Electoral violence provides breeding ground for other forms of corrupt practices such as embezzlement of electoral fund, falsification of electoral results, demanding, giving and acceptance of bribes; unlawful destruction of electoral materials, etc. The anti corruption agencies in Nigeria have arrested, investigated and prosecuted security and electoral officers involved in electoral bribes for the purpose manipulating results. There are cases were electoral officers are kidnapped or forced to alter electoral results.

Destruction of Economic Property: Apart from destruction of lives as a result of electoral violence, it also results in loss of economic property such as buildings, shops, firms, and other economic valuables. Arson as a form of electoral violence results in wanton burning of opponents’ property and valuables. Sometimes, violent protest on election related issue spreads across the affected area leading to destruction of economic valuables as well as preventing innocent citizens from engaging in their lawful business cum jobs.

Undermine Democracy: Election is paramount for survival of democracy. However, this is feasible only when it is devoid of violence. Elections that are characterized by violence have lost their real essence as instrument for democratic governance. Democracy is based on consensus, negotiation, compromise, rule of law and harmonious existence not anarchy.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-violent free and fair election is a desideratum for legitimacy of government and consolidation of democracy. The achievement of this in general elections in Nigeria demands holistic and concerted efforts of stakeholders in the electoral process. The recommended measures and strategies are:

Capacity Building for INEC and SIEC: Development and effective execution of capacity building, training and technical support programmes by INEC and SIEC will improve the commissions’ capacities to manage elections in a free, fair, transparent and timely manner. The electoral commissions’ staff should be provided with basic skills in election administration through a well-developed training programme. This requires adequate funding and co-operation of the commissions with NGOs and other relevant agencies. A training and capacity building unit should be institutionalized in the commissions for constant improvement in the electoral management skills of the staff.

Zero Tolerance to Corruption and Violence: Government and judicial authorities should undertake prosecution of persons implicated in political violence and corrupt practices no matter whatever their personality or political party affiliation. The prosecution should be all-inclusive: those persons who ordered or organized the violence as well as those who carried it out. In absence of legislation dealing especially with electoral violence, offenders should be tried under existing criminal law, including conspiracy. INEC and SIEC should leave no stone unturned to expose and undertake necessary disciplinary action in accordance with due process against any electoral officer or person implicated in election related corrupt practices. Also, disciplinary action should be taken as appropriate against any police or security agent who takes part
in political violence, commit extra-judicial execution or perpetrate human right violation.

**Strengthened Law Enforcement:** The police, as the head agency in charge of the law, order and internal security should be strengthened to undertake security function pre, during and post election period. The police and other security agencies should be equipped with adequate fire power and encouraged to disarm all political touts, militias and all those in possession of illegal arms. Adequate allowances and other logistics should be given to the police and electoral officers for the election time. The non-payment of allowances and provision of transport and other basic requirements make them susceptible to compromise to candidates and all sorts of interests.

**Poverty Reduction and Youth Empowerment:** The state policy should, as a matter of urgency, be directed to addressing the issue of poverty, particularly youth unemployment. Youth empowerment through micro credit facilities and entrepreneurial development is of strategic importance in reducing Youth restiveness and susceptibility to violence. The issue of Youth empowerment should be given genuine and committed attention since the Youth are most vulnerable to thuggery and violence.

**Less Monitization of Politics:** INEC and SIEC through electoral reforms should undertake, encourage and support legislations to reduce excessive role of money in politics. This in turn will reduce the incidence of political godfathers who invest in power as security and the push for politicians to borrow money, to contest poll and when they win, resort to extra-judicial means to pay back loan.

**Strengthened NGOs and Civic Education:** Civic society organizations have a crucial role to play in the electoral process. The roles span observing of election process from legislation concerning election, registration of voters, compliance with electoral procedure, campaigns and electoral competition. Government and electoral bodies should encourage and cooperate, to the greatest extent possible, with national and international NGOs in expanding campaigns to educate and enlighten the citizenry on electoral process. The citizens should be mobilized against anti-democratic tendencies, which include election-related violence.

**Effective and Efficient Resolution of Electoral Dispute:** INEC and SIEC, in co-operation with other stakeholders, should encourage and support non-violent and early resolution of electoral disputes. Legal institutions that are involved in election-related disputes should be strengthened and given true independence. The electoral commission should make available every necessary material to facilitate the dispense of justice in electoral matter. Political parties should develop internal alternative dispute resolution mechanism that is acceptable to members; reconciliation, mediation and arbitration. Also, inter-party peaceful resolution of dispute through alternative dispute system should be encourage.

Aggrieved member or person should resort to legal means in seeking redress to injustice.

**Development of Electoral Violence Research Unit:** INEC and SIEC, in collaboration with NGOs, and other stakeholders in electoral process, should develop a programme aimed at identifying, monitoring and where possible, mitigating and preventing election violence. Election violence research unit should be institutionalized in INEC and SIEC for the purpose of monitoring election related violence, analyzing information and making projection to mitigate violence.

**Political Culture of Ideology and Win-Win Strategy:** Political parties in the country should develop a strong unifying ideology, spirit of compromise and accommodation. Inter-party and intra-party cooperation should be encouraged to minimize factionalism. Political parties and candidate should strictly base their campaign rallies and programmes on issues that promote economic growth and democracy rather than attacking personality. Any political party or candidate/person found guilty of personality attack should be banned from participation. The spirit of win-win strategy as against winner-takes-all syndrome should be cultivated, encouraged and supported through value reorientation.

**IX. CONCLUSION**

Electoral violence does not only result in death and bodily harm but undermine the essence of democratic government. The manifestations of electoral violence in Nigeria, among other things, erode the sovereignty of the electorate and encourage political apathy. Thus, the electoral bodies, the government, the civil society and other stakeholders in the electoral system should partner to reduce the rate of violence during elections.

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