

Integrity of Nigeria's Electoral Processes: A Case Study of the Governorship Election held in Kogi State on 11th November, 2023*

Abstract

It was another sad tale of electoral violence during the 11th November, 2023 Governorship election in Kogi State. The election has come and gone, but the electoral violence that characterized the election is still fresh in our minds. During the election a lot of electoral violence took place. This development brings to the fore, the issue of electoral violence on our journey to democracy. This paper examined the integrity of our electoral processes with particular reference to the Governorship elections in Kogi State on 11th November, 2023.

1. Introduction

Governorship election in Kogi State was held on 11th November, 2023.¹ During the election, a lot of electoral violence took place. It was reported that some fake policemen with AK49 rifles without identity cards were arrested in Kogi State during the governorship election in the state. The suspects were arrested in Ankpa local government area of Kogi State.² The Governorship candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Kogi State, Senator Dino Melaye boycotted the election across the 21 local government areas. Melaye was not seen in his unit 004, ward 002, Iluafon quarters, Aiyetoro Gbede, Ijumu local government area to cast his vote. It was reliably learnt that the PDP candidate, who was in his country home, with some of his supporters stayed away from the exercise. The Nation quoting one of the PDP chieftains reported that Dino Melaye did not vote because he believed the election was already predetermined.³ A Civil society organization, YIAGA Africa, raised alarm concerning pre-filled results sheets in Ogori/Magongo, Eika/Ohizenyi and some other areas of the North Central State. YIAGA Africa urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to probe the matter and "promptly safeguard the integrity of the process." According to the report, the results sheets were filled before the commencement of voting.⁴

From the foregoing, we can come to a conclusion that there is a big question mark on the integrity of elections in Nigeria. Elections in Nigeria have degenerated from being a means for popular participation and peaceful change of government to an invitation to intense violence and political uncertainty in the country.⁵ While it may seem that Nigeria's democracy has steadily progressed on the road from nascent to fledging, there has emerged a disturbing concern over the conduct of elections in the country.⁶ The conduct of elections in Nigeria has at various intervals remained an invitation to political uncertainty for the country. This is not unconnected with the recurrent incidences of electoral malpractices especially electoral violence prevalent in the country. Elections in Nigeria have been described as a do-or-die affair even by esteemed official quarters.⁷ As a result of this, series of violent clashes occur and sometimes results to loss of lives and property. For example, having pre-filled results sheets in

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¹ Together with Bayelsa and Imo States where governorship elections were equally hold.

² <<https://news.band/video-fake-policemen-with-ak49-rifles-arrested-in-kogi-state/>> Accessed 12/11/2023).

³ <<https://news.band/just-in-pdp-guber-candidate-dino-melaye-boycotts-kogi-poll/>> Accessed 12/11/2023).

⁴ <<https://www.chaiinelstv.com/2023/11/11/kogi-election-yiaga-africa-draws-inecs-attention-to-pre-filled-results/>> Accessed 12/11/2023

⁵ <<http://www.Internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/election...>> Accessed 18 June 2012

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ <<http://www.Internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/election...>> Accessed 18 June 2012

Ogori/Magongo, Eika/Ohizenyi and some other areas of the North Central State of Kogi State before the commencement of voting is a serious vice that has affected the integrity of the electoral process. As electoral competitions become the preserve of violent individuals, the recurrence of electoral violence scares credible people from exercising their franchise and in engaging in partisan politics. This poses threat to democracy and development of the country.

The degeneration of elections to a violent warfare is not only peculiar to Nigeria. Other African countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Zimbabwe are also battling the consequences of election.⁸ In Cote d'Ivoire, the dispute over the result of the 28 November, 2010 Presidential run-off election between former President Laurent Gbagbo and erstwhile Prime Minister, Allasane Quattara – both of whom declared themselves President - provoked a short - lived civil war in the country that ended with the capture and overthrow of Laurent Gbagbo in April, 2011 by opposition forces loyal to Allasane Quattara.⁹ Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, opposition leader, Etienne Tshiekedi and President Joseph Kabila lay claim to victory as opposition reject the result of elections which observers claim lacked credibility. In the ensuing controversy, Etienne Tshisekedi unilaterally declared himself president.¹⁰ In Russia, the parliamentary elections of December, 2011 generated intense national resentment that provoked popular demonstrations against the administration of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Protesters across Russia openly demanded the resignation of Vladimir Putin and cancellation of the election. Former Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev called for the cancellation of the election result. This incident has been described by Al Jazeera as the administration's greatest challenge confronting the administration in 2011.¹¹ Other countries like Pakistan, India and Iraq also have a history of election related violence.¹² This article therefore examines the integrity of our electoral processes and its corresponding effects to our democracy taking into account the 11th November, 2023 governorship election in Kogi State.

2. What is Election?

Election is the corner stone of democracy.¹³ Election is a means through which people make choice of leadership.¹⁴ It is the process of electing one person or more for leadership positions in both public and private establishment. Election offers a medium through which citizens in a polity choose their representatives and political leadership.¹⁵ It also allows a degree of communication between the rulers and the ruled and further provides a means of legitimizing the rights of the rulers to govern.¹⁶ In the present world of today, elections have become the most acceptable means of changing leadership in any given political system. Representative government is often referred to as democracy where the authority of government is derived solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for translating that consent into governmental authority is the holding of free and fair elections.¹⁷ A free and fair election gives the assurance that those who emerge as rulers are the elected representatives of the people.

⁸ <<http://www.Internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/election...>> Accessed 18 June 2012

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ T. Osipitan, "Problems of Proof under the Electoral Act 2002," in *Judicial Excellence, Essays in Honour of Hon. Justice Anthony Iguh JSC CON*, (Enugu, Snaap Press Ltd, 2004)

¹⁴ <<http://www.Internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/election...>> Accessed 18 June 2012

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ <www.Buzzle.com/articles/electoral-reform-in-Nigeria-html-28k> Accessed 18 December 2008

Except in case where an aspirant is returned unopposed; there will usually be at least two contestants to elective posts. Rules and regulations are normally put in place for the conduct of free and fair elections.

The Electoral Act¹⁸ is the law which currently regulates elections in Nigeria. Applying a broad interpretation, the Court of Appeal in *Progressive Peoples' Alliance (PPA) v. Sariki*¹⁹ interpreted the word "election" as used in section 137(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) to mean the "*process of choosing by popular votes a candidate for a political office in a democratic system of government. It cannot refer exclusively to the polls. The casting of votes by the electorates on the day of the polls is just part of the electoral process*".²⁰ By the provision of the Electoral Act²¹ the word election is a generic term comprising *inter alia* submission of list of candidates and their affidavit by political parties, nomination of candidates, conduct of the polls etc. In this article, the term election will be used in a broad manner.

3. Free and Fair Election and Integrity Defined

Free election is an election in which the political system and processes guarantee that each voter will be allowed to vote according to conscience. The concept of "free and fair" election is not a legal theory as such. Its significance is underscored by municipal and international legal instruments. The African Charter on Human and People's Right²² provides that every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country either directly or through freely chosen representatives. Article 21(3)²³ provides that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine election which shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. From the above, it can be seen that free and fair elections are those elections held without physical or psychological intimidation and in accordance with the provisions of fair electoral laws in force. They are those elections conducted so that the electorates have reasonable opportunity to vote, with each vote given same effect.²⁴ Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.²⁵ Integrity has the same attributes with something that is free and fair. One of the most dangerous threats to free and fair elections and Integrity of electoral processes in Nigeria is electoral violence.

4. Electoral Violence defined

Electoral violence is all forms of violence that emanate, at any stage, from differences in views, opinions and practices during the process of elections.²⁶ It is the employment of force by political parties or their supporters to intimidate opponents and threats to a democratic regime and has often accounted for seizures of political power by the use of undemocratic means, such as force.²⁷ Electoral violence has regularly been reported in Nigeria and manifest in the 3

¹⁸ Electoral Act 2022

¹⁹ (2007) 17 NWLR Part 1064, 456

²⁰ *Ibid* per Ogunwumi JCA who read the lead judgment.

²¹ Electoral Act 2022.

²² Article 13(1), Cap A9 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, which is part of our law as was held in *Abacha v. Fawehinmi* (2006) 6 NWLR Part 660, 228

²³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

²⁴ BA Garner, (ed), *Black's Law Dictionary*, (8th Ed, Thompson Group. USA, 2004) 688

²⁵ AS Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, (7th Edition, OUP) 807

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

electoral stages, namely: pre-election, during election and post-election in various forms.²⁸ Electoral violence in Nigeria has two broad dimensions, physical and psychological.²⁹ It ranges from acts of assault, arson, ballot box snatching and stuffing to murder/assassination. Between 1999 and 2007, electoral violence has reportedly claimed more than 11,000 lives in Nigeria.³⁰

5. History of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The history of general elections³¹ in Nigeria since independence in 1960 has been characterized by widespread malpractices and violence. The attention of this paper will be focused on the elections conducted in Nigeria in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 in analyzing electoral violence.

5.1 The 1999 General Elections

The fourth republic in Nigeria started on 29th May, 1999. The military regime of General Abdulsalaam Abubakar was committed to a peaceful transition to democracy. Before then, there was growing fatigue of military rule at domestic and global arena and increasing international clamour for democratization in Nigeria and the wider world.³² These reasons partly accounted for the smoothness and swiftness of the General Abubakar's transition programme which climaxed in the 1999 general election and subsequent handover of power to civilians. Consequently, the election which was under military supervision was largely free of violence.³³

5.2 The 2003 General Elections

The next general elections of the fourth republic held in April, 2003 were marred by widespread rigging, voter intimidation and violence.³⁴ Dozens of people were killed in pre-electoral violence in various parts of the country. Events that followed the political crisis in Anambra State involving Dr. Chris Ngige and Chief Chris Uba - both members of PDP at the time - and the latter's subsequent confession exposed the apparent fraud that characterized the election in the country.³⁵ Specifically, Uba confessed unequivocally that:- *We the PDP did not win the 2003 elections in Anambra State. I have gone to church to confess. The election had no document. I called the result before midnight. I gave INEC money and asked them to announce the result.*³⁶

5.3 Other highlights of the 2003 general elections include:

1. During the election, the sub-station of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria in Markudi (Benue State) was burnt down.³⁷
2. At Oji River in Enugu State, the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was burnt down following violent protest on alleged falsification of electoral results.³⁸

²⁸ <<http://www.monitor.upeace.org/archive.cfm?id=article=67>> Accessed 18 June 2012

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ General elections were conducted in post independent Nigeria in 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019.

³² <<http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blogs/election...>> Accessed on 18 June 2012

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Ubanyionwu, CJ, "Electoral Violence and future of Nigerian Democracy", (2014) (1)(1) *Joseph Ayo Babalola University Law Journal*, [48-56]

³⁸ *Ibid.*

3. In Niger Delta region, elections aggravated the political crisis in the Niger Delta. During the period, the level of violence there was the highest in the country.³⁹ It was observed that politicians recruited and armed members of youth groups to intimidate opposition politicians and their supporters. Many of these armed youths have freed themselves from their former patrons and are now independent, well-armed actors with experience and knowledge of the terrain. Now, they engage in oil bunkering and other violent crimes like armed robbery and kidnapping.⁴⁰

4. In Benue State, the Kwande crisis of March, 2004 was traced to the 2003 gubernatorial elections. Supporters of Paul Unongo, an indigene of Kwande and the flag bearer of the All Nigerian People's Party in the 2003 gubernatorial elections saw the March, 2004 local government election as an opportunity to regain strength and control of Kwande. Meanwhile the ruling PDP at the state and local government levels were determined to maintain power. The stage was therefore set for the test of relative power and influence and also a contest over pre-eminence and the political leadership of the Tiv ethnic group.⁴¹ The tensions was compounded by the invasion of unknown soldiers which led to the killing of 11 people and wounding of about 9 in Adikpo, the headquarters of Kwande local government area. The victims were mostly supporters of the ANPP. The bubble burst after the Benue State Independent Electoral Commission declined to release the result of the local government elections of March, 2004 in Kwande but opted instead to postpone the election which had already been held. The ensuing violence led to the death of not less than 12 people and destruction of property valued at about N293, 501, 288 Million Naira.⁴²

5. In its report on the 2003 general elections, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) maintained that the desperation to capture power by members of the political class intensely heated up the political process. Political office holders utilized the power of incumbency to intimidate the opponents. This began with the stage managing of the registration of political parties to give advantage to the political incumbent. It further observed that even pre-election campaign were characterized by political violence including the assassination of prominent political figures such as Chief Bola Ige, Harry Marshal, Victor Nwankwo and Chief Dikibo.⁴³

5.4 The 2007 General Elections

The 2007 general elections in Nigeria were also flawed and generated immense tensions in the polity.⁴⁴ The elections were marred by pre and post-election violence. I shall highlight some instances to illustrate the pointed being made:-

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also Oga Ajene, "Partnership for conflict management and Peace – building: A field Experience from Kwande Local Government of Benue State, Nigeria," being paper presented at the Colloquium organized by the Strategic Partnership for Peace (PASPA) and the Network of African Peace Builders (NAPS) at Ecowas Secretariat, Abuja, 6-8 October, 2008.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Report of the Transition Monitoring Group on 2003 General Elections cited in Michael Oddih, "Electoral fraud and the democratic Process: Lessons from the 2003 Elections, in Jega, A. & Ibeanu, O. (eds.), "Elections and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria" (2007), A publication of the Nigerian Political Science Association.

⁴⁴ Inaugural speech of President Umar Musa Yar' Adua on 29 May, 2007 at Eagles Square Abuja.

1. In Ekiti State, on the day of the election, at least two persons were killed in Ikere-Ekiti and Ise-Ekiti while eight others received gun shots in the violence that ensued in the course of voting. There was massive snatching of ballot boxes in virtually all local government areas.⁴⁵
2. In Ondo State, about eight people were arrested while about five others were wounded during the Presidential and National Assembly elections held on 21/4/07.⁴⁶
3. In Bauchi State, thugs virtually took over the street even before the announcement of the governorship result. Because of the deteriorating situation occasioned, curfew was imposed in the state.⁴⁷
4. In Delta State, INEC office at Obiaruku was burnt down on the morning of the election. Election in the State was characterized by intimidation, arson, destruction of lives and properties in several parts of the state, accompanied by hijack of electoral materials. As a result of the violence in some parts of the State a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on Ekpan and Effurun in Uvwie local government.⁴⁸

Other States that were overtaken by violence as a result of the elections, especially after results were declared included Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Kano, Gombe and Rivers.⁴⁹

5.5 The 2011 General Elections

1. On the number of people arrested in their attempts to snatch ballot boxes, the chairman of INEC, Prof. Jega said that about 7 people were arrested in Nasarawa, apart from the one in Bayelsa State where a sitting Senator was involved in an attempt to snatch ballot boxes.⁵⁰
2. At Oporoma, headquarter of Southern Ijaw local government area, it was gathered that ex-militant commander, Eris Paul (alias Ogun boss) and his boys were also said to have hijacked election material from INEC officials for some unnamed PDP candidate.⁵¹
3. At Odomi and Agbere communities in Sagbama local government area, the special adviser to the governor on security matters, Richard Kpodoh also allegedly hijacked election material to unknown destination while the senatorial result sheet was also carted away at Adagbabiri community in the same local government area by a group of youths.⁵²
4. It was alleged that JTF impounded a car loaded with ammunition in the house of a House of Representatives aspirant in Kwale, Ndokwa West local government area of Delta State. The politician was said to be distributing guns to his boys when the military personnel invaded the house and shot sporadically to scare the residents who were said to have escaped leaving the car behind.⁵³

6. Integrity of the Governorship Election held in Kogi State on 11th November, 2023

The integrity of the just concluded Governorship election held in Kogi State on 11th November, 2023 is doubtful. As stated earlier, it was reported that some fake policemen with AK49 rifles without identity cards were arrested in Kogi State during the governorship election in the State.

⁴⁵ Ubanyionwu. CJ, "Fight against political Corruption in Nigeria: The Journey so far" (2011) (4) *UNIZIK Journal of Public & Private Law*, [244-256]

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Oguwike Nwachukwu, "PDP loses in Sambo, Obasanjo, Bankole Units, *Sunday Independent*, April 10, 2011, p. 2

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

The suspects were arrested in Ankpa local government area of Kogi State.⁵⁴ The Governorship candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Kogi State, Senator Dino Melaye boycotted the said election across the 21 local government areas. Melaye was not seen in his unit 004, ward 002, Iluafon quarters, Aiyetoro Gbede, Ijumu local government area to cast his vote. It was reliably learnt that the PDP candidate, who was in his country home, with some of his supporters stayed away from the exercise. The Nation quoting one of the PDP chieftains reported that Dino Melaye did not vote because he believed the election was already predetermined.⁵⁵ A Civil society organization, YIAGA Africa, raised alarm concerning pre-filled results sheets in Ogori/Magongo, Eika/Ohizenyi and some other areas of the North Central State. YIAGA Africa urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to probe the matter and "promptly safeguard the integrity of the process." According to the report, the results sheets were filled before the commencement of voting. The said election witnessed the late arrival of INEC officials at polling units in some parts of Kogi.⁵⁶ Most places around the Lokoja metropolis encountered the late arrival of officials and materials.⁵⁷ INEC had announced that materials and officials were expected to arrive at their centers or polling units by 6:00 a.m.⁵⁸ Places like Adankolo, Lokongoma and Kpata encountered similar challenges.⁵⁹ Cornelius Stephen, a civil servant who wanted to vote, expressed disappointment with INEC, which had assured timely distribution of materials and the arrival of officials at polling units across Kogi State.⁶⁰

7. Causes of Electoral Violence

The main causes of electoral violence can be summarized thus:-

7.1 Poverty/unemployment – Poverty is the state of being extremely poor. It is a situation whereby an individual cannot meet the basic needs of life. Such a person is more likely to participate in violence than a rich person.⁶¹ The 2002 killing and bombing in Kwara State of Nigeria was traced to this problem.⁶²

7.2 Ineffectiveness of Security Forces / Culture of Impunity - The ineffectiveness of security outfits (especially the police) is another factor that encourages electoral violence. During the pre-election stage of the 2003 general elections, for example, a number of politicians were murdered.⁶³ The police have been unable to get to the root of these killings. This failure seems to be creating a culture of impunity and motivation for recurrence of the crime.

7.4 Weak Penalties – The Criminal or Penal Code as well as the Electoral Act spelt out crimes and the penalties or punishment for violators. Penalties or punishment are intended to achieve correction, retribution and deterrence. In Nigeria, there are no specific legislations against certain electoral offences. For example, the laws have no provision for the snatching of electoral boxes from polling booths which is a common crime during elections. Moreover, the penalties

⁵⁴ <<https://news.band/video-fake-policemen-with-ak49-rifles-arrested-in-kogi-state/>> Accessed 12/11/2023

⁵⁵ <<https://news.band/just-in-pdp-guber-candidate-dino-melaye-boycotts-kogi-poll/>> Accessed 12/11/2023

⁵⁶ <<https://news.band/late-arrival-of-inec-officials-materials-mar-kogi-guber-poll/>> Accessed 12/11/2023

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ <<http://www.monitor.upeace.org/archive.cfm?id=article=697>> Accessed 18 June 2012

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ <<http://www.monitor.upeace.org/archive.cfm?id=article=697>> Accessed 18 June 2012

for acts associated with electoral violence like assault and arson, are generally weak. This has contributed to the culture of impunity and underscores the need to review the extant laws.⁶⁴

7.5 Weak Governance and Corruption – Weak governance and corruption are some of the causes of violence in Nigeria, as they make people desperate enough to seek any means including crime and violence just to survive. Corruption is closely entwined with political violence in Nigeria. Public revenues are not only stolen, but are often used to pay for the services and weapons used for electoral violence.⁶⁵ Lack of accountability and absence of social security could be adduced for the level of corruption.

7.6 Small Arms Proliferation – Another contributory factor to electoral violence is the proliferation of small arms in the country. There were over one million illegal small arms reportedly in circulation in Nigeria as at 2004.⁶⁶ These weapons perpetuate violent conflict and create new cycles of violence and crime.⁶⁷ Electoral violence has also been linked to the proliferation of these arms.⁶⁸

7.7 Immunity Clause – another cause of electoral violence is the retention of immunity clause in the Constitution.⁶⁹ The immunity clause has made the president, governors and their deputies to be sacred cows that cannot be touched. They do all sort of things to remain in power because they are covered by immunity clause. I shall use the case of *Chief Mrs. Anike Olowoporoku & Ors v. Ekiti State Electoral Commission & Ors*⁷⁰ to show case the extent governor Fayose could go to make sure that his party remained in power. One of the three police personnel who testified for the petitioner during the hearing of the petition gave vivid account of the role played by governor Fayose thus –

Voting started 9 O' clock and around 9:30, governor Fayose and some mobile police came to me with his entourage. The governor greeted me, 'well done' he said he wanted us to cooperate, and I asked how, he said he wanted to collect the ballot papers and put them in the box. I said no. He said if I refused he would carry the box away. I told him the DPO has instructed us to take care of the box and maintain peace. He ordered some persons following him to carry the box. I held the box and struggled for it with them. They pushed me down and collected my baton. Before I stood up, the ballot box had been taken away. They fired into the air as they were going. I hid somewhere till they left. I came out later and went to the station. I discovered there was commotion every where. They were singing as they were going in Yoruba which translated to "let everybody warn his ward as today will be tough." Some vilians followed the governor in addition to mobile police without tags...

8. Effects of Electoral Violence

1. It causes political instability. Political instability often arises due to inability of opposition and relevant actors in governance to resolve perceived or real grievance. Electoral violence, if not properly addressed, could ultimately lead to escalated violence. This will adversely affect the development of the country.

2. Electoral violence breeds insecurity. The collapse of the 1st and 2nd republics is attributable to this, as can be seen from our illustrations in the course of this work. In addition to the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended).

⁷⁰ Unreported suit No. EPT/EKLG/27/2004 reported in the *Daily Independent*, Thursday, June 21, 2007, p. 3

insecurity, there are attendant costs like increased security votes and the resources spent on repairs of damaged infrastructure. A good example was the crisis in Anambra State which eventually led to the burning of government house etc and abduction of the State governor. These resources spent in rebuilding the state could have been better spent on human and social development and such trends adversely affect the social and economic wellbeing of the country.⁷¹

3. Another effect of electoral violence is that it has helped propagate the ongoing cycle of violence in the country. We are witnesses to what is happening in Nigeria presently where citizens are mercilessly killed on daily bases. Another good example is the Western Region crisis during the rescheduled regional elections late in 1965 which led to the collapse of the 1st Republic.

4. Another effect of electoral violence is that it encourages voters' apathy in electoral process. In Akwa Ibom State, during the 2007 general elections, voters' apathy was high. A voter at one of the centres in Nsit Atai said of the election thus:- *Well, whether I vote or do not vote, it just doesn't count because the result would be declared in favour of the highest bidder. So, if that is the case why should I wait for several hours here under the sun when it is obvious that my franchise has already been mortgaged.*⁷² Again, in Lagos State, low turn-out of voters characterized 9/3/19 Governorship and House of Assembly election as most people remained indoors. Explaining the reason for the low turn-out in Jakande Estate, Low Housing Estate Primary School, one of the voters said: *I arrived my polling unit by 8: 30am to vote but the place is empty as you can see. I suspect that because of the violence that occurred in the last elections, many eligible voters lost interest in coming out this time around.*⁷³

Conclusion

It must be noted that the support for democracy and enthusiasm about elections in Nigeria were high but people are now being discouraged by the integrity of the electoral processes especially electoral violence. If violence and electoral fraud were reduced, people would be more enthusiastic to go out and exercise their franchise and in doing so, our democracy would be strengthened. The stakeholders in our electoral processes are called upon to ensure the integrity of our electoral processes in order to strengthen our electoral processes.

Recommendation

1. There is need for Nigerian political stakeholders to sanctify the electoral process so as to reduce voter's apathy occasioned by electoral violence so that democratic institutions in the country would be strengthened. This could be achieved through seminars, training and retraining of political stakeholders.
2. Electoral violence and malpractices have been on the increase since independence. There is need for strict enforcement of the provision to the Constitution, Electoral Act and Criminal or Penal Code dealing with electoral violence and the prosecution of all those apprehended in the commission of these crimes.
3. There is need to revisit the legislative proposal to create an Electoral Offences Commission along the lines suggested in the commission's report on electoral reforms. I am of the firm conviction that a body solely established to deal with the problem of prosecuting electoral

⁷¹ <<http://www.monitor.upeace.org/archive.cfm?id=697>> Accessed 18 June 2012

⁷² I. Ekponta, "A Violent – ridden election," *The Nation*, Sunday, April 22, 2007, p. 42

⁷³ Chinelo Obogo, Voter apathy mars guber/assembly polls in States, *Sunday Sun*, vol.15, No. 829, March 10, 2019, p. 40.

offences will be more effective in terms of recruiting the requisite staff and concentrating on the discharge of its mandate.

4. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) should be amended to remove totally the immunity clause enjoyed by the president, governors and their deputies so that all will be equal before the law.

5. There is equally need so abolish the issue of second term. All political office holders should quite the stage after finishing their first term in office. This will go a long way in reducing do-or-die syndrome in our political process.

6. Concerted efforts should be made to combat youth unemployment.

7. It is time we look at the salaries and emoluments of political office holders. Their salaries and emoluments should be made to be unattractive so that the do-or-die syndrome obtainable in our polity would be reduced to the barest minimum.

8. The agencies of government charged with mass education should rise up to their duties. A properly educated and informed public will not only see the ills of electoral violence and refrain from it, but will also help Nigerians take the right political positions about issues and policies.

9. It is my belief that with the implementation of the measures outlined above and appropriate funding and equipping of our security outfits, the nation will experience less of politically motivated violence and malpractices.

