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ections and Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Taking Stock of Violent Acts in the 2015 General Elections

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Abstract

ria's post colonial experience as regards the conduct of democratic elections has particularly turbulent. With the exemption of a few, specifically the aborted presidential election, other elections held were characterized by electoral nce. The 2015 general elections generated tensions and controversies more than ɔther election held in the Fourth Republic. Only a few did not anticipate the rence of post election violence. This paper examined the 2015 general elections the aim of documenting violent acts perpetrated before, during and after the ons. Generating data majorly from secondary sources, this paper argued that speech, campaign of calumny, corruption, the domino effect of the Boko Haram gency, among others, are among the major drivers of violence in the 2015 al elections. It is submitted however, that recurrent electoral violence has ous implications for the democratic process. It is however, concluded that the on of a sound legal framework, to try politicians who indulge in hate speech, ication of the state security apparatus, provision of employment opportunities, g others, will assist in reducing if not curb the occurrence of violence in ia's future elections.

vords: Election, Violence, Nigeria, Fourth Republic, Boko Haram, Insurgency

ɔduction

Elections all over the world are critical pillar of democracy and good rnance. When conducted in free, fair and transparent conditions they er legitimacy on the emerging government. Elections do not only serve ɔurpose of peacefully changing of government, it also enhances and ers political legitimacy on the government which is done though ving citizens in political decision making (Ojo, 2007). While elections ot, in and of themselves constitute a consolidated democracy, they in fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but as a

necessary requirement for broader democratic consolidation (Bratton, 1998). In democratic regimes, elections are used as a tool of managing social conflicts. Sisk (2008:2) posits that:

> when successful electoral processes offer a means of channelling social conflict into debate, persuasion and common rules for choosing authoritative representatives of the people who can serve in executive, legislative and other institutions, elections are in this sense a critical means of social conflict management through peaceful deliberations and decision making processes, in which 'winner' carry out promised platforms and "losers" are given the opportunity to either be represented as a loyal opposition in government or to try again in future electoral competitions.

However, promising and important as elections can be to the sustenance and consolidation of democracy, they can in another way undermine the democratic process. This can occur when they are not conducted in a free, fair and credible manner. When the conduct of an election is characterized by all sorts of electoral anomalies and vices they tend to lead to violence as aggrieved parties who feel cheated may engage in violent means to seek redress rather than using the normal judicial channel. This is a peculiar attribute of the Nigerian electoral process. The Nigerian electoral history is replete with electoral violence. The founding elections of the Nigerian state as well as subsequent ones, were all tainted with all sorts of electoral violence despite been labelled as free and fair. The 2011 general elections of the Fourth Republic have been described as the most violent in the country's electoral history (Adejuwon, 2011). This paper examines the 2015 general elections with the aim of documenting the various incidence of electoral violence. To achieve this, this paper is divided into four segments. The first part contains the introduction and a conceptual and theoretical perspective of electoral violence. The second segment discusses the Nigerian experience vis-à-vis electoral violence and an overview of the 2015 general elections. The third part dwells on the manifestations of violent acts before, during and after the election. It also gives the causes of violence in the election. The last part comprises the implication of electoral violence for democratic sustenance and the conclusion.

ctoral Violence: Conceptual Perspectives

Scholars over the years have explored the challenge facing the ıocratization process, particularly in Africa and some parts of the world. :ording to Mansfield and Snyder (2007) democracy increases the risk of ıed conflict in newly democratizing nations and intensifies the likely urrence of violent conflict in post-conflict societies (Jastard, 2008) It also eases the risk of political violence in low income countries (Collier, 9). Extant literature also shows that election related violence has become ıpant particularly in emerging democracies of Africa. Omotola (2008:52) le acknowledging the fact that "Africa's 'new' democracies and the lgling democratic re-experiments under the "third wave" of ıocratization with the exception of a few has been characterized by ence, is of the opinion that though violence has been a long-standing ure of the democratization process in Africa, its recent manifestations e assumed an unprecedented rate and a changing form and character. :ording to Fischer (2002), out of the fifty-seven countries that held :tions in 2001, violent conflicts were encountered in fourteen of them. In own statistics Bekoe (2001) posits that 19 to 25 per cent of elections in ica to violent conflicts.

Electoral violence is a sub-type of political violence and it occurs ıin the overall process of democracy and democratization (Sisk, 2008). :toral violence is a type of violence which is distinguished by its timing targets. It can take place before, during and after election and it is limited he electoral process in different ways (Hoglund and Piyaranthe, 2009). -election violence may include acts or threat against electoral stakeholders ing voter's registration or electioneering campaigns. Election Day ence includes snatching of ballot boxes, assaults on opposition agents or ies and harassment or intimidation by security. In the after math of an :tion, electoral violence may take the form of violent protest against :toral rigging whether real or imagined and of the state deploying its aratus of force in response to the protest, thereby further fuelling violence ıotola, 2010). As regards its conceptualization, electoral violence, ɔrding to Sisk (2008:5) involves:

> Acts of threat or coercion, intimidation or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process that arises in the context of electoral competition.

He further opines that when electoral violence is perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of election such as delay, disrupt or derail a poll and to influence the outcome which includes determining winners in competitive race for political offices or to secure approval or disapproval referendum questions (Sisk, 2008). In another conceptualization, Fisher (2002) views electoral conflict and violence as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced "protection", blackmail, destruction of property or assassination. Albert (2007) defines electoral violence as all forms of organized acts or threats-physical, psychological and structural aimed at intimidating, harming or blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to delaying or influencing an electoral process. While Sisk and Fisher's conceptualization have some form of convergence i.e. they both see electoral violence as perpetrated to disrupt the electoral process through random acts, Albert's conceptualization did not take into consideration random and spontaneous acts as constituting electoral violence, whereas elections can trigger random and spontaneous acts most especially in the post-election period. In another definition Laakso describes electoral violence as:

> An activity motivated by an attempt to affect the results of the election either by manipulating the electoral process and participation or by contesting the legitimacy of the result. It might involve intimidation of voters and candidates, killings, attacks against their property, forceful displacement, unlawful detention and rioting (Laakso, 2007:227).

In Laakso's view, electoral violence is solely perpetrated to distort the election results. It can however, be contested that electoral violence can be perpetrated not only to influence election results but also to prevent candidates from contesting and voters from voting, most especially when there is an expectation that a party might lose an election. The United Nations Development Programme (2004:4) sees electoral violence as "acts or threats of coercion, intimidation or physical ham perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the content of electoral competition. Electoral violence occurs at all stages of the entire electoral process. Ochoche (1997) argues that at any of the stages, electoral violence can be

physical or structural. In other words electoral violence must not be seen in physical terms alone. Any attempt at any stage of the electoral process to corrupt, disrupt, influence or determine the outcome of an election beyond what it should have being objectively does damage to the election and could be said to amount to electoral violence (Ochoche, 1997).

In a related vein Nwolise (2007) in conceptualizing electoral violence identifies three classifications and components. These include: physical, psychological and structural dimensions of electoral violence. The physical dimension includes assassination of political opponents, arson, looting, shooting, kidnapping and hostage taking, forceful disruption of campaign rallies, armed raids on voting and coalition centres, which includes snatching of ballot boxes and paper at gun point. The psychological actions involve the official and unofficial actions that create fear in the people, which may be a product of physical violence. These includes threat against and harassment by security agents of opponents of the ruling party, shoot-at-sight orders, terror inflicted by political assassination, broadcast of abusive, insulting or intimidating electoral advertorials. The structural dimensions includes coercion of citizens by government to register or vote, unequal opportunities for power incumbency, falsification of election results as well as the politicization of security and electoral officials (Nwolise, 2007). Summarily and deducing from the above, one can infer that electoral violence is that aspect of political violence which is mostly perpetrated during electioneering periods and is aimed at either disrupting the electoral process or influencing election results.

Historicizing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The history of elections in Nigeria immediately after colonial rule has been characterized by all sorts of electoral violence, with the exception of a few such as the ones held in the pre- colonial period that is, the 1922 and the 1959 elections and the 1993 and 1999 elections held in post-independence Nigeria. Aside these elections, all others held were tainted with exacerbated election related violence. The country's electoral history started in 1922 with the introduction of the Clifford's constitution. This paved the way for the elective principle and consequently the development political parties and party politics. What can be regarded as the election related violence started in 1964 and got to its climax in the 1964-1965 Western region election. The intensity of violence then was so high that it culminated

into total breakdown of law and order in part of the country. Late Chief Bola Ige, a chieftain of the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria described the violence which occurred during the elections as the people's reaction to what they perceived as despicable acts of the subversion of peoples' will. He described this as follows:

> The election rigging of 1964 (at the federal level) and of 1965 were seen by the majority of Nigerians as despicable acts and the victory of anti-democratic forces. So they reacted first, by the general boycott of 1964 and secondly, by the famous operation "we tie" in 1965 in which properties of those suspected of selling out were set ablaze (Ige, 1992).

However, the violence which occurred in retaliation to what the electorate perceived as fraud, electoral malpractice and the resultant breakdown of law and order paved the way for the military to take over power barely less than five years of independence. After the coup the country was thrown into a 30 month civil war. The war according to (Ojo, 2007) emanated out of the power tussle among top military hierarchy on who is eligible to take over the reins power. Amidst the war the military held on to power for 13 years. After the death of General Muhammed, the Obasanjo Military regime inaugurated a transition to democratic governance. Elections were eventually held in 1979 but they were characterised by all sorts of electoral vices including acts of violence. Nwolise (2007) claims that the election attracted a lot of criticism as the Supreme Court delivered a controversial decision on the winner of the presidential election, Alhaji Shehu Shagari based on a questionable mathematical theory introduced to determine the winner instead of the use of an electoral college as provided for in the constitution. According to Nwolise (2007) the election was characterized by violence at the three stages: pre-election, during the election and post election. There was hardly any state where the results were not contested or disputed. The violence was however, minimal as a result of the presence of the military (Ojo and Azeez, 2006).

The elections conducted in 1983 signalled the commencement of the second phase of the Second Republic. The regime of the then incumbent president of the ruling National Party of Nigeria conducted the elections. The 1983 elections were as well characterised by rigging, fraud and all kinds of electoral malpractices. As a result, the announcement of the election results was greeted by the outbreak of post-election violence. This development

once again invited the military to the political scene. The military took over power through a coup led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari Rtd. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime had barely lasted for one year when it was overthrown through a counter-coup in 1985. This brought in the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. In his bid to return the country back to civilian rule the Babangida administration organised presidential election in 1993. The election was however, inconclusive as it was annulled even before the results were released. The election was adjudged to be free and fair by local and international observers. It was also devoid of violence. The nationwide demonstration which occurred after the announcement of nullification of the election forced Babangida to step aside, paving way for Chief Earnest Shonekan to become the country's Head of State through the inauguration of an Interim National Government.

Within a few months the Shonekan led administration was overthrown in a palace coup led by the late General Sanni Abacha. The death of Abacha while still in office brought in General Abdulsalami Abubakar. On getting to office Abdulsalami almost immediately announced a transaction program to usher in a democratically elected government. In view of this, elections were held in 1999. Three political parties: Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to participate in the elections into legislative and executive positions. The Peoples Democratic Party's presidential flag bearer Chief Olusegun Obasanjo won the presidential election and was sworn in as president on May 29, 1999 signalling the commencement of the Fourth Republic. The 1999 general elections were devoid of violence. This has been attributed to two reasons: one is that Nigerians were tired of military rule and were hungry for democracy, secondly, because the elections were overseen by the military. The 2003 general elections marked the beginning of the second phase of the Fourth Republic. This election was particularly important in that it was the first time a civilian government would organize and conduct a democratic election successfully. The election returned the incumbent president Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the winner of the presidential election. The elections were not devoid of electoral violence as kidnapping, assassination and all sorts of violence were perpetrated.

The 2007 elections have been described as the worst in the country's electoral history. The elections were fraught with all sorts of electoral vices.

This can however, not be expected from an election that was described as going to be a-do-or-die affair (Obasanjo, 2007). The elections were condemned in totality by both international and local observers. Various literatures on the 2007 general elections in Nigeria confirmed the condemnation of the conduct of the elections. The condemnation however, got to the peak when the then president elect late Musa Yar' adua lamented that the 2007 general elections which brought him to power was no free and fair. The 2011 general elections despite, been described as free and fair have been regarded as the most violent in the country's electoral history (Adejuwon, 2011). The pre-election stage of the 2011 elections was characterized by politically motivated killings, assault, kidnapping, destruction of property and all stages of the election process were marred by violence. The announcement of presidential election results was followed by unprecedented violence. According to Bekoe (2011:1) Nigeria's 2011 election received high praise for being well managed. But the post election violence claimed 800 over three days in the northern part of the country and displaced 65,000 people, making the election the most violent in the country's history. It was claimed that the violence was triggered by a belief that challenger Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner, should have been the winner (Bekoe, 2011).

A Cursory Look at the 2015 General Elections: Preparation, Voting and Announcement of Results

Preparation

The prelude to the 2015 general elections was not so palatable. The period leading to elections was a period of intense spate of insecurity. According to Adelaja (2015), the 2015 general elections took place against the background of pervasive scepticism about the continued survival of Nigeria as one sovereign and indivisible nation by the end of 2015. The spates of violence and terrorism across the country in the past few years lent seeming credibility to this prediction. There was and still is a national spread of the geography of violence in Nigeria. No part of the country is spared of violence or its effects in one form or the other (Adelaja, 2015). The 2015 general elections were expected to commence with the presidential and the National Assembly elections on the 14th of February and the Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly elections on the 28th of February. However,

/hile the country's electoral body, INEC reiterated its readiness for the lections; claims by the country's security operatives of their inability to uarantee security most especially in the north eastern part of the country led) the controversial postponement of the polls by six weeks. The general otion of the people was that the period of six weeks would allow the ruling arty to intensify its efforts of holding on to power.

Also central to the preparatory stage of the elections was the issuance f permanent voters cards (PVC) to intending voters. INEC has earlier mphasized its decision not to allow those without the PVC to participate in ıe voting process. However, with about a few weeks to the elections many oters lamented that they have not been issued with the PVC which amounted) their disenfranchisement. The two leading political parties: The Peoples)emocratic Party and the All Progressive Congress pointed accusing fingers t INEC of trying to disenfranchise voters in their strongholds. The county's lectoral body however denied this claim. INEC in its resolve to conduct a ee and fair poll introduced the use of the Electronic Card Reader (ECR). 'he ECR, among other advantages, prevented multiple voting. This gave an verall boost to the credibility of the polls. Like the 2011 elections, INEC ecruited electoral officials from the National Youth Service Corps, the .cademia and the Professionals.

'oting Process

The 2015 general elections were eventually held on the 28th March 015 and 11th April 2015 for the presidential and National Assembly lections and the Gubernatorial and State Assembly elections respectively. 'he two major political parties, the PDP and the APC, were the major ontenders in the general elections. The voting process was generally eaceful except for some states where cases of violence were recorded. The ıtroduction of the use of card readers recorded relative success. Polls ommenced early enough except for some places where there was late arrival f election personnel and materials.

.nnouncement of Results

The opposition APC won the majority of presidential votes in 4 out f the 6 geopolitical zones, with General Buhari receiving 15,424,921 votes 53.96 per cent), while President Jonathan of the PDP received 12,853,162 44.96 per cent). The APC also secured the majority of the seats in the

National Assembly by apparently winning at least 60 out of 109 seats in the Senate (55%) and at least 214 out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives (59.4 per cent) (EUEOM, 2015:3). The 28 March presidential and National Assembly elections were historic, with the opposition winning for the first time since the transition from military rule in 1999, and with the incumbent presidential candidate, Goodluck Jonathan, conceding defeat and thus paving the way for a peaceful handover of power (EUEOM, 2015). What could have however, translated to the disruption of the process of collation of results by the PDP agent Peter Godsday Orubebe was maturely handled by the INEC boss Atahiru Jega. The INEC boss was accused of bias and that he exhibited ethnic partiality with the promptness with which he treated the All Progressives Congress's petition about alleged fraud in Rivers States and conversely the scant attention the INEC Chief had paid to the PDP's petition about suspected irregularities in some states in the North-West where Major Gen. Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, won resoundingly. He was also accused of giving election results to the APC even before collation started (The Punch, 2015:10). These allegations almost culminated into pandemonium. Jega however denied these allegations and told both the local and international election observer missions that he had not issued anybody with any results. This was recorded as follows:

> I cannot receive petitions in this hall on this platform. As we speak with you now, I have not received anything from the Secretary of the Commission. That is as far as the so-called petitions. With regards to what you said about the result allegedly published by the APC on its websites, I didn't release result to anybody. The results that are announced formerly by INEC are results that are declared here. And we have warned everybody to be careful and to ensure that they did not declare results which are not officially announced. So, as far as I am concerned, I have not seen any result and I have not given anybody any result. So for you to even engage me on that issue, I think frankly it is not fair on me. I have not seen the result. How can I speak on something I have not seen? (The Punch, 2015:10).

What served as soothing balm were Jega's final words before the announcement of results continued. Jega stressed why Orubebe should not attempt to stall the process. Jega said this in the following words:

> Mr. Orubebe, you are a former Minister of the Federal Republic, you are a statesman in your own right and you must be careful about what you say and about the allegations or accusations that you make and certainly you must be careful about your public conducts. Thank you (The Punch, 2015:10).

cplaining Electoral Violence in Nigeria: the Structuralism Perspective

Electoral violence is a concept that does not easily render itself neral explanations. General explanation may lead to over simplification of e issues that have led to electoral violence in a particular society (Begion, 09). But if election reflect the dynamics and functioning of a society, then neans that issues of electoral violence and fragility can only be understood thin societal context. Just as societies are varied in their dynamics and nctioning so are the reasons that lead to electoral violence in these societies egion, 2009). Structuralism gives pride of place to social stratification and e configuration of power relations among social forces within and without e ambit of the state in explaining electoral violence. Thus, the structural planation of electoral violence suggests that society and politics are ganized in a way that generates conflict (Friedrich, 2001). In this regard the use of electoral violence is the structure of the political economy of the te. In a situation where the state is organized in such a way that significant ment of the population are excluded from meaningful participation in and nefiting from political and economic life, then such segment are bound at ne points to resort to violence to reverse the effect of this exclusion arim, 2014). It has been observed that:

> A common cause of election dispute is that the stakes of winning and losing valued political posts in many situations and especially in conditions of high scarcity and under development is incredibly high. When winning a state office is the key to livelihood not just for an individual, but for their entire clan, faction or even ethnic group, then the electoral contest becomes a battle for survival in which all manner of forces and resources can be mobilized to ensure success (Sisk, 2008:9).

nen an election process becomes a contest between the 'included' and the cluded', the stakes of winning such an election are raised to a point where lence is the real outcome in the event of disappointment for either group sk, 2008). The stakes will be higher when it is assumed that the tendency

that resources will be channelled to a particular group is directly linked to whether the politician who controls those resources is a member of the group in question. In this situation those in power will seek to retain control at all cost, including the use of foul means (Karim, 2014).

It was opined that the capture of state power upon independence immediately assured the new Africa ruling class enormous political power (Matlosa, 2007). This power was converted into economic power through accumulation and in most instances, malfeasance by the ruling elite. This access to state power is tantamount to a license to rapid accumulation of wealth by fraudulent and foul means (Matlosa, 2007). This phenomenon has, according to Wyk (2007) and Van de Walle (2003) bred "clienlelism" in most African states. Therefore, capital accumulation outside the ambit of the state is bleak and as such, contestation for the capture of state power is fierce, often resulting to violence. Habu (2006) notes that central to the argument of structuralism is that violence or conflict is a phenomenon that is in-built human societies based to how they are structured and organized.

The tenets of structuralism are applicable to the Nigerian state. The political class in Nigerian sees the state as a primary source of wealth accumulation, hence the struggle to capture state power through electoral contest remains fierce and ruthless (Joseph, 1991). The structure of the Nigerian society makes the stakes involved in electoral competition extremely high. The situation is such that for political leaders, winning elective offices is a perpetual source of livelihood. Therefore, to lose election is for them to lose their source of living. In order to maintain or capture political power, politicians use violent means to daunt or even eliminate political opponents seen as impediments to achieving their aims. It is asserted that a patron-client political economy runs though the whole gamut of the state. Patrons and client exist in long chains of unequal relationship at all levels of government with the goal of not only winning power at the centre (Amuwo, 1998). Amuwo further demonstrated that the Nigerian polity is driven more by a political economy of distribution than of rules and regime, institutions and identity. Within this content election is a cash and carry game. Electoral success ceases to be a function of viable programme or manifestoes (Amuwo, 1998).

Ianifestation of Pre-Election and Post-Election Violence in the 2015 ieneral Elections

The much expected 2015 general election was tainted with ıticipation of post election violence. However, while minimum or none case f incident of post election violence, the build up to the elections as well as ıe voting process was marred with election related violence. The following ıbles show documentation of cases of pre-election and post election iolence.

able 1: showing cases of incidents of pre-election violence

S/N	Name of victim or property	Date killed attacked or destroyed	State	Remarks
1	Several party supporters (Names not given)	17th Feb. 2015	Rivers	The party supporters scampered for safety when explosions and gunshots were released at the Okada National Secondary School field. Five policemen were reportedly shot. While one of them died four were in critical condition at the hospital
2	Two PDP stalwarts	14th Mar. 2015	Rivers	Unknown gunmen shot the strong PDP members in Abonema town in Alakuto local government area of the state
3.	Kehinde Bello and Sarafa Adedeji	1st Mar., 2015	Oyo	The two were shot dead in Odinjo area in Ibadan during a

				campaign rally.
4	15 people	1st Mar., 2015	Oyo	The people were injured by suspected political thugs in Odinjo area in Ibadan, the state capital.
5.	Governors convoy	26th Mar., 2015	Rivers	Gunmen attacked the governor's convoy while going on campaign trip in Portharcourt. Two people were wounded in the attack.
6	Vehicles belonging to a party	10th Jan., 2015	Plateau	Youths in Jos burnt the car belonging to a presidential campaign organization
7	Former president	20th Jan. 2015	Katsina	The former president was attacked by a mob in Katsina state when visiting the family home of former president late Umar Yar'adua
8	Presidential campaign trail	23rd Jan., 2015	Bauchi	The presidential campaign train of the sitting President was attacked. About six security aides were injured while trying to protect the former president
9	Campaign ground	24th Jan., 2015	Rivers	The governorship campaign rally was

				disrupted by party thugs.
	Solomon Adeola	31st Dec., 2014	Lagos	The Lagos West senatorial aspirant was attacked in his office by his opponent Mr. Segun Adewale and his thugs in Ikeja
	Six persons	1st Feb., 2015	Lagos	The people were killed in a clash between rival groups at the venue of a political campaign rally in Ajeromi Ifeoldun Local Area of the State.
	One person	3rd Dec., 2014	Lagos	The person was reportedly shot at a primary held in Apena in Ebute meta Lagos mainland Constituency
	Headquarters of Chisco Transport Company	8th Feb., 2015	Lagos	The place was burnt down by supporters of a political party who were on a political rally. 25 luxury buses and trucks were reported to have been burnt
	Party supporter	9th Feb., 2015	Uyo	Some party supporters beat to death a rival party supporter accused of tearing down their political posters. This

				was then met with a reprisal attack which left five people injured.
15	Party vehicles	10th Feb., 2015	Uyo	Thugs affiliated to a political party set two cars belonging to another political party ablaze in Oron local government area of the state.
16	Party supporter	13 Mar., 2015	Edo	The party supporter was murdered in Owan East local government Area of the state
17	Gazali Sule	15th March	Gombe	The young SS 3 student was killed by a thug identified as Abubakar Chani. The young student was mistook for an APC supporter.
18	A church	26th Mar., 2015	Kaduna	The Church was burnt down after reports of the endorsement of a particular presidential candidate by the general overseer of the church got circulated.
19	Political party campaign convoy	21st Jan., 2015	Bauchi	The convoy was attacked by youth with stones which apparently caught

				some presidential body guard
20	Two people	15th Feb., 2015	Kwara	The two people were killed in a pre-election related violence in Ilorin the state capital. The incidence was confirmed by the commissioner of police.

ıble 2 showing cases of Election Day violence

S/N	Name of victim or property of place	Date	State	Remarks
1	INEC vehicle	28th March, 2015	Rivers	The vehicle conveying election officials and materials was hijacked. The election officials were also reportedly assaulted by the hijackers.
2	Polling units	28th March, 2015	Plateau	Several cases of ballot box snatching were reported in the local government area of the state.
3.	Card Readers	28th March, 2015	Imo	Several cases of card reader snatching were reported in the

				state.
4	Voters	28th March, 2015	Cross Rivers	Voters were scared away by gunshots while electoral materials were carted away.
5.	Two people	28th March, 2015	Cross river	The two people were reportedly shot dead during the voting process.
6	A young man	28th March, 2015	Plateau	The young man was reported to have been shot dead by a security agent.
7	Five people	28th March, 2015	River state	The five people including a police officer were reportedly killed at a voting centre.
8	Four people	28th March, 2015	Kebbi	The four people were allegedly killed by the military during voting.
9.	Five party leaders	11th April, 2015	Bayelsa	The party leaders were kidnapped by gunmen on the election day.
10	INEC RAC Centre	11th April	Rivers	The INEC registration area collation centre was set ablaze by party thugs.
11	House of a	11th April	Rivers	The house

	government official			belonging to the Rivers state commissioner for women affairs was set ablaze.
12.	INEC vehicle	11th April	Rivers	The vehicle transporting election materials was hijacked and burnt in Asari Toru local government area of the state.
13.	Three people	11th April, 2015	Yobe	Suspected Boko Haram gunmen opened fire on a polling station.
14.	Eight people	11th April, 2015	Gombe	The eight people including a candidate were killed in an attack in Dukku area of the state.

ource: authors compilation from: CDD (2015), Ojo (2015), NHRC (2015), ideme (2015), Winsor (2015).

Unlike the 2011 when post-election violence greeted the nouncement of the presidential election result, the 2015 general elections corded minimal post-election violence. Post-election periods in Nigeria ve been characterized by violence at all stages. Therefore, there was high pectation of the occurrence of post-election violence. Prior to the election y, few people were optimistic that the outbreak of post electoral violence ould not lead to the disintegration of the country. In order not to witness the minent violence some people moved to neighbouring countries with lative peace, while others stayed back to find solace at home. The former esident however, took the world by surprise when he gallantly conceded efeat and congratulated the eventual winner and his closest opponent even

before the presidential election results were released. The patriotism and spirit of sportsmanship displayed by the former president defused the spontaneous violence that may have been perpetrated.

Causes of Electoral Violence in the 2015 General Election

There is no gainsaying the fact the 2015 general elections were hotly contested. Prior to the election the potential for the occurrence of electoral violence was high. This cannot be unconnected to the close presidential contest between the then incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan and a-four time contestant Muhammadu Buhari who had extensive support in the North and who also drew support in the Central and South western states of the country. However, in order to amass votes, various political parties and contestants used different means. Some of these means were major contributing factors to the occurrence of pre-election violence. Some of the causal factors of electoral violence in the 2015 general election include but are not limited to the following

Hate speech and campaign of Calumny: Hate speech is universally used to describe any communication that denigrates a particular person or a group on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or other characteristics. It can be in form of speeches, gesture, conduct, writing or display (NCSSR, 2015:1). Campaign of calumny on the other hand can be described as the use of false and slanderous statement aimed at defaming a political opponent in order to soil his or her reputation. Politically motivated hate speech and campaign of calumny are not new to Nigerian politics. Such were used as campaign weapons in the First and Second Republics. However, hate speech and campaign of calumny took an unprecedented dimension in the electioneering campaign period of the 2015 general elections. No sooner than the two presidential candidates inaugurated their campaign organizations that hate speech came into play. Instances of the use of hate speech were recorded during campaigns in the 2015 general elections. For instance the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (2015:2) reported that the former Governor of Katsina state Ibrahim Shemma reportedly urged his supporters to attack opponents and referred to his political opponents as cockroaches, urging his supporters to kill them as they kill cockroaches. In another development, the Ekiti state governor, Ayo Fayose gave the most offensive and conspicuous hate speech in January 2015 when he sponsored a front page advertorials

warning voters not to vote for the APC presidential candidate Muhamadu Buhari. The advert which is popularly referred to as death wish advertorials insinuated that the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress, the major opposition party then, was likely to die in office if elected like his follow town's man late Yar'adua. In her own contribution to the rising tide of hate speech and campaign of calumny the former first lady Patience Jonathan while speaking during the PDP women presidential campaign rally in Kogi State reportedly described Muhamadu Buhari the APC presidential candidate as unfit to be the country's president. She described him as old and brain dead. In a similar vein, the former first lady in a campaign speech delivered at a rally in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, urged the supporters of the PDP to stone anyone who promised change. "Change" as it was known was the campaign slogan of the All Progressives Party (NCSSR, 2015:9). The electronic media which according to Akubor (2015:9) should play the role of effective management of reportage as a way of maintaining peace and stability (most especially in fiercely contested elections, played a destructive role.

On the 1st of March, 2015, the African Independent Television (AIT) transmitted a documentary, at 11pm. showing various properties and companies across Lagos purportedly owned by Bola Tinubu a top APC stalwart. The AIT went as far as describing him as "Nigeria's Biggest Landlord". It also alleged that the APC leader was in 1993 charged for narcotics (NCSSR, 2015). The rampancy of hate speech, campaign of calumny, derogatory advertorials, blackmailing, offensive electronic media programs etc. which characterized the electioneering campaigns of the 2015 general election painted a gloomy post-election scene in Nigeria. Akubar 2015) opined that up to the eve of the elections, the major newspaper and magazines as well as other print and visual media carried scaring head lines such as: Rumbles in the land, freedom war declared, ISM magazine, Make up or Breakup-The African Guardian Nigeria breaks-The News, Tension in Onitsha as Hausa residents flee city – The Punch Newspaper, Kano Multiple Blasts: There is A grand Design to set Nigeria on fire – Sultan (The Leadership), MASSOB will soon Declare war on North- National Mirror, Nigerian crisis Worsens as the Igbo Issue ultimatum to all Muslims to quit the South East (This Day). These and many more captions predicted the occurrence of post-election violence and a possible break – up of the country.

The Domino Effect of the Boko Haram Insurgency: Terrorism orchestrated by the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country was one of the main security challenges to the 2015 general elections. According to Blanchard (2015) more than 5,500 people were killed in Boko Haram attacks in 2014 and Boko Haram attacks had already claimed hundreds of lives in early 2015. Summarily, the group may have been responsible for the death of over 10,000 people since it began attacks in 2002 and the displacement of over one million Nigerians. It was however, claimed that the then upcoming elections may have served as impetus to the increased tempo of Boko Haram attacks, as the group sought to manipulate political sensitivities and undermine the credibility of the state as the polls approached (Harf, 2015). Concern about the activities of the Boko Haram insurgent group may have informed the postponement of the elections. On the 7th of February, 2015 the country's electoral body announced the change in dates of the elections. The elections which were initially scheduled to hold on the 14th and 28th of February, 2015 was postponed for six weeks and was eventually held on the 28th of March and 11th of April 2015. The reason given for the postponement was that the Nigerian security officials lamented that they could not guarantee security for polls because the military "needed at least six weeks within which to conclude a major military, operation" against the Boko Haram insurgent group and could not provide support to police and other security agencies during the elections (Jega, 2015). Despite the additional time there were recorded cases of Boko Haram attacks in the northern part, particularly in Yobe and Gombe States (Hoije, 2015). It was reported that the Boko Haram extremist group killed 41 people and scared hundreds of people from voting (Faul and Umar, 2015).

Unemployment and the scourge of poverty: According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2010:2) Nigeria has a population comprising 80 million youths which represents 60 per cent of the total population of the country, 64 million are unemployed while 1.6 million are under employed (National Bureau of Statistics 2010). Similarly, the 2014 World Bank assessment of poverty situation in the world ranked Nigeria third among the world ten countries having extremely poor citizen. According to the report, the World Bank established that Nigeria with about 170 million population falls among countries with extreme poverty rate whose over 70 per cent population live on 1.25 dollars about N200.00k or even less per day (Daily

ıdependent, 2014). This harsh economic reality makes Nigerians vulnerable different forms of social vices, particularly that of violence during ectioneering period.

Political elites mobilize unemployed and impoverished youths in ost cases along ethnic, religious and party membership lines as instrument violence during election periods. The youths are induced by token amount money to indulge in all sorts, election related violence for the political ites to achieve their electoral or political success. In order to achieve their ms political elites provide youths with arms and ammunitions who mostly e political thugs to perpetrate the sinister motive of violence. The armed uths manipulate election results, kill political opponents, maim, threaten ctorates before and during elections, destroy properties and instigate olence when election results do not favour their sponsors. The post-election olence which occurred as a spontaneous reaction to the 2011 presidential ction result in the northern part of the country, according to the HRW 011) claimed more than 800 lives. The northern youth took to the street in otests after Goodluck Jonathan was re-elected as the president. The protests generated into violent riots and sectarian killings in most part of the north. was reported that more than 65,000 people were displaced (HRW, 2011).

Corruption: the Nigerian Fourth Republic from inception has been ught with endemic corruption. Transparency International in 2013 ranked geria 144th in the corruption index. Though the 2014 assessment showed t the country improved by nine place (Obinna, 2015), the country is still from being cleansed from corruption. Corruption reached a high scendo in the Fourth Republic particularly before the inauguration of the sent political dispensation. During this period corruption has worsen the nace of poverty in Nigeria. This has invariably opened the unemployed ıths to use any means, including violent ones to make ends meet. The pact of corruption in electoral violence can however, be explained in the that even funds and treasury are looted by political and elective office ders, they use part of the funds to establish, maintain, fund and acquire ıs for their political thugs to prosecute incoming electoral contest so as to ntain their hold on power.

Ineffectiveness of Security agencies and Inability of the Judicial em to prosecute electoral offenders: the ineffectiveness of security ncies to arrest and arrange election offenders for prosecution in court es as impetus for perpetrators of violence to indulge in violent acts

before, during and after elections. The trial of electoral offenders and the consequent sanctions placed on them will serve as deterrence to intending perpetrators. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in Nigeria reported that 18 deaths were recorded with about hundred persons injured during incidents of election violence (Mac-Leva, 2015). The import of these cases of violent acts during elections is that this act does not perpetrate themselves, they are perpetrated by people. People who therefore, are found guilty of committing election offences should be prosecuted accordingly.

Elections and Violence in Nigeria: Implications for Democratic Advancement

Recurrent electoral violence has grave effects on promotion of democracy in particular and the progress of the society in general. Firstly, electoral violence is a precursor to political instability. Electoral violence exposes other political crises which manifest and which can result to political instability. Uncontrolled electoral violence can lead to large scale societal violence and ultimately can lead to civil war. It would be recalled that the intrigues, politicking, electoral malpractices and fraud, electoral violence and the consequent breakdown of law and order led to the termination of the country's first political dispensation. Sustained electoral violence undermines the process of nation building. This thus, prevents the building of a strong, united and viable democratic polity.

Secondly, electoral violence increases crime rate after elections. The proliferation of small arms by political elites to either disrupt or manipulate election result heightens and perpetuates the cycle of violence and crises. This is because political thugs who are provided arms do not return them to the political stalwarts who provided them. Once electioneering campaigns and elections end they direct the use of these arms to other social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, looting and even assassination. This thus increases the rate of crime within the society.

Furthermore, insecurity which results from the rampancy of electoral violence has dangerous effects on democracy. Even though elections are not the only ingredients for sustaining democracy, they are important to the democratic process. Election process is one of the ways through which citizens are involved and participate in democratic governance. But when elections are tainted with violence the electorate may decide to stay away from the process in order to protect their lives. However, elections boycotted

the people cannot be adjudged as democratic. The danger lies in the fact at when an election period approaches the electorate may develop phobia r participation. This consequently leads to political apathy and nsequently a reduced political participation increases the risk of the thusiastic and visionary politicians to isolate themselves from the country's litical space.

Again, endemic electoral violence leads to a general feeling of curity. Violent elections are often characterized by loss of lives which is a ect consequence of killing and murder and destruction of property. rough these fear is instilled in the electorates; hence electioneering period them is nothing but a period of war. This definitely hinders the process of bibing democratic values, norms and culture which are basic prerequisite sustenance and development of democracy. Lastly, electoral violence pact negatively on the credibility of the electoral and democratic process. ide that, it destroys the will to adhere strictly to the dictates of the rule of . Generally, electoral violence can weaken political representation, foster rcion and introduce crudity into the country's political space, encourage l fuel insurgencies and private militia.

nclusion: Preventing Electoral violence in future elections

Electoral violence has become a recurring attribute of the Nigerian ctoral process. A part from the elections conducted under the direct ervision of the British colonialists, that is, the 1922 and 1959 of elections, er elections with the exemption of some conducted after their departure e been tainted with exacerbated violence. It is becoming a norm that hcoming elections will be worse than the previous one in terms of tion related violence. Winning electoral contests in Nigeria is fast oming a-do-or-die issue. In this situation, achieving election victory ely depends on how fit, and crude and brutal political contestants are in loying their arsenal to instigate electoral violence so as to disrupt the oth running of the electoral process to their advantage. There is however, rgent and important need to checkmate the menace of electoral violence s to have a developed and sustainable democratic process.

Firstly, there is a necessity to create a sound legal framework which hold contestants in electoral contests responsible for hate speech and paign of calumny as well as their consequences. The creation of this l framework however, is not as important as its enforcement. Elective

post seekers who violate such laws should be tried and prosecuted accordingly without fear of favour. Secondly, the current spate of insecurity in the country occasioned by the deadly Boko Haram group is a major challenge to election periods. There is need to fortify the Nigerian security agencies, the police, army and other paramilitary force with all the necessary equipment, information and expertise in order to be able to check the excesses of the deadly insurgent group. Thirdly, government must create a suitable socio-economic environment so as to woo investors both local and foreign to invest in the country. This will go a long way in creating job opportunities and as well will reduce the growing number of unemployed graduates in the polity. Fourthly, agencies established by law to combat the menace of corruption, the EFCC and the ICPC should be given more powers to prosecute corrupt officials that are found guilty of embezzling public funds. The government should give more autonomy to these agencies in order to function independently and without interference. Lastly, the Nigerian police need to be well trained, equipped, and structured and motivated so as to be able to arrest and prosecute electoral offenders and most importantly instigators of electoral violence.

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