

Electoral Violence and Its Implication on Development of Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria

Abdulumumin M. Omiya¹

Department of Sociology, Federal University,

Birnin-Kebbi, Kebbi State-Nigeria

&

Abimiku A. Kukumah

Doctoral Candidate, PhD student,

Federal University Lafia, Nasarawa State-Nigeria

Abstract:

This paper is on electoral violence and its implication on development of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The paper centered on critical challenges facing free, fair, credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria and the need to seek solutions to these challenges. The paper drew evidences from scholarly papers and commentaries as well as empirical essays on the subject matter. Using conflict theory, the paper discussed the implication of electoral violence on free, fair credible and peaceful election with emphasis on Jos-North LGA of Plateau state. The paper implicated ethnicity, religion, electoral fraud as well as ignoble role of electoral umpires in electoral violence. Based on these, the paper recommended among others, public sensitization, criminalisation of electoral violence, and prosecution of INEC officials who compromised electoral laws.

Key words: Electoral violence, Democracy, Good Governance, Jos-North.

La Violence Électorale Et Ses Conséquences Sur Le Développement De La Démocratie Et La Bonne Gouvernance Au Nigeria

Address for Correspondence: Abdulumumin Musa Omiya, Department of Sociology, Federal University, Birnin-Kebbi, Kebbi State-Nigeria Babsomiya@gmail.com

Abimiku Anthony Kukumah, Doctoral Candidate, Post Graduate School, Federal University Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Kukumahabimiku@gmail.com,

Résumé:

Ce papier est sur la violence électorale et ses conséquences sur le développement de la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance au Nigeria. L'étude a porté sur les défis cruciaux auxquels gratuitement, justes, crédibles et pacifiques élections au Nigeria et la nécessité de trouver des solutions à ces défis. Le travail attire les preuves trouvées dans les documents et les commentaires ainsi que les essais empiriques sur le sujet. En utilisant la théorie du conflit, l'étude a examiné les conséquences de la violence électorale sur le libre, équitable et crédible des élections pacifiques en mettant l'accent sur l'Jos-North LGA de l'État du Plateau. Le document en cause l'appartenance ethnique, la religion, la fraude électorale ainsi que rôle de l'ignoble général des juges-arbitres dans la violence électorale. Sur cette base, le papier recommandé entre autres, la sensibilisation du public, criminalisation de violence électorale, et la poursuite des responsables de l'INEC qui aurait compromis la législation électorale.

Mots clés: La Violence Électorale, La Démocratie, La Bonne Gouvernance, Jos-North

Introduction:

Electoral violence has a lot of implication on development of democracy and good governance not only in Nigeria but elsewhere in the world, (Sharma, 2007). According to the Report of a forum titled "Nigeria's 2007 Elections", the critical challenges ahead of free, fair, credible and peaceful elections in Nigeria is the ability to curb violence before, during and after elections. This includes repositioning the mindsets of the electorates. The general electoral society and electoral college particularly the various Stakeholders of election namely: INEC, Media, Political Parties, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), NGOs, and the Academia; who formed Election Monitoring Groups (EMG) or Observers or Returning Officers and the Security Agencies, Donor Agencies and the Diplomatic Community have a big role to play towards ensuring an acceptable electoral system that can be adjudged free, fair, peaceful and above all credible, (Abdullahi,2015).

Credibility therefore serves to ensure the emergence of a good leader, a leader that is adjudged to have been freely elected; and so represent the will of the majority of the people. Where violence is used to intimidate the few electorate to even turn out to vote, then the emergence of the leader become questioned and exert a negative impact on governance.

Violence is a devastating situation which most often results into destruction of lives and property. Political violence has a long history in Nigeria. From the Mid- west politics of Action Group (AG) and Northern people congress in northern Nigeria of the early 1960s, (Egobueze & Ojirika, 2017). Violence has severally been recorded in Nigeria's elections during and after electioneering campaigns as well as during election. The incidences defeat the objectives of

conducting elections. When violence erupts, the electorate, gladiators and umpire find themselves in Jeopardy, deadlock and confusion. This is not without consequences on democracy and good governance.

Violence negates the concept of democracy defined years by Abraham Lincoln as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. A review of this definition implies that democracy is the popular participatory practice of representative government of the people, who aspire to share love with one another irrespective of their socio-economic and demographic characteristics (sex, age, marital status, occupation, educational background, religion, tribe, etc.). In this context, the people are determined to act, behave, demonstrate and cooperate as agents of socialisation, modernization and development. In forming a representative government, the people are organized, coordinated and committed to protecting the fundamental human rights including their political, economic and social rights. Such attribute ensure peace, security, harmony, consensus, tranquility, unity, stability, progress and general well-being of constituent communities (Kukumah, 2008). Democracy therefore impacts on good governance.

Good governance is a political and institutional environment based on respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights and the participation of civil society. Good governance allows a responsible economic and financial management of public and natural resources; for the purpose of economic growth and social development, and poverty reduction in an equitable and sustainable manner, (Sebudubudu, 2010). Good governance encourages the use of clear participatory procedures for public decision-making, transparent and accountable institutions, primacy of law in the management and distribution of resources. With this, there will be effective measure to prevent and automatically combat corruption, support a people-oriented leadership, pave way for meaningful development and empower majority of the common people. Within this context, good governance shapes the exercise of political power, and the relationship between those in power and those outside it. It is the exercise of effective, honest, equitable, transparent and accountable power and authority at the various levels of government.

The task of promoting good governance includes a wide range of activity areas. Public sector development increases strict adherence to due process and other bureaucratic effectiveness through organizational, administrative and policy reform; decentralization of government both internally and externally (for a range of supernatural institutions). Good governance ensures effectiveness and accountability by bringing government to appropriate constituency levels; working automatically against existing and potential corruption. It becomes easy to have good governance where democratic governance is realized in an atmosphere devoid of violence and where the system guarantee high level of honesty, restoration, retribution and equitable governance.

Electoral violence in Nigeria

Right from the time of Independence and the First Republic (1963 to 1966), Nigerian political system that involves electoral process was faced with series of violent conflicts. Electoral violence has always been as a result of serious disagreement due to differences in political opinions and divergent interest of political actors. According to Kukumah (2008:58), “the crises of human co-existence and co-habitation of electorate within the frame of political societies make it expedient for electoral violence, which turned out to be essential elements of political corruption in Nigeria”.

In Kukumah’s (2008) analysis, Nigeria has suffered several political developmental crises as a result of electoral violence. Electoral conflicts have not only threatened the existence of the nation, shortly after independence, but have also brought great troubles and annoyance to the country. Up till today no political dispensation to usher-in an elected Executive has been conducted without either conflict or ending in with violence and electoral tribunal. For instance the 1962 election created the circumstances and the remote factor of the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria that claimed the lives of more than a million Nigerians. In 1979, it was the fraud of National Party of Nigeria (NPN), and again it was repeated in 1983, which eventually led to the sacking of the republic in December 31, 1983 By General Muhammadu Buhari due to deep rooted violence and electoral corruption. The third Republic also failed to be conclusive because of the political violence and controversy surrounding the conduct and result of the elections. However, Babangida (1993) affirmed that the June 12 Presidential general election was the fairest ever; it was nevertheless truncated or annulled by the same Military Administration which he presided over.

In another analysis, Unachukwu (1993) argued that the history of Nigeria’s elections has never been troubled-free due to the corruptive ways voters’ register were compiled in the past. This allowed for rigging thereby causing havoc to not only the electoral system but also democracy and good governance. The author faulted the registers of 1979 and 1983 election periods which were full of duplicated names, fictitious names and names of dead people. Consequently it was possible not only to manipulate voting or impersonation at polling units, and eventually the manipulation of election results but also possible for violent crises to occur across the country.

The observation of Otite (1986) revealed that politicians exploited these lapses to rig elections and the end result has always been mob reaction as both political hoodlums and aggrieved electorate resort to wanton destruction of lives and property as a way of protest against electoral fraud and cheating.

Sources and causes of electoral violence in a democracy:

According to Jega (2006), in Nigeria’s most recent history, violent crises related to politics generally and elections in particular has increased, if not in number of incidents, at least in magnitude, complexity and its consequences on democracy and good governance. It is so because Nigerian politics has come to assume the characteristics and attributes of a rat-race in which only the fittest, richest and filthiest survive. There is no civility, hardly any decorum, too much crudity

and unfathomable aggression and violence that result into democratic and governance crises in the name of Nigerian general elections. The author blamed this on the nature of Nigerian democracy. The winner takes all and losers forfeit all, syndrome. Beside this, are the indigent settler disparities and consistent rigging and manipulation of votes during election.

Indigene and Settler disputes or tension over perceived rigging or manipulation of election process and results is one of the most significant and widespread sources of violent electoral conflict in Nigeria and have a long history, (Joshua & Jegede, 2013).

Communities in Nigeria that have co-existed for centuries in relative peace have suddenly been redefining their relationship and sense of identity in order to justify their quest for Leadership or greater political power and control of resources as well as political institutions (Aliyu, 2000). In several cases, conflict is deliberately manipulated and exploited by the political Leaders to thwart efforts of democrats who are planning to provide good governance to the people.

In the work of Duncan (2016), ethnic related crises during electioneering campaign and elections have been recorded in Plateau State of Nigeria. The crises between Berom and Hausa over disputed electoral figures and other political affiliations, attest to the indigene–settler conflict. Such conflict has been inimical to development of peace and security management whereby democracy and good governance are jeopardized in Nigeria. Elsewhere conflict associated with indigene-settler conflict has resulted in the abandonment of polling units. Violent conflicts over the use of electoral materials have also resulted into crises as community that have large turnout are short-change with those who have few but with politicians and money-bags who are ready and willing to buy vote.

When conflicts are motivated and are escalated over the years without mitigation it affects the democratic process (Unachukwu, 1993). The most serious violence is the type related to both announcements and declaration of election results and winner respectively. In the last few years, these crises have resulted to lose of lives of members from both Political Parties in electoral disputes and their property worth millions of Naira. According to Sandole (1987) government has intervened in most cases, but unfortunately, it has not been completely resolved in order to protect and sustain democracy. In many cases the battle ground has shifted to the court where court judges and Lawyers have been displaying their legal delinquencies.

Violent-free election: theoretical frame

Social Group Conflict Theory

The theoretical framework that supports this paper is the social conflict group theory, which relies greatly on the reviews of Andrew and Steve, the British Sociological and Psychological Experts on electoral violence. According to this theory, the sources and causes of group violence include electoral malpractices, monetization of votes, fictitious and duplication of names in the voter register, delay in voting processes and perceived bias of the electoral umpire.

The theory states that to avoid group violence in the society, there has to be conflict management mechanisms to separate the warring political factions through third party intervention strategies by the Law Enforcement Agents, organs of UN, NGOs, individuals, etc., during intense electoral violence.

Empirical evidences have, however, shows that deploying security agents to quell electoral violence may be exercise in futility in the long run. This is because that violence may be calmed once the police and the soldiers are on the road, only to resurface at another time; and or in the next round of election. Even when the court and tribunal take over as umpires, the decision may not be popular as justice may likely go to the candidate who paid more money. What guarantee free and fair election is a strong electoral institution that can conduct free and fair election and an impartial umpire? This is very possible where democratic leaders that emerge insist on good governance.

Electoral violence: a case of Jos-north LGA in Plateau state

In explaining electoral violence for focus on empirical explanation we analyse archival materials available on political violence in Jos north in plateau state Nigeria. The data are taken from a survey conducted after 2003/2004 election, which the researchers participated. A total of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were selected for the study. The method of data analysis used was the qualitative method based on the instrument of in-depth interview for key informants.

Table 1 is a descriptive analysis of major factors that were responsible in the area. It showed a combination of factors including ethnicity, religion and political interest sustained the political violence beyond the issue of boundary between Jos south and Jos north which was hitherto alluded to. In Nigeria religion is no longer a function of the mind and what one chose to worship but a practice, which provide the umbrella for one's family. Like ethnic bounds, if religion sustains the concept of brotherhood such others who are not in the same religious group are seen as enemies. In this context, Jos has become a clustered city based less on ethnicity but mostly on religion. It has influence on political affiliation also.

Table 1: On the major factors Responsible for the electoral violence in Jos-town:

S/N	Variable	Frequency	%
01	Ethnicity	32	32.0
02	Religion	32	32.0
03	Political interests	32	32.0

04	Boundary	4	4.0
05	TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field report

Equally table 2, the role of corruption. It remains a serious factor as even shown during the 2015 election in Nigeria were money meant for arms to fight insurgency in north-east Nigeria was said to have been shared to PDP stalwart to use for the election. So much money still exchange hands today during election, especially on the Election Day as political parties and their candidates struggle to buy not only voters, but also electoral officers. Buying of delegates is no longer a novel phenomenon in the Nigerian electoral arena. Corruption has been elevated during election. In many instances, it is no longer the electorate that determine who wins election but the electoral officers. The recognition of this factor has made corruption a defector practice in Nigerian election. As the finding in the table suggest, INEC official either participated in the rigging.

Table 2: On the major area that created political crises in Jos Town:

S/N	Variable	Frequency	%
01	Tribalism	21	21.0
02	Electoral corruption	48	48.0
03	INEC	23	23.0
04	Electorate	8	8.0
05	TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field data

When the respondents were asked to suggest remedies to electoral violence, majority (40%) cited involvement of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and to strengthen the Independent National electoral Commission (INEC). Although the involvement of EFCC is not clear, except in the investigation after election on accusation of monetary inducement, strengthen INEC to become real independent will be quite commendable. If EFCC can check against corruption (the so-call Nigerian factor) and INEC doing the job of incorruptible umpire, then popular leaders will emerge. It is hoped that educating the electorate can go a long way to encourage voters' education (Table 3).

Table 3: Suggested ways to eradicate political crises in Nigeria:

S/N	Variable	Frequency	%
-----	----------	-----------	---

01	Involve the military	4	4.0
02	Involve the EFCC	40	40.0
03	Educates the electorate	16	16.0
04	Strengthen the INEC	40	40.0
05	TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field data

Discussion on Findings

Electoral violence, Challenges and the way forward for democracy and good governance in Nigeria

The challenge of electoral violence to Nigeria's democracy and good governance derives its root cause sometimes from INEC's preparations. The general preparations toward election often suffer setbacks due to late passage of budgetary allocation, cash-backing and late release of funds to the electoral commission. Some other areas where preparations can cause violent conflicts include voter registry activities, administration services and procurement of equipment that facilitate preparations (Iwu, 2003). Beside these, voters' education has not been properly handled as well as the training of adhoc Staff and logistics problems. The coordination of electoral institute and the department of operations have always been the determinant factors to either free, fair credible and peaceful or crises ridden election, whereby the results will be declared most often inconclusive or a re-run especially when accompanied by violence, (Iwu, 2003).

Given the impact of violence on credible election, Ogundale (2007) recognized them as challenges to democracy and good governance. The need to engender trust and confidence in the electoral process amongst election Stakeholders and to mobilise the citizenry to consciously play their roles in ensuring a democratic governance has become very important given the temptation for emergence of despotic leaders; and the demand for development in the 21st century. A government that ignores etiquette of democracy may not be able to develop the economic, and ensure safety and security of the citizens. It thus creates a political atmosphere and society worse than that colonial era. It is in this context that Fatile, Akhakpe, Igbokwe, chinyeaka and Oteh (2012) emphasized that changing of old socio-political distortions, including negative mindsets about elections. Nigerian electorate need to encourage the institutionalization of the culture of elections through the adoption of affirmative action not only through encouraging women but registering and holding voters card and being ready to confront the monsters riggers during election. This is crucial in the quest for democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

According to Uwais Report (2008), the development of information and communications technology in order to eliminate electoral fraud or malpractices that cause violence in election have

become one of the greatest factors of democracy crises in and governance and challenges to political development in Nigeria. In that Report, a recommendation to carry out education and cooperation amongst Stakeholders especially electoral gladiators, political party leadership, youths, women and political associations; to bring about a regime of fair play amongst key players and electorate was made for the purpose of peaceful electioneering campaign and proper general elections in Nigeria.

The assertion of Onigu (1986) clarified the facts that the challenge of political bodies and the Security Agencies in creating confidence, fair play and justice in the electoral process is important. Failure to tackle this challenge, bring the manifestation of political problems especially electoral violence to the fore. Onigu (1986) believed that that the mass media can provide sustainable dissemination of political information on the electoral process without bias for political parties and candidates. This is possible where the media is not interested in investigative journalism and not politically allowed owned or pay to sing the tune of the pay master.

As the Jos north incident used to illustrate the subject matter of this paper has shown democracy through political crises is bedeviled with distabilisation. Each of the elections in Jos-North towards democratic experiment reveals electoral violence that has turned the area to theater of violence associated with ethnicity, religion and political interests. It suggests that violence grew with intensity when politicians began to manipulate ethnicity and religion to fit their purpose.

However, the Respondents indicated that electoral corruption and indiscipline have been the major factor of electoral violence that results into political conflicts in Jos-North LGA of Plateau state. It is obvious also that the best ways to tackle it in order to eradicate political crises during electioneering campaign and election in Nigeria is to involve the EFCC and strengthen the INEC institution. Nigeria democracy, without doubt has become associated with electoral violence even with the slightest provocation. It is important to note that electoral violence is not merely in Jos-North LGA but nation-wide. It has become something that is used by gladiators or groups seeking power, by those holding power and by groups in the process of or about losing power. In addition, the findings equally reveal that political crises caused by electoral violence; has not only attracted the security agents out of their barracks, but in many instances the presence of armed personnel has turned the country to police states. In the instances of Jos- north used in this study, it has severally resulted in the declaration of state of emergency, with road blocks and restriction in movement. Money that could have been used in development has been diverted to the security and the feeding of people in IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps and provision of relief material. These are all affront to democracy good governance.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the facts of this paper on the “electoral violence and its implication to democracy and good governance in Nigeria” conclusions are made. This paper believes that electoral violence has increased in both the number of incidents and magnitude, complexity and consequences in

Nigeria. The major factors that triggered political crises during elections in Nigeria include ethnicity, religion and differences in political party interests. However, electoral corruption and indiscipline of stakeholders have equally been identified as a catalyst-factor that enables the continuous crises in democratic governance of Nigeria.

This paper also concludes that the root cause of electoral violence is power struggle. The remote cause may be lack of voter education. Based on the findings, the best ways to tackle electoral violence is to involve the EFCC and strengthen the INEC institution. The paper equally concludes that corruption in electoral processes is at the root of all Nigeria electoral fraud, mismanagement and violence that result into political crises; in which democracy and good governance are at the receiving end. It is perpetuated through monetary inducement of decision-making by high profile Politicians with the help of street miscreants. Therefore, political crises in a democratic Nigeria are influenced by corruption, ethnicity, religion and high profile stakeholders in the INEC institutions, who are responsible for bribery acts, which jeopardized democracy and good governance against the interest of the majority electorate.

Specifically, the paper suggests the following:

- i. Ethnic politics should be discouraged in the system and Politicians should not be allowed to deploy ethnicity during campaigns. This is because over the years, ethnic politics has not been peaceful rather encouraged violence in Nigeria. In fact, it has been destroying the tenets and principle of democracy and good governance.
- ii. Unemployment too contributes immensely to political crises via electoral violence in Nigeria. Most of the electoral violence are perpetrated by unemployed youths as they say “*an idle man is a devil’s workshop*”. The unemployed should not be used as a tool in the hands of politicians to ferment political troubles for the purpose of achieving their selfish aims. This has not only been obviously causing violence in the electoral process, it has destroyed the dividends and values of democracy and good governance in Nigeria. The government should provide more jobs for the populace.
- iii. The government should formulate political policies that will eliminate the use of huge sums of money as well as the monetization politics (votes) in Nigeria. It is observed that in the time past, political offices did not attract money as it does today. The government has made politics (democracy) more financially attractive through the bloated perks awarded political office holders to the extent that nobody wants to engage in any other profession other than politics, and this has increased crises through electoral violence in the polity.
- iv. To combat electoral violence and other negative factors responsible for political crises so that democracy can thrive, the government should reduce the salaries and allowances of political office holders. This is because many people abandoned their well-trained

professions to join politics due to the financial benefits attached to it rather than the promotion of democratic values and selfless service to the people and Nigeria.

- v. There is no doubt that the Police has let down the nation. The advice here is that since the Police Force does not have sufficient manpower to effectively monitor electoral violence in Nigeria alone the Army should be used before, during and after in electioneering process in Nigeria. This will drastically reduce crises in democracy and good governance.
- vi. Political enlightenment through voter education for the populace is also imperative for curbing political crises. People should be educated to seek redress in the law Courts instead of taking laws into their hands. The reality of Nigeria's political life is that candidates cannot accept defeat without exhibiting acts of violence. This is not good for democracy.

Democracy is premised on the ballot box and not violence (Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General)". It is surely the best way to reduce or eliminate electoral violence and consequently political crises; replacing it with democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

References:

- Abdullahi, A. (2015). Promoting credible elections in developing centres: international development partners and civil society organization in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Sciences and international relations*, 9(5), 190- 199.
- Catholic Ecclesiastical Commission (2000). *Uneasy peace: A report on violent conflict in Abuja-province*. By Health/Justice Development and Peace Commission Caritas.
- Clifford, S. and Henry, N. (1929). *Social disorganization*. Chicago: Chicago Press Ltd.
- Duncan, L. (2016). *Social problems are injustice. A case of race relations*. Toronto: United Press International, Canada.
- Egbueze, A. and Ojirika, C. (2017). Electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic: Implications for political stability. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, 13(2), 1-11
- Fatile, O. J; Iokwe. I; Chinyeaka, J. and Eteh, C. O. (2012). Feminism and political Participation in Nigeria; An empirical Analysis. *International Journal f Asian Social Science*, 2(7), 1077-1092.
- Globe Magazine, July 11, 1971: Reprinted Courtesy of the Boston Globe.
- Guobadia, L. A. (2009). *Reflections of a Nigeria electoral umpire*. Benin: Mindex Publishing Co. Ltd.

- Iwu, M. (2009).The electoral process and the imperatives of electoral reform in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Electoral Journal*, 3(1), 7-17.
- Joshua, S and Jegede, A. E. (2013). Ethnicisation of violent conflict in Jos. *Global Journal of Human Social and Political Science*, 13(7), 37-42.
- Kukumah, A. S. (2008). *The eclipse of development by corruption; an inevitable challenge for political and economic leaders of modern Nigeria*. Abuja: Madol Press Abuja.
- Ogundale, O. (2007).*Electoral systems in Nigeria. Issues of political development*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Okello, O. and Yakubu, N. (2007). *Brain gain for African renaissance; Issues in governance*. Zaria: ABU Press Limited.
- Sebudubudu, D. (2010).Impact of good governance on development and poverty in Africa: Botswana-A relatively successful African initiative. *African Journal of Political science and International Relations*, 4(7), 249-262.
- Unachukwu V. C. (1993).*Societal discipline and problems*.Owerri: Ihem Davis Press Ltd.