

Electoral Violence and the Survival of Nigerian Democracy in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2015: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract

Electoral process in the post-colonial Nigeria was characterised by violence, which was both pre and post. Recent manifestations of electoral violence, most importantly between 1999 and 2015 in the Fourth Republic assumed an unprecedented magnitude, resulting in the loss and displacement of many innocent lives. However, with the adoption of technology especially in the build up to the 2015 general elections, the rate of electoral violence was minimized. The paper historicizes electoral violence and its implications on the survival of democracy in Nigeria with major emphasis on the Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2015. It argues that the high incidence of electoral violence since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 was as a result of the nature and kind of party politics being played, neo-patrimonial character of the Nigerian state, weak institutionalization of democratic architectures and inefficient electoral management body. The paper, therefore, submits that the survival of Nigerian democracy in the ongoing republic can only be possible through strict adherence to the ideals and principles of electoral process as practiced in advanced democratic societies such as the United States of America and Great Britain.

Keywords: Violence, Election, Electoral Violence, Democracy.

Introduction

Without doubt, in every stable democratic society, election remains the essential ingredient of transitory process from one civilian administration to another. Elections have become an integral part of representative democracy that by and large prevails across the world. Lindberg (2003) explains that every modern vision of representative democracy entails the notion

of elections as the primary means of selection of political decision makers. Therefore, it is incomprehensible in contemporary times to think of democracy without linking it to the idea and practice of elections. Ojo (2007), argues that election is the 'hallmark of democracy' while Chiroro (2005) sees it as the 'heart of the democratic order'. In all, elections constitute a core component of democracy.

The electoral process in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general especially since the beginning of the 21st century is characterized by different forms of violence. It is important to emphasize here that though violence has been a long-standing feature of the democratization process in the post-colonial Nigeria, its recent manifestations especially since the birth of the Fourth Republic has assumed an unprecedented magnitude thus constituting a major threat to the survival democracy. Fundamentally, there is no doubt the fact that electoral violence remains a major source of political instability in a democratic society with palpable threats of deconsolidation. For instance, Adigun Agbaje and Said Adejumo argued that violence has become infused in political processes in most new democracies in Africa especially with respect to the 21st century. For example, according to the 2008 Amnesty International Report, 'the violent struggle for power, even in states which do not descend into armed conflict, still remains an important component of political life in Africa.

Having survived decades of military dictatorship which was characterized by despotism, violation of fundamental human rights, financial profligacy among others, Nigeria eventually returned to civil rule on May 29, 1999 which culminated in the birth of the Fourth Republic. The republic, which started amidst great hope and expectations is yet to significantly convince the generality of the Nigerian populace its democratic success especially with respect to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections devoid of election violence (pre and post). Within the space of these sixteen years of civil rule, political transition from one civilian administration to another since 2003 at all levels of government (that is, federal, state and local) has not only been very rough, but also very turbulent. This is noticeable in the various cases of electoral violence which has claimed several lives, displacement of innocent people and wanton destruction of property. In fact, the conduct of general elections between 2003 and 2011 has been retrogressive rather than progressive. It is against this background that this work seeks to historicize electoral violence and the survival of democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2015. The paper adopted historical and analytical approaches, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources.

Conceptual Clarification of Some Terminologies

It is very significant to conceptualise some major key concepts based on their relevance in this paper. Among these concepts include, violence, electoral violence, election and democracy

Violence: The word violence has been viewed by scholars, researchers and political scientists from different perspectives. However, in this paper, violence is seen in terms of both violation of human rights and social injustice. This paper therefore examined one major type of violence (electoral violence) that have greatly led to loss of lives, wanton destruction of property, massive displacement of innocent lives as well as threat to the survival of democracy in Nigerian's Fourth Republic. Gilula and Daniels (1969) as cited in Wikipedia (2010) define violence as 'destructive aggression'. This conceptualization of violence implies the use of physical force to injure persons or property; and this is the core of most definitions of violence. According to World Health Organization, violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO, 2002).

Election: Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (2006) defines election as: "the act or process of organizing systematic (s) election (permitting mass participation and method of choosing) a person or persons by vote for a public office position in which state authority is exercised". According to Roberts and Edwards (1991) cited in Omotola (2007) election is: "A method for the selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by an electorate; those (citizens who are qualified to vote under the rules and procedures of the electoral system"

Electoral Violence: According to Fischer (2002), electoral violence (conflict) is any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced "protection," blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination. Fischer's definition has been modified by Megan Reif (2010) as cited in Majekodunmi, R & Adejwon, K.D (2012) where electoral violence is defined thus:

any spontaneous or organized act by candidates, party supporters, election authorities, voters, or any other actor that occurs during an electoral process, from

the date of voter registration to the date of inauguration of a new government, that uses physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics aimed at exploiting, disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, or otherwise influencing an electoral process and its outcome. Also, Igbuzor (2010) sees electoral violence as:

“any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities, including pre, during and post election periods, and may include any of the following acts: 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 or injury to any person connected with electoral processes”. International Foundation for Election Systems (2011) defines electoral violence as

“any violence (harm) or threat of violence (harm) that is aimed at any person or property involved in the election process, or at disrupting any part of the electoral or political process during the election period”

According to Albert (2007) electoral violence has to do with *all forms of organized acts or threats – physical, psychological, and structural – aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process*

These above definitions of electoral violence typically captured the deeper nature and stages of electoral violence in Nigeria especially since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

Democracy: Democracy which started in Ancient Greek city state of Athens was derived from the Greek words “Demos” meaning “people” and “Kratos” implying “rule”. Thus when put together, democracy in Ancient Greek means “rule by the people (Cambridge Encyclopaedia 1990). Dahl et al (2003) cited in Abimbola & Adesote (2012) explain that equality and freedom remain the most important characteristics of democracy since ancient times. They however defined democracy as an egalitarian form of government in which all the citizens of a nation together determine public policy, the laws and the actions of their state, requiring that all citizens (meeting certain qualifications) have an equal opportunity to express their opinion (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

Historicising Electoral Violence in Nigeria, 1951-1993: An Overview

The historical trajectory of political violence (electoral violence inclusive) in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial period. This means that thorough understanding of the problem of electoral violence in Nigeria requires situating it within its political history. Some scholars in the extant literature have argued that colonial settings laid the foundation for post-colonial political conflict in Nigeria. This argument was hinged on a number of British political experiments during the colonial period as could be seen in the introduction of the elective principle in 1922 as well as the emergence of the 1946 Richards constitution. For instance, the elective principle, though to a very large extent was non-violent, was a restrictive franchise, which was limited to Lagos and Calabar with income and residential qualifications, and could be a potential basis for violence (Omotola, 2007). The first major incidence of dissatisfaction as regard the conduct of elections during the colonial period was during 1951 regional Houses of Assembly elections. The elections which were held based on the then electoral system introduced by the 1951 constitution led to widespread dissatisfaction among majority of Nigerians in 1952. Thus, in 1953, there was increase in the intensity of political agitation (Falola, et. al, 1991). In other words, the emergence of political development in 1950s marked the genesis of electoral violence in Nigeria.

The first and immediate post-colonial electoral violence in Nigeria occurred during the 1964 general elections, the first election to be conducted after independence. The Northern People's Congress needed the elections to consolidate its power at the centre. The Action Group (AG) also needed it in order to dislodge Chief S.L Akintola from power in the West. The NCNC on its own also wanted to improve its bargaining strength in the East. It became obvious that all the major political parties were adequately anxious to participate in the elections (Falola et. al, 1991). By the middle of 1964, two major political alliances had emerged from all the manoeuvres. The NPC and the NNDP founded the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). The AG and the NCNC constituted themselves into the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The 1964 federal election was contested between these major alliances (Ige, 1995). Two main coalitions contested these elections: the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) made up of the NPC and some other minor parties; the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) comprising the NCNC, AG, NEPU and UMBC (Falola, et al, 1991).

The campaigns by these coalitions generated much bitterness, acrimony and violence, especially in the west. The elections which were said to have

been massively rigged through different means led to widespread violence/conflicts in the west following the announcement of results by the Chairman of Federal Electoral Commission, named Mr. Esua. This argument could be corroborated with the address of President, Dr. Nnamdi-Azikiwe and the then Inspector General Police, Mr. Louis Edet. Azikiwe in his Dawn broadcast to the nation, expressed that the head of state condemned the way and manner the electioneering was conducted. He explained that the politicians in power have no right to employ instruments of power in order to perpetuate their stay in office. He cited instances where Nigerian citizens had been deprived of their constitutional right to freedom of association. He warned the politicians that: "If they have decided to destroy our national unity, they should summon a round table conference to decide how our national assets should be divided for it is better that we should disintegrate in peace and not in pieces" (Anifowose, 1972). Also, the Inspector General of Police, Louis Edet made a nation-wide broadcast reporting that incidents involving violence had reached alarming proportions. He appealed to the politicians to protect Nigeria's enviable reputation as a bastion of democracy in Africa (Anifowose, 1972). The attendant consequences of the violence such as arson, looting, killing, wanton destruction of properties and the total collapse of public order mostly especially in the Western Region, were unprecedented. For example, at Ishokun, Ilesha, twenty school children were murdered on the ground that they were in town to combat an impending riot. Also, at Isho, a village few miles from Owo, sixteen people were killed. As it was in the west, so also it went on in the Middle Belt. A good example was the second Tiv riot of 1964 (Anifowose, 1972).

The second major electoral violence in the post-colonial Nigeria was traced to the Western Regional election in October 1965. The announcement of the election results by the Federal Electoral Commission, which led to the victory of Chief S.L Akintola of the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) as against the wishes of many people who expected that Chief Adegbenro of the UPGA led to large-scale widespread violence in the whole of Western Region on the ground that there were irregularities in the election results. The decision of the federal government to recognise the results of the election thus gave Chief Akintola the power to form a new government. This development forced the members of UPGA to embark on a spontaneous and violent demonstration known as "operation *wet e*" - an operation which required the spraying of houses, cars and persons with petrol and then setting fire to them (Ige, 1995). There were series of protests and demonstrations carried out by angry students, market women, farmers and other groups in most towns and villages throughout

the western region, and these were accompanied by looting, arson, killing on an unprecedented scale and burning of houses, vehicles and shops. Anti-governmental placards were displayed, party slogan- Awo! Awo! UPGA! UPGA! -as well as war songs were advanced. In some cases, the demonstration ended in clashes with anti-riot police squad, who did not hesitate to shoot. A typical song by the angry demonstrators was “*E jeki a muraogun, eleyi l on je iya*(let us prepare for war, this is an insulting behaviours) (Anifowose, 1972). The high rate of electoral violence in the 1964 and 1965 elections contributed largely to the collapse of the First Republic in 1966 (Osaghae 1998; Akinwumi 2004).

Another major electoral violence occurred during the Second Republic (1979–1983). During the republic, which barely lasted for four years, two major general elections were conducted, namely the 1979 and 1983 elections. The conduct of the two elections witnessed various cases of electoral violence across the country. The structure of politics, despite the alteration in the structure of the federation from three (and later four) regions of the first republic, to nineteen states, was still largely driven by ethno-religious forces, where each party maintained its strong hold in a given regional/ethnic domain (Omotola,2007). For example, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) dominated the Northern region, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) dominated the Western region while the National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) dominated the Eastern region (Abimbola &Adesote, 2012). The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), obviously NPC’s successor, controlled the federal government between 1979 and 1983. In the 1983 elections, it wanted to extend its reach to other regions, either by hook or by crook. The attempt to achieve this underscored the massive rigging of the 1983 elections, which resulted in an unprecedented outbreak of violence in the Western region, where the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), AG’S successor, held sway (Omotola,2007). In the then Oyo and Ondo States, the two UPN states were declared for the NPN. This announcement led to unprecedented violence, in which a writer simply described it as ‘the house of war’ (Barbarinsa 2002). Although Ondo state was later returned to UPN at the Election Tribunal, series of violence that characterised the disputed election results following various cases of alleged irregularities led to the collapse of the republic on 31 December 1983, in which Major General Muhammadu Buhari (who was then the Chief of Army Staff) decided to seize power. This ushered in the emergence of the second phase of military rule in the country which lasted till 1999.

This discourse would be incomplete without having a cursory look at the electoral process during the aborted Third Republic. Prior to the Presiden-

tial election in 1993, the local government, House of Assembly and gubernatorial elections had already been conducted in preparation for the birth of the republic, which were not only peaceful, but also devoid of pre and post electoral violence. The presidential election, which was held on June 12, 1993, and contested by Chief M.K.O Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Alhaji Bashir Tofa of the National Republican Convention (NRC), and described both local observer as the fairest election in the post-colonial Nigeria was eventually annulled by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. The annulment of the election caused series of crises especially in the Western part of Nigeria championed by some groups such as NADECO among others. The post electoral violence which followed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election was what forced Gen. Ibrahim Babangida to form an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Ernest Shonekan, who was later overthrown in what was regarded as peaceful coup on November 17 1993 by General Sani Abacha.

Historical Analysis of Electoral Violence in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2015

Before we begin to examine various cases of electoral violence that have plagued the Fourth Republic since 1999, it is imperative to briefly have a glimpse of the birth of the republic. The process that eventually culminated in the birth of the Fourth Republic began as a result of the sudden death of late General Sanni Abacha on June 8, 1998, which paved way for the emergence of General Abdulsalam Abubakar as the new Head of State of Nigeria. Subsequent upon his emergence, Gen Abdulsalam announced that he would hand over power to the democratically elected president on May 29, 1999. In the pursuance of the political transition programme, General Abubakar, dissolved the initial five political parties registered by the Abacha's regime, cancelled all the elections that were conducted and thus, set up another electoral body known as Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The electoral body was set up initially to grant provisional registration to nine political parties, with the condition that after the local government elections of that year, those that had 10% votes and above in at least 24 states of the Federation would qualify to contest the subsequent State and Federal elections. Eventually, only three political parties that is, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), All Peoples Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) that were registered (Dode, 2010 ; Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

Within nine months of inception, the regime of General Abdulsalam successfully completed a transition to civilian administration by conducting

several elections including the presidential election of April 1999 and thus handing over power to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP on May 29, 1999. The emergence of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the third executive president of Nigeria marked the genesis of the Fourth Republic. The need therefore to nurture the nascent democracy to maturity such that it could no longer be reversed or eroded like what happened during second republic became a major challenge to the new government.

The conduct of free, fair and credible periodic elections by unbiased electoral body including its umpire as well as other electoral officials and the adherence to democratic principles of governance remain major factors responsible for the avoidance of electoral violence in any democratic society. These two major factors were the challenges which the Fourth Republic had been contending with since its birth in 1999 up till 2015. It is against this backdrop that we shall examine various electoral violence vis-à-vis elections that were conducted in Nigeria since the birth of the Fourth Republic with major emphasis on the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections.

After the 1999 general elections, four general elections were conducted under a civilian administration in the country in which one can say that democracy was actually consolidated. In other words, the years between 2003 and 2015 witnessed successful transition of one civilian administration to another. For instance, in 2003, a presidential election was conducted and the incumbent president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP was declared winner by INEC. Also, in 2007, late Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua of the PDP was declared by INEC as the President elect. In April 2011, presidential election was conducted and won by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, who was initially sworn in first as, Acting President following the critical condition of late president Umaru Yar'Adua, and later as a substantive President in 2010 after the death of President Yar'Adua. While civilian to civilian transition between 2003 and 2011 was intra party affairs (that is between PDP), in 2015, civilian to civilian transition changed to inter party affair (that is from PDP to APC).

Although democracy was consolidated in the period between 2003 and 2015 because, there was no military welcome back, various general elections conducted during this period were characterized by of different forms of electoral malpractices and irregularities which sparked off various cases of electoral violence that led to killings and displacement of many innocent lives and wanton destruction of property that worth billions of naira. Effort would be made to cite various cases of electoral violence that took place in Nigeria between 2003 and 2015.

Scholars have argued that one of the fundamental problems facing majority of post-colonial African states is that of how to sustain and consolidate their democracy through credible elections (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1989). Evidences have shown that in the whole of African continent, only few states could lay claim to have genuinely conducted free and fair elections that were universally perceived. Thus, election administration that will achieve governmental legitimacy and as well prevent electoral violence after polls has always been a major serious concern to not only electoral scholars (Kolawole, 2007), but also many lovers of democracy. It is on this submission that the three general elections that were conducted in Nigeria stands.

The first major general election to be conducted by a civilian administration in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic was held in 2003 under the administration of President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The 2003 general election was said to have been one of the most corrupt and fraudulent elections to be conducted in the post-colonial Nigeria (Kurfi, 2005). The election was also characterised by different types of electoral frauds which range from ballot stuffing, intimidation, killing, and assassination among others. The election was a triumph of violence. A number of people have argued that there were no elections in 2003 but merely the intimidation of voters and the selection of already decided winners by elites and caucuses (Abimbola&Adesote, 2012). Both internal and external observers were unanimous on the unfairness of the competition in the electoral process which was said to have been manipulated by the so-called ruling party, Peoples' Democratic Party. For example, according to the Human Right Watch's report, between April and May 2003, about one hundred people were said to have been killed and many more injured during federal and state elections in Nigeria and that most of the violence was perpetrated by the ruling PDP and its supporters (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The subsequent local government election which was conducted across the country in the following year also witnessed electoral violence. USIP noted that violence during the 2003 election cycle was more blatant and widespread and marked the unchecked proliferation of another worrisome development; the hiring and arming of militias to serve narrow political ends.

Also, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), a coalition of over ninety civil society groups, in its report on the 2003 general elections, gave a vote of no confidence in the elections. The group declared in its report that "...Twenty-nine of the registered political parties that either contested or did not contest the elections have variously rejected the results as announced by the INEC declaring the results as fraudulent. Both Domestic

and International Election Observers documented massive irregularities that characterised the elections and refused to endorse the elections as free and fair. Some political parties and their candidates decided to challenge some of the results before the various Election Petition tribunals and have gone ahead to do so while others declared "mass action" to pressure a government without popular mandate to abdicate power" (TMG,2003). This could be corroborated with the submission of Agbaje and Adejumbi (2006), who argued that the electoral fraud that was staged in 2003 general elections was more sophisticated than that of 1983 general elections.

In 2007, the second election under the Fourth Republic was conducted. Rather than getting better, in spite of series of negative reports by both internal and external observers against the 2003 general elections, the 2007 general elections turned out to be the worst election to have been conducted in the post-colonial Nigeria in particular and the Fourth Republic in general. In the run-up to the elections, there were several incidence of pre-electoral violence leading to political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political parties. Evidences showed that between June and August 2006, about three gubernatorial candidates were assassinated (Omotosho, 2007) among which Dr. Ayo Daramola, PDP gubernatorial candidate of Ekiti State was among.

The outcome of the general elections of 2007 was said to be flawed. In fact, the 2007 general election was worse than the 1999 and 2003 elections. The scale of electoral violence (pre and post) was unprecedented. Several cases of pre-electoral violence in the 2007 election were captured by IFES-Nigeria and the Human Right Watch. For instance, the IFES-Nigeria collected, documented and reported different incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria, and thus put the total at 967, which included 18 deaths from January 13 - April 30 2007 (IFES-Nigeria, 2007). The Human Rights Watch also highlighted incidence of pre-electoral violence in the run-up to Nigeria's April 2007 elections which was beset by political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political factions (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Instances of irregularities in the conduct of the election which invariably engendered electoral violence were noticeable in the recourse to courts by aggrieved parties as well as the reports of various local and foreign observers, electoral scholars and even in the speech of elected president.

Animashaun(2008), argued that there were massive irregularities in the 2007 general elections and it was characterised by inflation of voting figures, declaration of result where elections were never held or not conclu-

sive, intimidation of voters as well as manipulation of the security services. According to former governor of Anambra State, Dr Chukwuemeka Ezeife, while commenting generally on the status of democracy in Nigeria as cited in Adeyemo (2009) opined that:

...democracy is associated with elections.How have the elections gone since 1999 tilldate? The 1999 elections were disputed but it was vastly better than the 2003 elections. People shouted foul about the 2003 election but that was infinitely better than the nonelectionof 2007. Each election has been worse, more flawed than the one before it. We cannot be getting a democracy by running further away from it.

Late President Umaru Yar'Adua also at his inaugural speech admitted that the 2007 general elections were flawed (Abimbola &Adesote, 2012). The evidence of this was seen in the various steps he took subsequently after its assumption. First, he inaugurated twenty-one members of Electoral Reform Committee, headed by justice Uwais to see to the problem of electoral process in the country. Second, he ensured the Independence of Judiciary which was noticeable in the various judgements dispensed at both Tribunal and Appeal courts over electoral irregularities. Examples of this were the loss of Edo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo States to Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) and Labour Party respectively (LP), which were initially declared to have been won by PDP according to INEC(Aniekwe, et al, 2011)).

Although the 2011 and 2015 general elections were generally acceptable by both local and foreign observers to be very fair when compared with the 2003 and 2007 general elections which conducted under the Fourth Republic, the election witnessed two major stages of electoral violence, the pre-election period (that is, period of registration, campaign, election day) andthe post-election period (that is, after the announcement of results). At the state level, there were several cases of pre-electoral violence which led to the brutal murder of some people. A good example of this was the case of pre-electoral violence in Akwa Ibom state in March 22, 2011 which led to the setting up of Presidential Investigation Panel to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the violence and proffer solutions to nip future occurrence in the bud and the way forward.According to a report, some parts of the Akwa Ibom state, particularly in Ikot Ekpene and Uyo were engulfed by a reign of violence which was unprecedented. Thus, by the time the dust of the mayhem settled, according to officially confirmed Police report two supporters of the PDP, Etop Nicholas Idiong, a trader and Daniel Udo Akpan, a commercial motorcyclist, were brutally murdered in Ikot Ekpene while several people sustained various degrees of injuries.

Also, NsemoItaEkong, an Akwa Ibom Transport Company bus driver was recovered shot dead in his vehicle on Abak road and several persons were injured in Uyo. Other losses suffered included property worth billions of Naira which were destroyed during the politically motivated rampage. The property included: 200 brand new Peugeot 307 cars; 500 brand new tricycles; the Goodluck/Sambo Campaign office which was burnt down by the rampaging mob; Fortune International High School owned by Senator Aloysius Etok which was razed down with school children in session and over 20 Toyota Hiace buses belonging to the PDP and Godswill 2011 Campaign Organization, nine Hilux jeeps belonging to the Government of Akwa Ibom State which were either completely destroyed or vandalized (Official Gazette of Government of Akwa Ibom State, 2012).

At the national level, the announcement of the April 2011 Presidential election result by INEC in which President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP was declared the winner led to violence (post electoral violence) especially in some parts of Northern Nigeria, such as Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri, Kaduna among others. The post electoral violence that accompanied the 2011 general election resulted in the killing of about ten corps members in Bauchi state (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). Beside this, there were other cases of electoral violence over the 2011 election. It was a result of the magnitude of the pre-election violence in Akwa Ibom State and the mayhem that had rocked several parts of the country before and after the April 2011 general elections that compelled President Goodluck Jonathan to set up a 22-man panel under the chairmanship of Sheikh Ahmed Lemu to look into the various crises. Specifically, the Panel was mandated to identify those responsible for the pre-election violence in Akwa Ibom State as well as the other electoral violence that greeted the election especially in some Northern states in the country.

The 2015 general elections were recorded less electoral violence due to the series of electoral reforms that were introduced and implemented by INEC. It is imperative to point out here that the process of electoral reform had started since the appointment of Prof. Attahiru Jega as the new INEC Chairman in 2010. The electoral reforms were initially implemented during the 2011 general elections, but took a new dimension in the build up to the 2015 general elections, in which Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and Card Reader were adopted as major instruments for the conduct of the elections. Its adoption helped to reduce high incidence of electoral violence compared with previous elections conducted during the Fourth Republic. The 2015 general elections which were conducted amidst fear of violence, killings and electoral fraud and irregularities by the Nige-

rian populace turned out to be the best elections ever conducted in the post-independence Nigeria. With respect to the presidential election in particular, the outcome of the election resulted in the defeat of the then incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP by the incumbent President, General Muhammadu Buhari (retd) of the APC (Adesote and Ofogbor, 2018).

Electoral violence and the Survival of Nigerian Democracy in the Fourth

Republic: Lessons from other West African countries

The importance of free, fair and credible election in the sustainability of democracy in a democratic society cannot be overemphasized. This is because, it not only offers a government a unique opportunity for legitimacy, but, also serves as a transitory process in stable democracies. This is one of the reasons why scholars such as Adigun Agbaje, 2006, and Shola Omotola, 2007 argued that free and fair elections are critical element in the survival of democracy. Besides, in a liberal democracy, electoral process always gives room for the formation of groups popularly called political parties which are expected to possess some basic characteristics like political ideology, sincere political manifestoes, party discipline, strong internal democracy among others (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012). Competition among these political parties is seen as part and parcel of democracy because it helps to strengthen the quality and level of their service to the people. It is when politics is not being played according to the acceptable democratic principles that it generates into unprecedented violence.

Historically, the use of violence (pre and post) in elections is not peculiar to recent and emerging democracies in developing world in general and Africa in particular. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century England and America, there were documented cases of electoral violence where force and intimidation were used as a tactical means of winning elections (Seymour C, et al, 1918). One basic fact remains that violence in elections has always been a major threat to the sustenance or stability of a democracy. With respect to African continent, new democracies in this continent especially since the 1990s which was termed as the third wave of democracy have been confronted with series of electoral violence that had resulted in the killing/death and displacement of many innocent lives. Examples of this are noticeable in the cases of Zimbabwe, 2000, 2005, 2008; Zanzibar 2005, 2010; Kenya, 2007, among others (Chaturvedi, 2005, Khadiagala 2008, Waki Report 2008, and USIP, 2010). For example, the 1998 elections in Lesotho led to a post-election conflict nearly brought the country

to a civil war situation. This situation was only contained through the diplomatic and military interventions of South Africa and Botswana. In 2007, the elections were similarly accompanied by violence (Matlosa, 2007). Also, the disputed presidential elections in 2007 in Kenya threw her into a postelection violence which, in only two months, claimed more than 1200 lives and displaced an estimated 350,000 people (USIP, 2010).

More importantly, high degrees of conflict or continuous electoral violence are capable of creating political unrest and as result instability; and slow the sustenance and consolidation of democracy as well as development. This could be seen in what happened in some of the countries in African mentioned above. For instance, an analysis by Afrobarometer of Africans' view of democracy suggests that poor elections are to blame for dissatisfaction with elections as means to attain political representation. Thus, among the eighteen countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, the three countries where elections have been relatively free of violence—Ghana, Botswana, and Namibia—are the most satisfied with elections as a means to engage the government. On the other hand, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Zambia, where elections have been more violent and controversial, are the least satisfied (Afrobarometer, 2006). The implication of this lack of satisfaction is democratic instability.

The survival of democracy in some countries in West Africa in particular and Africa in general had been threatened due to electoral violence. A good example was the case of Cote d' Ivoire in the 2010/2011 presidential elections between the then incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo and the current president, Alassane Quattara, in which the former refused to concede defeat and thus refused to step down on the ground that the elections were characterized by irregularities. His refusal to concede defeat sparked off violence in the country. It was the intervention of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) cum the United Nations that eventually forced Gbagbo to set down. Also, in 2016, there was electoral dispute between the then president of the Gambia, Yahya Jammeh and the incumbent President, Adama Barrow, in which the former refused to concede defeat. The refusal of Yahya Jammeh initially sparked off post-electoral violence which threatened the country's democracy. However, in order to save the country's democracy, the leaders of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to intervene. The intervention of ECOWAS led to the restoration of peace into the country.

The above examples of several cases of electoral violence in some countries in West Africa in particular and Africa in general and how it had

threatened the consolidation and sustainability of their democracy should serve as big lessons to Nigeria especially as she prepares for 2023 general elections. The notion that “better a sham election than no election at all”- for the purposes of ensuring the continuity of democracy as well as the view that worst civilian government is better than the best military regime should not be taken for granted. Therefore, strict adherence to democratic ideals and principles of electoral process are critical to the survival of democracy.

Conclusion

The above discourse has critically examined the historical trajectory of electoral violence and the survival of democracy in Nigeria, with major emphasis on the Fourth Republic. It argues that the foundation of electoral violence in Nigeria was traced to the colonial period, but took a new dimension in the post-colonial period. It explains that the fall of the First and Second republics in the post-colonial Nigeria was as a result of electoral violence, caused by massive electoral irregularities. With respect to the Fourth Republic, the paper identifies and discusses several cases of electoral violence that occurred between 1999 and 2015. It also argues that despite the fact that the most recent electoral exercise in the country, the 2011 and 2015 general elections showed elements of improvement and possibly restoration of hope in the democratization process which was though applauded by both local and foreign observers, there were records of post-election violence. The paper submits that, for democracy to survive in Nigeria, strict adherence to the ideals and principles of electoral process as practised in advanced democratic societies such as the United States of America and Great Britain is paramount.

Importantly, electoral competition should not be seen as a do or die affairs as championed by former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo during the build to the 2007 general elections. A good sportsmanship is expected to be displayed by all the political players. A good example could be seen in the 2015 general elections in which the then incumbent President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan did not only conceded defeat but also peacefully handed over power to the then opposition party (now ruling) under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. The legacy already laid in 2015 occasioned by the adoption of PVC and Card Reader should be consolidated and improved upon as Nigeria prepares for another round of general elections in 2023.

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