

An Examination of Violence on Elections: A Case Study of the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Lagos State

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Abstract

This paper made an examination of violence on elections in Nigeria, zeroing in on the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections in Lagos State. The paper examined the multifarious examination of violence on elections within the timeframe highlighted above to ascertain the extent and level to which the outcome of elections were negatively affected by violence. The paper also appraised the various factors that precipitated violence and considered modalities and strategies of how the recurring decimal of violence can be realistically nipped in the bud. The paper equally delved into the role of the police in managing security and preventing violence during elections in the country. These are some of the objectives of the paper, while appropriate research questions were posed. The paper used the secondary data method of analysis which focused essentially on books, journal articles, newspapers, monographs, lectures, seminar papers, judicial pronouncements, online materials, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022 Electoral Act etc. The theoretical framework adopted is the theory of political violence which centered on rationale choice model. The paper concluded that for Nigeria's government to enjoy far-reaching legitimacy, violence coupled with ethnic identity and religious bigotry must be jettisoned. Election results must reflect the desires and wishes of the overall interests of the generality of the people. And, the paper recommended that Nigeria should as a matter of urgent national importance shift from First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) to Proportional Representation (PR) to reduce the propensity for do or die elections, which leads to violence and also criminal elements or electoral offenders that perpetrate electoral violence must be brought to book instantly not to encourage the culture of impunity and government should endeavour to set up the Criminal Offences Commission to prosecute electoral offenders as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is already overburdened with variegated responsibilities; and, the perks and perquisites of political offices should be drastically reduced, political offices are overtly attractive, which has made power to be pursued with deadly seriousness, everything is set out to win elections at all cost, retain power and prevent others from coming on board, this sorry pass must be discouraged.

Introduction

Electoral violence has become a recurring feature of elections in Nigeria since the post-independence era. To varying degrees, electoral violence has characterised elections in Nigeria from the first to the fourth republics. In spite of the amendments to electoral laws and introduction of different modalities, violence has played not an insignificant role before, during and after elections in Nigeria. It is imperative to underscore the fact that electoral violence is an infinitesimal aspect of political violence, which is indicative of the mindset, *modus operandi* and systemic make-up of political gladiators in Nigeria. It must be clearly pointed out that Nigeria practices First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system as opposed to Proportional Representation (PR) in which, winners win all and losers' losses everything; such an electoral system goes a long way to breed and promote violence and electoral acrimony. This is because in our clime, politicians make a lot of financial investment and commitment in elections, with the view of recouping their investment by winning elections and holding government positions. In order to make this a reality, there is the systematic resort to violence to election at all cost. It is this awful scenario that has characterised elections in Nigeria since the attainment of flag independence in 1960.

It is also germane to point out that violence has had a smooth sail during elections in Nigeria because politicians and political office seekers find a willing tool in the hands of youths and other pliable characters who are eager to wreak havoc on people as mercenaries for pittance to eke out a living. The implication of this, therefore, is that poverty, extreme want and deprivation have combined to make cheap labour available to devious politicians to carry out their nefarious and atrocious activities to satisfy their ulterior motives. This sordid development is accentuated with the prevalence and availability of preponderance of small arms and light weapons. The penchant for violence during elections is further complicated and underlined by the pervasiveness of aggravated provocation and deep-seated ethnic hatred and religious bias, this is coupled with the fact that crass materialism and value placed on politics by politicians has put violence on a high pedestal.

Yet, in spite of the avalanche of electoral violence, election is the hallmark of democracy, without elections, democracy cannot be said to be democracy properly so-called. Election is a referendum on the performance of those in government at any given point in time. Elections help in the peaceful transition from one government to another without recourse to anti-democratic tactics and antics. If indeed a government had performed creditably

well, it will be rewarded with continuity in office but where there are proven cases of non-performance, such political parties are booted out of power through the instrumentality of the ballot. Why periodic elections are germane to having democratic culture and ethos, much more important is the issue of quality and credibility of elections. It is in this vein that electoral violence is critically discussed in order to have elections that are free, fair, credible and transparent, where votes of the electorates will count and be counted.

The following research questions were posed (1) what are the impact assessment of violence on elections? (2) what are the multifarious and variegated factors responsible for electoral violence? And, (3) Can electoral violence be averted and how? In view of the above research questions, the following objectives are presented (1) to find out if any, the correlation between electoral violence and electoral outcomes. (2) to examine the causes and factors responsible for electoral violence. And, (3) look for creatives of dealing with the menace of electoral violence, in order to have free, fair and credible elections.

Violence, Elections and Democracy

The centrality of elections to democratic practice in an inconvertible fact because there can be no democracy properly so called without competitive elections which follows laid down rules and regulations, and on this account makes the election free, fair and credible. Momoh and Adejumobi (1999) underscored this fact very poignantly thus, "Elections occupy a central place in the democratic process through the animating force they provide for representative government. On the other hand, they serve as an instrument of legitimization for the state and who manage the reins of state power, while on the other, they ensure political accountability to the people". Relatedly, Mackenzie (1954) summed up that elections can only be free and fair in an environment where there exists: "(a) an independent judiciary to interpret electoral law; (b) an honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections; (c) a developed system of political parties, well organised to put their policies, traditions and teams of candidates before the electors as alternatives between which to choose and (d) a general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rather than vague rules of the game which limits the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiments that if the rules are not observed more or less faithfully, the game itself will disappear". The question is, to what extent are the above highlighted factors obtainable in our social milieu?

Violence-free elections are crucial for the sustenance and growth of democracy in Nigeria. Elections are one of the fundamental pillars of a democratic system, and they provide an opportunity for citizens to select their leaders, determine the course of governance, and hold those leaders accountable. However, violence during elections undermines the principles of democracy, erodes public trust in the electoral process, and poses significant challenges to the consolidation of democratic institutions.

One of the key reasons why violence-free elections are important for democracy in Nigeria is that they promote inclusivity and citizen participation. Elections serve as a mechanism for citizens to express their preferences and influence the political direction of the nation. When elections are marred by violence, the fear of physical harm and intimidation can deter citizens from participating in the electoral process. This leads to a skewed representation of the will of the people and diminishes the legitimacy of elected leaders. Violence-free elections, on the other hand, encourage broad-based participation, allowing diverse voices and interests to be heard and considered. This inclusivity strengthens democratic processes and ensures that decisions are made in the best interest of the entire society.

Violence during elections also undermines the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. When citizens witness or experience violence firsthand, it creates a perception of a flawed and biased system. This perception erodes trust in the fairness of elections and the credibility of electoral institutions. Such skepticism can lead to apathy and disengagement, as citizens may lose faith in the ability of elections to bring about desirable change. By contrast, violence-free elections generate confidence in the electoral process, fostering trust in institutions and authorities responsible for conducting elections. This trust is essential for the stability and legitimacy of democratic governance.

Furthermore, violence-free elections contribute to the consolidation of democratic institutions and the rule of law. In a democratic society, institutions such as the electoral commission, judiciary, and security agencies play a critical role in ensuring the smooth running of elections. However, when violence erupts during elections, these institutions may be overwhelmed, compromised, or unable to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. The breakdown of law and order undermines the capacity of institutions to enforce electoral laws, protect citizens' rights, and guarantee the integrity of the process. Therefore, violence-free elections are essential for building strong democratic institutions that can withstand external pressures and uphold the principles of democracy.

Violence during elections also poses a threat to national unity and social cohesion. Nigeria is a diverse country with multiple ethnic, religious, and regional identities. Political tensions are often rooted in these divisions, and violent incidents during elections exacerbate these fault lines, leading to polarization and fragmentation. When elections become a source of conflict, it can further deepen divisions, increase societal mistrust, and fuel inter-communal violence. Violence-free elections, on the other hand, provide an opportunity for peaceful political contestation and dialogue among diverse groups. This fosters a sense of national unity, solidarity, and shared destiny, which are vital for the stability and progress of Nigeria as a democratic state.

Moreover, violence-free elections enhance Nigeria's international reputation and credibility. In the global arena, countries are judged based on the quality of their democratic governance and adherence to human rights standards. When elections are marred by violence and irregularities, it negatively impacts Nigeria's image, making it difficult to attract foreign investment, garner international support, or engage in constructive regional and international cooperation. Conversely, violence-free elections serve as a testament to the country's commitment to democratic values, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. This enhances Nigeria's standing among the community of nations, enabling it to effectively engage in diplomatic and economic relations for the benefit of its citizens.

Hence, violence-free elections are essential for the sustenance and growth of democracy in Nigeria. They promote inclusivity, citizen participation, and majority rule, which are core democratic principles. Violence during elections undermines the credibility of the electoral process, erodes public trust in institutions, and threatens national unity. Moreover, violence-free elections strengthen democratic institutions, enhance the rule of law, and contribute to Nigeria's international reputation. Therefore, concerted efforts must be made by all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, security agencies, and voters, to ensure peaceful and violence-free elections in Nigeria.

It is in this respect that Adejumo (2000) explains that “political system characterized by regular and free election in which politicians organize into parties, compete to form the government by right of virtually all adult citizens to vote and by guarantee of a range of familiar political and civil rights”. It means that there is an organic link as formidable nexus between democracy and elections.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that Anifowose (1984) gave an elaborate clarification on political violence which he essentially captured as

The use of threat or physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within political system against another individual or individuals and/or property with the intention to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property and whose objective, choice of target or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance, that is tend to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

Political violence is violence which is perpetrated in order to achieve political goals. It can include violence which is used by a state against other states (war), violence which is used by a state against civilians and non-state actors (forced disappearance, psychological warfare, police brutality, targeted assassinations, torture, ethnic cleansing, or genocide), and violence which is used by violent non-state actors against states and civilians (kidnappings, targeted assassinations, terrorist attacks, torture, psychological and/or guerrilla warfare). It can also describe politically motivated violence which is used by violent non-state actors against a state (rebellion, rioting, treason, or coup d'etat) or it can describe violence which is used against other non-state actors and/or civilians. Non-action on the part of a government can also be characterized as a form of political violence, such as refusing to alleviate famine or otherwise denying resources to politically identifiable groups within their territory. (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_violence)

According to Segun Jegede (2003), he argued vehemently that

There are different manifestations of electoral violence, e.g., murder, arson, abduction, assault, violent seizure and destruction of electoral materials and these acts are perpetuated by individuals and groups with the intention of influencing the outcome of elections or deter elected officials from consolidating their positions after elections

Ogundiya (2003) looking critically and painstakingly at the issues of electoral violence contended that

Electoral violence includes all sorts of riots, demonstrations, party clashes, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping etc., spontaneous or

not, which occur before, during and after elections. It could be regarded as elections motivated crisis employed to alter, change or influence by force or coercion, the electoral behaviour of voters or voting patterns or possibly reverse electoral decision in favour of particular individual, groups or political party.

In the view of Tamuno (1991) he opined that violence is the unlawful use or threat of force and violence takes different forms and patterns. It would be recalled that the 1964 General Election was marred by violence in Nigeria's first republic but the violence paled into insignificance when compared to the 1965 Western Regional Election, which led to *Operation Wetie* with the wanton killing of people and destruction of property; and later plunged the country into a civil war. The second republic election of 1983 was characterised by massive killings and annihilation of properties; and subsequently led to military intervention in politics. Electoral violence also reared its ugly head in the 1992, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections.

The conduct of a free, fair, and credible election is crucial for any democratic process. However, the integrity of the electoral process is often threatened by violence and other malpractices. Electoral violence is a significant challenge faced by many countries during elections, especially in developing nations like Nigeria. Electoral violence can take many forms, ranging from verbal abuse to physical attacks, destruction of property, and even loss of human lives. The consequences of electoral violence are dire and have the potential to undermine democratic institutions, perpetuate a cycle of violence, and destabilize the country's political and social fabric.

Lagos State, one of the most populous and economically significant states in Nigeria, has a history of electoral violence during elections. In the 2019 General Election, there were reports of violence and intimidation of voters in some parts of Lagos State, leading to the cancellation of the gubernatorial election in some areas. As Nigeria prepares for the 2023 General Election, there is a need to examine the potential for electoral violence in Lagos State and develop strategies to prevent and mitigate such violence. This paper examines the electoral violence that occurred in Lagos State during the presidential and National Assembly elections in the course of the 2023 General Election in Nigeria. The study seeks to identify the causes of electoral violence in Lagos State, the actors involved, and the consequences of such violence on the electoral process. The Electoral Act, 2022, as amended, has several provisions against electoral violence, especially under sections 125 and 128 with punishment of acts of acts of disorderly conduct, incitement or threats and infliction of injury, abduction duress, etc at polling centres, ranging from 12 months imprisonment or a fine of N500,000 or both to three years imprisonment or a fine of N1 million or both.

Theoretical Clarification on Electoral Violence

Rational choice theory is a widely utilized framework in the social sciences that seeks to explain human behavior by assuming that individuals make rational choices based on their own self-interests. Applying this theory to understand violence in elections in Nigeria involves analyzing the factors that motivate individuals to engage in violent behavior during the electoral process. This essay will outline how rational choice theory can be applied to explain violence in Nigerian elections, drawing on historical and contemporary examples.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that elections in Nigeria are highly competitive, as political power and resources are at stake. Consequently, rational actors may resort to violence in order to achieve their political ambitions or secure advantage for their preferred candidates. Rational choice theory suggests that individuals engage in violence when they anticipate the benefits of their actions will outweigh the costs. In the context of elections in Nigeria, these benefits could range from gaining political power, amassing wealth, or accessing governmental resources. By engaging in violence, actors may seek to intimidate opponents, suppress voter turnout, or manipulate election results in their favor.

Historically, Nigeria has experienced multiple instances of violence during elections. The 2011 general elections, for instance, witnessed a significant level of violence across the country. This violence can be closely linked to rational choice theory, as political actors sought to influence electoral outcomes through intimidation and force. For example, by disrupting opposition rallies or targeting opposition supporters, rational actors sought to reduce the chances of their opponents gaining political power. Similarly, incidents of ballot box snatching and vote rigging can be understood as rational choices made by those who seek to secure their desired electoral outcomes by any means necessary.

Furthermore, rational choice theory also helps explain the role of poverty and economic incentives in perpetuating violence during elections in Nigeria. Poverty and economic struggles can drive individuals to engage in violent behavior if they perceive it as a means to access economic opportunities or resources. For instance, politicians may provide financial incentives and resources to unemployed youths, encouraging them to engage in violent acts such as thuggery, rigging, or voter suppression in exchange for financial compensation or potential future benefits.

In this case, the rational choice to engage in violence stems from an individual's belief that it will lead to personal economic gain, however short-term it may be.

Another factor to consider when applying rational choice theory to violence in Nigerian elections is the lack of effective law enforcement and weak institutional frameworks to hold perpetrators accountable. When actors believe they can engage in violence with limited consequences or punishment, it strengthens the incentive for such behavior. In Nigeria, instances of electoral violence have often gone unpunished, leading to a climate of impunity. Rational actors may, therefore, weigh the potential costs of engaging in violence against potential gains and conclude that the benefits of violence outweigh the risks.

Additionally, ethnic, religious, and regional divisions play a significant role in aggravating violence during elections in Nigeria. Groups with shared identity markers may resort to violence to protect the interests of their communities or to retaliate in the face of perceived threats. Rational choice theory suggests that individuals engage in violence when they believe it is in the best interest of their group or community. Consequently, politicians often exploit these divisions to mobilize support and incite violence. By framing elections as zero-sum games where survival and prosperity of one's own group are at stake, rational actors can manipulate their followers into engaging in violence in defense or promotion of their collective interests.

Therefore, applying rational choice theory helps shed light on the factors driving violence in Nigerian elections. By considering the motivations and incentives of rational actors, such as political elites, unemployed youths, and ethno-religious groups, one can gain a clearer understanding of the decision-making processes that contribute to violence. The desire for political power, economic gain, weak law enforcement, and the manipulation of ethnic and religious divisions all play significant roles in rationalizing violence in Nigerian elections. Ultimately, addressing the issues highlighted above requires a multi-faceted approach that combines effective law enforcement, poverty alleviation, and the promotion of inclusive politics to reduce the prevalence of violence during elections in Nigeria.

Rational choice theory is a decision-making approach in which the decisions makers compare the expected utility of competing options and select the option that produces the most favorable outcome. Political violence occurs when the benefits in participating in political violence outweighs the costs. The theory is predicated on the notion the decision taken is the best and in the best of those who took the decision, this snowballs into the reason in *Why Men Rebel*, Ted Robert Gurr uses relative deprivation theory to explain why men commit acts of violence. As Gurr explains, relative deprivation "is defined as actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities." In other words, relative deprivation is the gap between the wants and needs people feel they deserve versus what they are capable of "getting and keeping." The collective discontent, the gap between the expected and achieved welfare, leads people to resort to violence. Similarly, the collective action theory explains why people participate in rebellions. A person decides to participate or not participate in a rebellion based on the benefits and costs. Generally, people decide to be free riders and not to participate in the rebellion. These people will still receive the benefits of the rebellion since the benefits are a public good. However, if people are expected to receive private goods, like material rewards or power, then that person is expected to rebel. Hence, greed versus grievance provides two lines of explanations as to why individuals will fight. Individuals are said to be motivated by greed when they decide to join a conflict in an effort to better their situation and find that benefits of joining a rebellion or any kind of collective violence is greater than not joining. Individuals are said to be motivated by grievance when they fight over "high inequality, a lack of political rights or ethnic and religious divisions in society." In "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler argue that greed is a better predictor of participating in violence than grievance. (en.m.wikipedia.org).

Rational choice theory, a cornerstone of economic theory for more than a century, has been largely dismissed as having relevance to the study of political violence, especially when applied to individuals rather than to groups. Yet rational choice theory offers many benefits to policymakers attempting to prevent political violence: it can place political violence within a continuum that ranges from tacit approval of violence, to nonviolent explicit support, to actual participation in violent acts. Because such models also include explicitly the constraints on individual behaviors that are the most common and promising targets for policy, they hold promise for understanding the role that counterterrorism policies play in determining individual behavior. To be most useful, however, rational choice models need to incorporate concepts such as cultural or religious beliefs that many researchers suggest are key motivators of political violence. This brief argues that rational choice models can be usefully extended to explore the role that revenge seeking plays in individuals' choices to engage in political violence. (Bray 2019).

It is very glaring that electoral violence and indeed political violence can be influenced or instigated by greed or grievances or even both, but those sponsoring or taking part in the activity are of the view that, such an endeavour is what serves their best interest and they are committed to it. In other words, they do not see their action as a misdemeanor but a right course of action to achieve particular set of goals.

Contending Issues in Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Security is key to having an issue-free election but in our clime there are numerous cases of ballot-box snatching, thugs disrupting elections and preventing people from voting, massive thumb printing of ballot papers etc.

According to Mediayanose (2018) Some of the roles of security in elections are as follows: “Providing security for candidates during rallies, congresses, conventions, electioneering campaigns and elections; safeguarding the lives and properties of citizens during the electoral process; ensuring and preserving a free, fair, safe and lawful atmosphere for campaigning by all parties and candidates without discrimination; maintaining peaceful conditions, law and order around the polling and collation; providing security for electoral officials at the voting and counting centre’s; ensuring the security of election materials at the voting centres and during transportation; ensuring the security of all electoral material, personnel and citizens during registration of voters, update, revision and any other electoral event. In sum, the role of security is to ensure safety of the electorate, electoral materials and electoral officers before, during and after elections”.

In fact, Otiye argues that “the success or failure of any election depends on the stakeholders performing their duties (INEC, Political Parties, Election Observers, Media and Security Agencies)”. He laments that “the security agencies can make a difference in the outcome of elections”. It is therefore important that security officers display the highest level of integrity, neutrality, professionalism and sense of duty. The protection of human life, voters, electoral materials and officials and the preservation of lawful and orderly electoral processes are necessary for credible, free and fair elections.” (Otiye 2013).

In a related vein Olurode (2013) put it thus “security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. From the provision of basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result forms are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations.” Thus, without adequate security, there cannot be credible, free and fair elections.

According to Nlemchukwu E. & Onyige C.D. (2019) causes of electoral violence in Nigeria include amongst others

- **Poverty and Unemployment:** Poverty is a state of being extremely poor. It is a situation whereby an individual cannot provide for himself all the basic necessities of life. Such a person is more likely to participate in violence than a rich person in line with the relative deprivation theory. This assertion aptly captures the physical, material as well as socio-economic situation in Nigeria where arrays of unemployed youths have become a ready tool for electoral violence.
- **Ineffectiveness of Security Forces/Culture of Impunity:** The ineffectiveness of our security agencies over the years is another factor that has encouraged electoral violence. During the pre-electoral stage of 2003 elections for example, several politicians were murdered and till today the Police has not been able to get to the root of these killings. This failure paves way for the re-occurrence of such crimes. Many political analysts have argued that the centralization of the Police could be the cause of the laxity. This is because the Federal Government seems to tolerate their inefficiency as far as the Police carry out their bidding, which only favors the Federal Government, hence the clamor for State Police System.
- **Weak Penalties:** The crime or penal code of a nation spells out crimes and penalties or punishment for violation of the code. Penalties or punishments have intended goals which are correction, retribution and deterrence. In Nigeria, there are no specific legislations against certain electoral offences only for associated acts like arson, assault and murder. The laws have no punishment for the snatching of electoral boxes from polling booths. This has become a common crime during elections in Nigeria which people seem to overlook afterwards. Moreover, the penalties for acts associated with electoral violence like assault and arson are generally weak...a few years imprisonment at most. Thus has contributed to the culture of impunity and underscores the need to review the extant laws on election
- **Small Arms Proliferation:** Another contributory factor to electoral violence is the proliferation of small arms in the country. There were over one million illegal arms reportedly in circulation in Nigeria as at 2004. These weapons are used to perpetuate violence, conflict and also create new cycles of violence and crime. The weapons also undermine the work of humanitarian and relief organizations and militate against sustainable development. Small arms threaten peace, sustainable development,

democracy and human right if acquired and used illegally and these arms have fully found expressions negatively on our electoral processes and outcomes.

- Weak Governance and Corruption: weak governance and corrupt practices are some of the causes of structural violence. Corruption hinders development, creates unemployment thereby making people desperate enough to seek out financial avenues through crime and violence just to survive. It is pitiable that our political leaders and other government functionaries who lack moral rectitude are still saddled with the responsibility of pontificating in most electoral issues (which they are even complicit to), all because they control the finances of the state. Though the Economic and financial agencies saddled with such “Check mate” responsibilities have achieved a substantial success, a lot more need to be done to that direction.

In any election, authorities take steps to ensure that voters, candidates, pollworkers, observers, and other actors involved in an election experience the process free from fear or harm and to ensure that sensitive election materials are kept secure. The specific security requirements for a given election will vary greatly depending on the context. In places with ongoing conflict, or where there is a significant potential for violence, securing an election will need to address a multiplicity of factors and will likely involve deploying relatively large numbers of security personnel, such as police or military forces, to protect physical locations and individuals. In every election, there will be plans in place for the secure transfer and storage of election materials, especially ballots and ballot boxes. Safeguards to any technologies used in the election process should also be adopted to prevent hacking or manipulation.

Potentials for violence in election periods come from political, economic and social dimensions of a society. Effective violence mitigation plans often include identifying early warning signs, mobilizing citizen monitoring and mitigation efforts, dispatching properly trained security forces, coordinating among government agencies and educating the public, among other things. Multiple institutions, including EMBs, ministries of interior and other relevant bodies, may be involved in creating a secure election environment. These institutions work to develop, implement, and review security measures throughout the electoral process. Civil society, through CSOs, trade unions, religious and traditional leaders, and the media, also plays important roles in creating a secure electoral environment by mediating, building intolerance for violence and enhancing public confidence in experiencing secure electoral participation. In many countries, like Kenya and Nigeria, plans for electoral security take into account such activities by civil society. (<https://openelectiondata.net/>).

The Code of Conduct to guide all members of the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) in Nigeria and their personnel is clearly spelt out. Electoral duties refer to activities related to elections as established by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), including but not limited to voter registration centres, PVC collection centres, polling units or results collation and declaration centres and political party campaigns and rallies. Security Personnel on Electoral Duty are therefore expected to: i) maintain strict discipline and professionalism; ii) respect the human rights of citizens based on the rule of law; and iii) treat all stakeholders with dignity, fairness and impartiality. The roles of the ICCES members in securing the electoral process encompasses a wide range of activities. These include: a. Ensuring the safety and security of all persons and properties that will be involved, before, during and after the voting exercise without bias; b. Strict enforcement of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Electoral Act and relevant Criminal and Penal Codes; and c. Traffic and crowd management at electoral locations, venues of Political Parties’ conventions/congresses, campaigns/rallies and other activities relating to elections. (<https://www.inecnigeria.org/>).

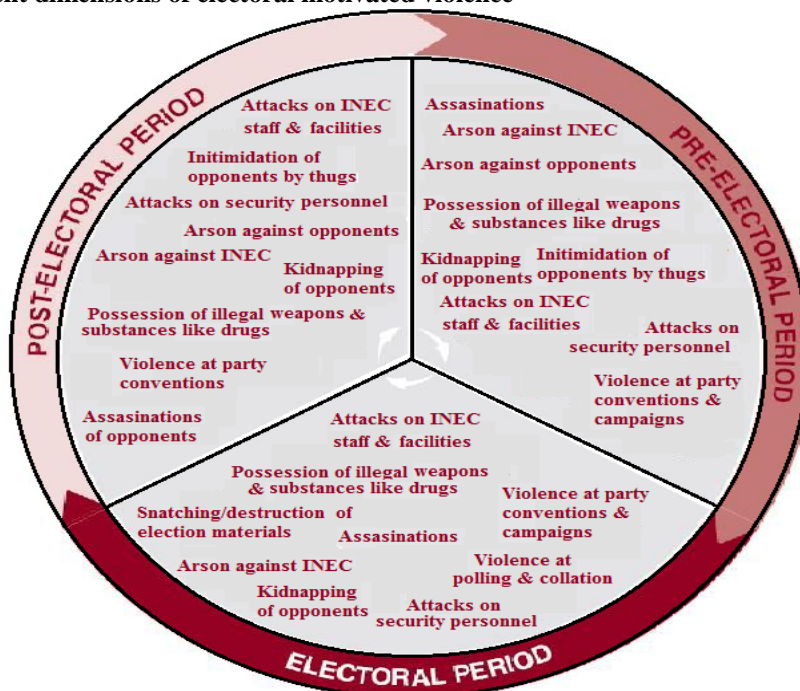
It is imperative to underscore the fact that since the return of democracy in 1999, Nigerian elections have never been devoid of violence perpetrated by non-state actors. The 2023 elections will be no different, as heightened competition between political actors for access to power will see non-state actors mobilized to help achieve political aims. More so, the 2023 elections are to be held within the context of state fragility, as several areas across the country have become ungovernable spaces due to pre-existing localized and regionalized conflicts which could undermine security and impede the free and fair voting process. This includes regional security threats such as terrorism led by Boko Haram and its offshoot Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the northeast, banditry in the northwest, ethno-religious tensions in north-central Nigeria, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) led secessionist agitations in the southeast, separatist movements in southwest, farmers-herders clashes in at least 20 states, and militancy and cult clashes in the south-south. (<https://www.csis.org/>).

Insecurity has been a primary concern of pundits, ordinary citizens and many officials alike in this election period, forcing the current president as well as the chairman of the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) to directly address fears that the polls will be canceled because of it. While a cancellation seems unlikely, there is

a risk that violence will lead the polls to be delayed and/or fundamentally undermine the conduct and credibility of the elections in a manner that could have significant ramifications for Nigeria's stability, cohesion and development moving forward. (<https://newlinesmag.com/>).

Afolabi (2018) argued that election security involves the protection afforded all those engaged in the electoral process, including EMB staff, facilities and events. In other words, it provides safety to men and resources involved in the electoral process while preventing attacks on them. Thus, election security denotes protection for every individual involved in the electoral process and includes Electoral Management Body (EMB) and its officials, EMB ad-hoc staff, party representatives, the electorate (voters), election monitors and observers, media agents, security officials and other individuals/groups incidental to the smooth running of the elections.

Figure 1. Different dimensions of electoral motivated violence



Source: Okorie A, Bitrus M & Ukata E.S. (2020), *Election & National Security in 1999 -2020, International Journal of Business Management & Economic Review, Vol. 3, No. 6. ISSN 2581 4664*

Some of the associated causes of electoral violence include amongst others, ethnic particularism and religious affiliations; the lack a body to efficiently prosecute electoral offenders, thereby encouraging the culture of impunity; the adoption of First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system, where winners win all and losers lose everything as opposed to Proportional Representation (PR), which is more suitable for a pluralistic society like Nigeria; the hyper-attractiveness of political offices in the country; high level of permissible corruption in the polity in which corruption has more or less become an official policy of the state and political gladiators see political offices as avenues for primitive accumulation of scare financial resources of the state; incapacitation of the police force as a result of paucity of manpower and inadequate weaponry; lack of political will to deal decisively with criminal elements and their sponsors; the refusal of government to unbundle INEC and free it from some of its burdensome responsibilities amongst others.

Types of Electoral Violence

Physical Violence:

- Assassination of political opponents
- Burning down of public or opponent's properties
- Shooting, killing of individuals
- Partisan harassment by securing agents, arrest, forceful dispersal of rallies
- Killing and hostage-taking, bombing of infrastructures
- Forceful disruption by thugs at political and campaign rallies
- Destruction of ballot boxes and papers from polling agents.
- Free for all fights.

Psychological Violence:

- Shoot on sight orders that breed fear in voters
- Terror inflicted by political assassinations which makes people scared to participate in politics or elections.
- Publications or broadcast of abusive, insulting or intimidating materials or advertorials Threat against and harassment by security agents of opponents of the ruling regime or party which create political apathy
- Threat to life through phone calls, text messages etc.

Structural Violence:

- Coercion of citizens by government to register or vote or be denied certain national facilities.
 - Exclusionary acts and policies
 - Unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates
 - Deliberates changes in dates, venue or time of events to the advantage of others.
 - Partisan delimitation of electoral constituencies and location of polling stations/booths.
 - Excessive fees for the collection of party nomination forms.
 - Absence of free campaign
 - Restraints imposed on voters
 - Reliance on money and brute force instead of moral integrity and competence.
 - Use of the incumbency factor to give undue advantage to some candidates
 - Announcement of false or fraudulent results
 - Lengthy delays in announcing election results
 - Absence of adequate voting
 - Discriminatory acts and policies
 - Partisan behavior of police and other security agents
 - Absence of electoral officers from polling booth at an appropriate time
- Nlemchukwu & Onyige (2019).

To exemplify why the intensity and level of insecurity increases when threatened by such factors, the Justice Uwais Election Reform Committee found that the challenges which undermine elections in Nigeria include; the effort by politicians to perpetuate their hold on power through the use and abuse of state institutions, otherwise framed as "incumbency power", indicating that, "the politicians have become more desperate and daring in taking and retaining political power; more reckless and greedy in their use and abuse of power; and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them. Other undermining factors as stated by the Committee include; dashed expectations of the public, the tendency of incumbents to win at all cost, and the absence of trial, conviction and enforcement of the consequences of electoral offences in Nigeria's electoral history. The abuse of power of incumbency is particularly frustrating since these big men are hardly brought to book apparently, they are above the law (Olurode, 2011).

INEC's manual for elections requires that during elections the following provisions must be made for the security of elections; that the provision of security agents in every polling station will be part of required personnel and such security agent's functions are clearly indicated in the manual as follows -Responsibilities of Security Agents: To ensure that the conduct of the poll, collation and declaration of results are carried out without any disturbance or threat to peace:

Security Agents shall:

- Provide security at the Polling Stations and collation centres to ensure that polling, counting of ballots, collation and declaration of results are conducted without breach of peace.
- Take necessary measures to prevent violence or any activity that can threaten or disrupt elections.
- Comply with any lawful directive issued by or under the authority of INEC.
- Ensure the safety and security of all election materials by escorting and guarding the materials as appropriate.
- Protect election officials at the polling stations and collation centres.
- Arrest, on the instruction of the Presiding Officer or other INEC officials, any person(s) causing any disturbance or preventing the smooth conduct of proceedings at the polling stations and collation centres.
- At the polling station, inform the Presiding Officer if they believe that any voter is under the age of 18 years or has committed an offence of impersonation.

- On the instruction of the Presiding Officer, stand at the end of the queue of voters at the polling station, if any, at the official close of accreditation so that any person entering the polling station after this time is not allowed to vote.
- Accompany the Presiding Officer to deliver the election results, ballot boxes and other election materials safely to the RA/Ward Collation Centre.
- Accompany Collation Officers to deliver collated election results to Returning Officers.
law (Igini, 2011).

To implement these security arrangements nationwide during elections, state offices of INEC are directed to make specific directional security arrangements. Hence, the Independent National Electoral Commission, conscious of the security challenges of past elections and the need not to have a repeat of same experience, established in the 36 states and FCT what is called Inter Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). Joint State Election Security Committee made of the state Resident Electoral Commissioner (including Administrative Secretary, Head of Operations Department and Public Affairs Officer) various security agencies, namely, the Police, Department of State Security (DSS), the Navy, the Air Force and officers of para-military organizations such as Customs, Correctional Services, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Civil Defence Corp etc, to plan and coordinate security of elections. The State Commissioners of Police chair the committee and at the Local Government level, this structure is also replicated with the Divisional Police Officers (DPO) as heads of the committee. The State Joint Security Committee conducts the following activities;

- Ensuring that all security personnel are in the right places and, therefore, avoid role conflicts at all registration centers or polling stations.
- Mapping of areas where elections would be conducted in order to determine flashpoints, violent prone youth's places, polarized political group communities.
- Review confidence building measures for the public, and where necessary show the availability of potential force and in appropriate cases ensure low visibility of force and diminished threat.
- Tracking of persons granted arms licenses for possible illegal arms acquisition and distribution to individuals.
- Intelligence gathering of activities of key political actors and supporters and guiding rules of disclosure to actionable agencies.
- Suitability of the voting booth and the approach route for delivery of materials and equipment.
- Risk sensitive analysis / vulnerability analysis.
- Mobility of security personnel and accessibility of relevant stakeholders.
(Igini 2013).

Some of the security challenges amongst several others are

- ✓ Prevalence of logistics, infrastructure and communication challenges;
- ✓ Poor welfare provision for election security personnel (no housing or toilet facilities), their remuneration and welfare issues have persisted for too long. Consequently, their motivation and enthusiasm are dampened and temptations for compromises become attractive;
- ✓ Late planning for security personnel involvement and poor coordination among security agencies;
- ✓ False alarms by politicians merely to gain unfair political advantage and sometimes to distract;
- ✓ Un-coordinated and late deployment of security personnel which rarely reflect situations on ground;
- ✓ Need for INEC's involvement in the training of security personnel for election security;
- ✓ Inadequate briefings of security personnel on election duties.
- ✓ Unclear and conflict in the command chain during elections.
- ✓ Ambiguous and conflicting rules of engagement;
- ✓ Weak information gathering and flow system;
- ✓ Near absence of prosecution of electoral offenders to serve as deterrent to others
- ✓ Absence of reward for exceptional performance by security and electoral personnel, and for those posted to flashpoints and difficult terrains.
- ✓ Poor compensation for those who fall gallantly or get maimed in the service of their fatherland. (Olorode 2013).

Security is an expensive affair; it is costly to engage and deploy security forces in guarding election materials, at the polling and tallying stations to ensure that voting and tallying operations are conducted peacefully, in the transportation of election materials between and across polling stations, and other logistic supports. (Hassan 2013).

Among the most serious and blatant cases of electoral fraud are;

- i. Rigging, overstuffing of ballot boxes, over bloating ballot register, special treatment of voters and election officials, disappearance or destruction of ballot box etc.
- ii. Distortion or doctoring of results.
- iii. Annulment and falsification of election result.

Other factors that are consistently cited as undermining competitive electoral politics in Nigeria include;

1. Lack of discipline in the forms, spirit and implementation of the election process.
2. Excessive monetization of politics in general.
3. A “winner takes all” philosophy pervasive among the political elites;
4. The general level of poverty and illiteracy.
5. The absence of clear ideological underpinning of the parties.
6. Religious bigotry and to a limited extent ethnic chauvinism
7. Political corruption. (Isma’ila & Othman 2015).

One of the most significant challenges facing Nigeria in the 2023 election is the threat of political violence and intimidation. This can take many forms, including the use of armed groups to intimidate voters, the use of state security forces to suppress opposition parties, and the use of propaganda and disinformation to manipulate public opinion. All of these tactics can undermine the integrity of the electoral process and the confidence of voters in the fairness and legitimacy of the election. Another major challenge facing Nigeria in the 2023 election is the threat of cyber-attacks and interference. With the increasing reliance on electronic voting systems and the growing use of social media platforms to spread information and propaganda, the risk of cyber-attacks and manipulation of the electoral process has increased significantly. This can include the use of social media bots and trolls to spread false information and propaganda, as well as the targeting of critical infrastructure, such as election servers, to disrupt the electoral process. (Ugwu & Omotola 2022).

Electoral violence epitomizes any planned action that encompasses physical, psychological, and structural threats directed at either to intimidate, harm, blackmail or pressure a candidate for political office. This action could be before the election, during the election or after. This action is directed at influencing and subverting the otherwise fairness of the electoral process. In terms of motivation, violence is usually intended to influence the outcome of an election. The specific type of violence employed can take a variety of forms, but it is temporally close to Election Day. The perpetrators of violence are generally actors who have a vested interest in the election outcome, such as members of the state security apparatus (police, military, etc.), militias that are loyal to particular parties, and rank-and-file party supporters. Electoral violence can be “understood as a coercive force, directed towards electoral actors or objects that occur in the context of electoral competition... [It] can occur before, during or after elections and it can target a variety of actors, including candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists and voters. (Igiebor 2020).

As evinced by Adele Jinadu, election security transcends voting and other activities taking place on the voting day alone. Literally, electoral security has been ably expressed ‘as the deliberate prevention of electoral governance from distortions, violations and manipulations; in such a way that legitimacy of democratic elections and democratic political succession would be guaranteed’ (Olutola 2019).

In the same vein, Ali & Ali (2022), described electoral violence as any act of violence perpetrated in the course of political activities that may include any of the following act; thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process, or to cause bodily harm. He therefore considers violence as part of political culture of Nigeria so much that all elections are almost violence ridden.

Electoral violence is an anathema that should be exorcised from the history of elections in the polity, we should have strong and formidable institutions that tough enough to deal with incidences of violence during elections and bring to book perpetrators of electoral violence and their sponsors. There is an exigent need for a constant and effective political education to enlighten the general public of the importance of free, fair and credible elections as well as the need to have peaceful, violent free. This is the hallmark of genuine democratic ethos and culture which can truly bring about rapid socio-economic growth and widespread prosperity as well as development in different other sectors of the national economy.

It has been pointed out that documented records indicate no less than 200 deaths in the aftermath of the 1964/65 federal and regional elections compared to between 13 and 21 deaths in sporadic incidents across the country in the 2023 presidential and governorship elections. The estimated number of deaths during various elections

includes 100 in the 1993 elections, 80 in 1999, 180 in 2003, 300 in 2007, 800 in 2011, 100 in 2015, and 150 in 2019. Despite the exaggerated reports of violence in a minuscule number of the over 176,000 polling units throughout the country, the scale of violence in the 2023 elections was the least in the country's history. (The Nation Newspaper, 15th April, 2023).

Electoral Violence in Lagos State during the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly Elections

Many observers have condemned the February 25th Presidential/National Assembly Elections and the March 18th Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections following the widespread violence and electoral irregularities that accompanied the elections. It is important to emphasise that the violence is not confined or limited to Lagos State alone but it was noticeable throughout the length and breadth of the country. In Lagos State for instance, in Aguda, Surulere, Lagos, a woman, Mrs Jennifer Efedo was stabbed on her face by thugs who disrupted the voting process. The political thugs who were armed with dangerous weapons went about snatching ballot boxes, attacking voters and preventing those suspected to be opponents from voting. Sporadic gunshots also erupted in front of the palace of Alamuwo of Kuje Amuwo, Mazamaza, old Ojo Road leaving voters running for dear lives. The thugs ordered the people should leave the polling booths for their safety, warning that they would come back. Many voters could not return to the scene despite assurances from security men who rushed to the scene to restore normalcy.

Armed thugs also invaded the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections, polling unit 003 in Bestford/Ganiyu Yusuff Street, Oke-Afa, Ejigbo in Lagos State. The thugs, who brandished the identity tags of a major party, stormed the polling unit and attempted to cart away election materials and ballot boxes and in the process damaged several thumb-printed papers. The rampaging thugs also destroyed chairs and tables used by officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission and attempted to seize the BVAS machine. (Vanguard Newspaper 25th March, 2023).

Moreover, with the 2023 general elections over, victims of electoral violence wait for justice. At least 39 persons were reported to have lost their lives in different parts of the country during the polls. DAILY POST reports that violence was witnessed in states like Lagos, Abia, Nasarawa, Benue, Akwa Ibom, Osun, and Taraba during the 2023 general elections. Those who lost their lives during the elections include policemen, politicians, hired thugs, and a yet-to-be-identified ad hoc staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC.

The Chairman of CDD Election Analysis Centre, EAC, Prof Adele Jinadu, at a news briefing in Abuja, said their data showed that violence occurred in 10.8 per cent of all polling units, which led to low voter turnout in the state elections. "10.8% of observed polling units recorded violence and this was most pronounced in the northwest (19.9%) and south-south (11.6%) geopolitical zones with Bayelsa and Zamfara respectively," Jinadu said. The Director CDD, Idayat Hassan also noted that the motive of perpetrators of violence was to disrupt election processes. According to Idayat: "Victims of this violence were voters, some of whom were disenfranchised as a result of having their ballot boxes snatched".

In Lagos State, some electorates were attacked and threats issued during the just-concluded elections. The former Lagos State National Union of Road Transport Workers, NURTW, Chairman Musiliu Akinsanya, also known as MC Oluomo, had threatened Igbos against voting against the All Progressives Congress, APC, in the state. Following backlash that greeted this comment, MC Oluomo recanted his threat. (Daily Post 30th March, 2023). The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria has lamented the spate of attacks unleashed on women during the 25 February general elections. FIDA's national president, Amina Agbaje, said its observers in collaboration with their partners witnessed cases of violence against women during the elections. Nigeria had its presidential and National Assembly elections on 25 February. FIDA Nigeria said its observers witnessed some incidents of patriarchal, physical and other forms of violence perpetrated against women at some of the polling units "in focal states and across the country." Ms Agbaje highlighted cases of violence perpetrated against women in Borno, Kaduna, Edo and Lagos States.

Violence is one of the frequent features of Nigeria's electoral process before during and after elections. The reasons for the violence vary. It can be an attempt to neutralise opponents or used to undermine opponents' ability to mobilise supporters and perform at the poll. Sometimes the motive is to manipulate or delegitimise the electoral process. The tactics include assaults, assassinations, kidnappings and bombing.

Daily Trust highlights some of the casualties of the just concluded elections. In Aguda, Surulere, Lagos, a woman, Mrs Jennifer Efedo was stabbed on her face by thugs who disrupted the voting process. The political thugs who were armed went about snatching ballot boxes, attacking voters and preventing those suspected to be opponents from voting. (Daily Trust 29th March, 2023).

Despite the assurances from the Nigeria Police Force and the military, pockets of violence rocked some parts of Lagos, Imo, Bayelsa, Edo, Kogi, and other states in yesterday's elections. This is coming as former President Goodluck Jonathan has warned politicians against using violent methods to win elections, saying it would portray them as armed robbers and con artists. In Lagos, areas such as Mafoluku, Amuwo Odofin, Oshodi, Surulere, Ijaiye, Ijaniki, LASU Iba, Iyana Shashi, Ikorodu, Fadeyi, Ojota, Ogombo, Badagry, Sangotedo, and Lekki witnessed violence. At Ijaiye, four polling units were affected Branco (two), Agboola (one), and Obisanya (one). The polling units affected in Surulere include Adedeji, Owoseni, Dipo Olubi, Itire, and Aguda. THISDAY gathered that voting was disrupted in polling units around Surulere, Ikate, and Ajah after thugs attacked the area and warned the voters who were not willing to vote for a particular presidential candidate to vacate the polling units while policemen looked away. In Ikate, a popular Nigerian Rapper, Falz, had his phone snatched from him by thugs in the presence of police officers, while the thugs also scattered the ballot boxes and dumped them in the gutter. (Thisday Newspaper 26th February, 2023).

The Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba, has revealed that police recorded and responded to 185 major incidents after it arrested 203 electoral offenders during the presidential and National Assembly elections held on Saturday, February 25, 2023. He also noted that the cases are currently at various stages of investigation at the Nigeria Police Electoral Offences Desks, adding that they will be concluded and processed to the Legal Department of the Independent National Electoral Commission for prosecution in due course. (The Punch Newspapers 6th March, 2023).

European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Nigeria's 2023 general election has decried the obstruction and use of organised violence by thugs serving varied political interests to stop voters from expressing their free will. European Union chief observer, Barry Andrews said that public confidence and trust in INEC were severely damaged on February 25 due to lack of transparency and operational failures in the conduct of the presidential and National Assembly elections even as he stressed that the polls revealed systemic weaknesses in the country. The Mission also tasked the country to work hard to address the challenges confronting the electoral system in the country in the future. (Leadership Newspaper 3rd April, 2023).

Following bloody clashes among supporters of the different political parties in Lagos, many residents are worried that next weekend's election may be marred by violence. Despite assurances from security agencies, particularly the state police command, many residents are apprehensive that the violence already witnessed during the campaigns of the leading political parties will escalate as the presidential and National Assembly elections draw near. (Nigerian Tribune Newspaper 18th February, 2023). In other words, the violence in Lagos State was anticipated; and several steps and measures were put in place to forestall the violence, but in spite of all efforts to nip the projected violence in the bud, it still occurred. *However, recalled that according to the Lagos State Deputy Governor twitter handle @drobafemihamzat "Lagos has 13,325 polling units, Alimosho for example has 1,545, only 3 violence were recorded, the whole of Lagos, 349 polling units recorded issues of violence and disruption".* In furtherance of the above, it has been put forward that

1. A lot of the challenges confronting electoral democracy in Nigeria are the direct results of illegal and often criminal actions taken by key members of the political class and their surrogates, who violate the Electoral Act and other laws and regulations; and engage in violence, murder, fraud, disruption of elections, hate speech and so on. Accountability for such actions is important and the long-standing proposal by the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee to establish the Electoral Offences Commission should be implemented as soon as possible;
2. There is need to establish a Political Parties Regulatory Commission, which will focus on building the strengths and capacities of parties, so that INEC can focus exclusively on the organisation of elections.
3. Democracy-promoting institutions should be strengthened, including the Independent National Electoral Commission, which requires more autonomy, especially in relation to the appointment of its members and related support institutions, such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the National Human Rights Commission, which serve as guardrails of competitive party and electoral politics;
4. A National Cohesion and Integration Commission needs to create to promote inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding with functions and powers modelled on the Kenyan commission with the same name;
5. An independent committee has to be established, which will be like the Uwais Electoral Reform Committee, to look into improvement of election management in the country. (Premium Times 24th March, 2023).

Conclusion

Electoral violence has become a disturbing recurring that must be uproot from our elections at all cost. Election is not a do or die affair, election is about rendering self-services for the better of the society. It is not about primitive accumulations or self-aggrandisement of any sort. If it is about service, then violence has no place in elections and those that are involved for any reason must be duly prosecuted so that the culture of impunity and wanton disregard for law and order will not be promoted in the polity. Recalled that according to the Lagos State Deputy Governor twitter handle @drobafemihamzat “Lagos has 13,325 polling units, Alimosho for example has 1,545, only 3 violence were recorded, the whole of Lagos, 349 polling units recorded issues of violence and disruption” but the most important issue should be that there should not be any incident of violence at all, not even in one polling unit/booth; there should always be a non-violent peaceful elections that is when the dividends of democracy can actually get to the grassroots. But the electoral violence in Lagos state during the period in question has not substantially affected the outcome of the election results, as the violence occurred in less than 2 per cent of all the polling booth/unit in the state, looking at the voting pattern and electoral behaviour of voters across the state.

Modalities for Violence-free Elections

One of the recommendations of this paper is the creation of creation of Electoral Offenders Commission to deal with electoral offenders and not overburden INEC with too numerous activities. Secondly. There is need to establish a Political Parties Regulatory Commission, which will focus on building the strengths and capacities of parties, so that INEC can focus exclusively on the organisation of elections. Thirdly, there is the increasing need for political education and enlightenment on the need for peaceful election and that election should not be a do or die affair. Fourthly, political offices must be made less attractive to minimise unhealthy rivalry for public posts. Also, our electoral system should be looked into as pointed out in this paper and a strategic move from First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) to Proportional Representation (PR) is best in this regard. There should be the political will to deal decisively with electoral offenders and criminal elements.

Other recommendations include,

1. The various political parties and candidates should focus on issue-based campaigns
2. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), should ensure that the electoral process is transparent, credible, and free from manipulations.
3. Security agencies should be non-partisan and impartial in the discharge of their duties.
4. Civil society organizations and election observers should monitor all aspects the electoral process and report any incidents of violence to relevant authorities.
5. The government should invest in social and economic development programs that reduce poverty and inequality
6. The media should promote responsible journalism

In final analysis, violence in elections is as a result of elite conspiracy orchestrated by primitive accumulation tendencies, and since the desperate acquisition of the collective commonwealth of the people through illegal means is the primary purpose for seeking political power, violence becomes inevitable in the electoral process. Electoral violence is a significant challenge in Lagos State before, during and after the presidential and National Assembly elections in the 2023 General Election in Nigeria. The study recommends that relevant stakeholders take proactive measures to prevent and mitigate electoral violence, which can undermine democratic institutions, perpetuate a cycle of violence, and destabilize the country's political and social fabric.

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