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EFFECTS OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ON DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA WITH SPECIFIC FOCUS ON 2011, 2015 AND 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Rashida Adamu Oyoru PhD,
Towoju Adedoyin John
Department of Politics and Governance, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria
07030239820;rashida.adamu@kwasu.edu.ng &
08168582876; Adedoyin.towoju13@kwasu.edu.ng

Abstract

The place of free, fair and credible election in the sustenance of democracy most importantly 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. The main objective of the study is to examine the effects of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with specific focus on 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, The Frustration Aggression theory will be adopted, the study adopted a descriptive survey design, and a self-structured questionnaire was developed to gather data from 78 respondents. The study's findings indicated that; the respondents agreed that all variables selected in the study are causal factors of electoral violence in Nigeria. It is also found that electoral violence does have bad implications on democratic consolidation. The suggested ways to prevent electoral violence and consolidate democracy in Nigeria are the bill for the establishment of Electoral Offences Commission should be passed without delay. Nigeria must improve on its existing security apparatuses in order to combat the dynamic and sophisticated 21st century security among others.

Keywords: Election, Electoral Violence, democratic society, consolidate democracy, frustration aggression

Introduction

Nigeria's fourth republic has witnessed the conduct of general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 respectively. These elections have been deeply enmeshed in series of violence before, during and after the elections. With specific reference to 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections, it can be said that both elections have records of violence but at different degree of manifestations. For example, the Northern states of the country were thrown into chaos and anarchy after Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was declared the winner of the 2011 presidential election. Human Rights Watch (2011) reported that about 800 lives were lost as a result of the post-election violence. Similarly, the Human Rights Watch (2011)

claimed that more than 65,000 people were displaced after the 2011 post-election violence. The Nigerian Red Cross Society released a slightly lower figure indicating that the violence displaced 48,000 persons in 12 states (Omenazu & Paschal, 2011).

The 2015 elections were not also free of electoral violence. The CLEEN Foundation Security Threat Assessment published in March 2015 found that 15 states were on red alert level. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its Pre-Election Report stated that at least 58 persons have been killed even before the conduct of 2015 general elections (CLEEN, 2015). According to INEC, there were 66 reports of violent incidence all across the country. Incidences of violenc were recorded in Rivers State (16 incidents); Ondo (8); Cross Rivers (6); Ebonyi (6); Akwa Ibom (5); Bayelsa (4); Lagos and Kaduna (3 each); Jigawa, Enugu, Ekiti (2 each); Katsina, Kogi, Plateau, Abia, Imo, Kano and Ogun (one each) (Vanguard, April 12, 2015). The European Union Election Observation Mission reported that about 30 people were killed on April 11, 2015 Election Day as a result of inter-party clashes and attacks on election sites (EU EOM, 2015).

There are various studies that have tried to discuss the implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Most of these studies were theoretically based studies. There is lack of empirical studies on the implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The main problem of this study is the unuttered nature of the causes of electoral violence in both 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections as well as the negative implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effects of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria with specific focus on 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the causes of electoral violence in 2015 and 2019 elections in Nigeria.

ii. Investigate the implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Election

The concept of election in representative democracy as practiced in most modern states which is the freedom to choose people into political offices is one of the unique factors that make representative democracy one of the most acceptable systems of government in the world. The concept of election is associated with several meanings. In political parlance, Ojo (2010) further defines election, as a "formal expression of preferences by the governed, which are then aggregated and transformed into a collective decision about who will govern, who should stay in office, who should be thrown out, and who should replace those who have been thrown out." In support,

Awopeju (2011) explains that, election is a procedure that allows members of a given society to choose representatives who will hold positions such as leaders of local, state and national government. According to Dye (2001) election is an important mechanism for the employment of administrative governance in democratic social order, a major involvement in a democracy; and the way of giving approval to a regime.

Osumah & Aghemelo (2010) see election as a process through which the people choose their leaders and indicate their policies and programme preference and consequently invest a government with authority to rule. An election is a formal decision making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office. Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy operates since the 17th century (Britannica, Encyclopedia 2009). Elections may fill offices in the legislature, sometimes in the executive, and judiciary, and for regional and local government.Elections are the means through which the people exercise their sovereign right to choose who governs them and what the political and other priorities of their government should be. Democratic elections are thus the opportunity for the people to express their sovereignty through the ballot to confer legitimacy to their government, renew its mandate if necessary or withdraw from it the authority to govern (INEC, 2011).

Democracy

Democracy has no universal acceptable definition as various scholars have different interpretations on the conceptualization of democracy. The term democracy is very common in political discourses. Hence, the term has attracted several explanations from different scholars and personalities. According to Falade (2014) the term democracy is derived from two Greek words: "demos" which mean people and "kratos" which means rule. In his classical definition, Abraham Lincoln defines Democracy as "the government of the people by the people and for the people". According to this view, people are central in any democratic process. Without given people the power to decide who become their leader as well as hold their leaders responsible, democracy would be a mirage.

Democracy means different things to different people: a platform for power contestation and not the least a class struggle. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War has privileged liberal democracy globally as the most credible basis of governmental legitimacy (Adelaja, 2007). In the views of Dahl, R. A. (2000) "within the enormous and often impenetrable thicket of ideas about democracy, it is possible to identify some criteria that a process for governing an association would have to meet in order to satisfy the requirement that all members are equally entitled to participate in the association's decisions about its policies". Dahl believes, at least five such standards abound. These are: effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, exercising final control over the agenda and inclusion of adults. A democratic society, Dahl asserts, produces desirable consequences, avoiding tyranny, provision of essential rights, general freedom, self- determination, moral autonomy, human development, protection of essential personal interests, political equality; in addition, he noted,

modern democracies are peace-seeking and prosperous.

Electoral Violence

The concept of electoral violence is made up of two distinct concepts in one, which include electoral and violence. In this section of the review, the two concepts are defined and then reviewed in the context of the subject matter of the current study.

The word electoral in the opinion of Bamgbose (2011) is the process involved in the conduct of elections either at the public or private level. Bamgbose (2011) further stated that electoral process at the public level is the process of planning and conducting elections to choose representatives of the people in public offices of governance such as the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government at state and national levels. Similarly, Robert (2011) posited that electoral process at the private level includes all the processes involved in the successful conduct of elections into other types of groups other than those of government such as associations and clubs. The concept of violence has been examined by scholars in diverse perspectives which all relates to either positive or negative views towards achieving a given goal or end. Bamgbose (2011) opined that violence is an act of aggression that leads to inflicting injury on persons, destruction of properties and causing pandemonium within a given social gathering, community or society.

Democratic Consolidation

Scholars have used different definitions of democratic consolidation. These definitions are based on two conceptions of democracy. One is a "minimalist conception", emphasizing procedural or formal democracy. The other is a "maximalist conception," focusing on the outcomes of politics, such as institutionalization of political institutions, social justice, and economic equality. Based on the Schumpeterian conception of democracy (that equates democracy, with regularly held electoral competition), Schimitte (1992) defines the minimalist conception of a consolidated democratic regime as "the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives, that participate in democratic governance.

To Linz (1996), a consolidated democracy is one in which "none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces or institutions consider(s) that there is any alternative to the democratic process to gain power and that no political institutions or groups has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers... To put it simply, democracy must be seen as "the only game in town." In comparison with a minimalist conception of democracy, many scholars adopt "out-come-oriented conceptions" of democracy, or a maximalist conception of democratic consolidation. These scholars argue that both political and socioeconomic democracy is needed for a country's democracy to be consolidated. This conception includes not only procedural or formal democracy but also substantive democratic elements, such as

guarantees of basic civil rights, democratic accountability and responsiveness, civilian control over the military, democratic and constitutional checks on executive authority, and punishment of occupational and human rights abuses.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Frustration Aggression theory due to the nature of electoral violence in Nigeria.

The Frustration Aggression Theory

The Frustration Aggression theory is accredited to Dollard and colleagues. The theory was developed in 1939 when Dollard and colleagues published a monograph on aggression, which later was known as the frustration-aggression theory,

Assumptions of the theory

- Aggression is always the consequence of frustration
- The occurrence of aggressive actions always presumes the existence of frustration and contra wise, and that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.
- Frustration aggression reflects the reasons for electoral violence because men who want to live beyond their social means do not accept their limitation in defeat this results into violence as the last resort in order to live beyond their social means.
- Frustration and aggression comes into play when a certain aspirant is power hungry and possibly realizes the indications that he/she may possibly lose to the rival, thereby adopting vehemence for their own personal gains
- Persons who feel cheated on election outcomes, isolated or disadvantaged by the injustice of the electoral practice are likely out of frustration, transfer aggression on other individuals through violent acts.

The strengths of the theory

- The theory shows that political actors resort to violence as a means to achieving their aims and exercising power, out of feelings of frustration that leads to aggression, especially when the results of the election would not favor them.
- The theory helps in understanding the psychological behavior of persons in the use of violence to achieve selfish interest.
- The theory is able to explain the causes of electoral violence and can be used to explain the nature of electoral violence in Nigeria.

Major weakness of the theory

- The theory seems to focus on frustration and aggression as the major causes of electoral violence, whereas there are other socio-economic factors such as illiteracy, poverty e.t.c. that could lead to electoral violence.

The frustration aggression theory stipulates that events surrounding electoral violence in Nigeria in 2011 and 2015 were as a result of fear of defeat exhibited by electoral

candidates, which triggers frustration and then transfer of aggression, through the employment of human mercenaries in perpetrating violence in pre, during and after elections. Therefore, to achieve peace, fairness and transparency of elections in Nigeria, the theory specifies the need for enlightenment on the importance of citizens coming out to vote in their masses in support of a free and fair election, making their votes count and as well provisions for well-equipped security personnel that would safe guard life and properties of voters during elections.

Research Design

the study adopts a descriptive survey. The choice of this design was dictated by its effectiveness to secure evidences concerning existing situations, identifying standards with which to compare present conditions in order to determine how to take the next step having determined where we are and where we wish to go.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprise members of civil society organization, Academicians, official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and selected members of the leading political parties in three selected local government areas which are Ilorin South, Ilorin East and Ilorin West. . The criterion for selection was based on the availability of institutions and organizations with interest in elections and democratic studies, records of violence in elections and geo-political spread.

Sample and sampling technique

The selection of the three local government areas (Ilorin South, Ilorin East and Ilorin West) was purposive. A random sampling technique would be used to select the respondents as shown in the table below.

Name of LGAs	Members of civil society organizations	Academicians	Officials of the INEC	Members of political parties (PDP and APC)
Ilorin South	10	5	1	10
Ilorin East	10	5	1	10
Ilorin West	10	5	1	10
Total	30	15	3	30

Note: The total number of sample to be selected using random sampling would be 78. Therefore, a sample size of 78 will be drawn for this study.

Research Question One: What are the main causes of electoral violence in 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections in Nigeria?

Table 1: Causes of electoral violence in 2011 and 2015

S/N	Item	Mean X	SD	Remarks
1	Religion was a major cause of electoral violence in both 2011 and 2015 general elections.	3.81	0.78	Agree
2	Electoral violence was caused in both 2011 and 2015 general elections as a result of inordinate ambition of the politicians.	3.68	0.89	Agree
3	High rate of poverty in Nigeria was a causal factor of electoral violence in both 2011 and 2015 general elections	3.71	0.79	Agree
4	The 2011 and 2019 general elections were caused by ethno-geopolitics.	3.82	0.77	Agree
5	Rivalries between political parties necessitated the electoral violence in both 2011 and 2015 general elections.	3.96	0.72	Agree
6	Electoral Malpractice was a major cause of electoral violence in both 2011 and 2015 general elections	3.92	0.74	Agree
7	The unacceptability of election results by politicians is a major cause of electoral violence in both 2011 and 2015 general elections.	3.81	0.78	Agree
	Grand mean	3.3		Agree

The table above revealed that the respondents agreed that religion, inordinate ambition of politicians, high rate of poverty, conflict among political parties, electoral malpractice are all major causes of electoral violence in both 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The standard deviation which shows a consensus in scores from the mean is an indication that all the selected factors are inconvertibly major causes of electoral violence in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What are the implications of electoral violence on democratic consolidation in Nigeria?

Table 2: Implications of electoral violence on democratic consildation

S/N	Item	Mean X	SD	Remarks
1	Electoral violence often leads to inflicting injury on persons, destruction of properties and causing pandemonium within a given polling unit.	4.69	0.41	Agree
2	Electoral violence can make me not to participate in an election.	3.68	0.89	Agree
3	Electoral violence is a major deterrence to fundamental human rights.	2.29	1.28	Agree
4	Electoral violence, especially pre -election violence, can lead to high rate of political apathy.	3.81	0.78	Agree
5	Electoral violence often disrupts the voting system hereby leading to illegitimacy crisis.	3.45	1.02	Agree
6	Electoral violence discredited the 2011 and 2015 general elections.	3.32	0.76	Agree
7	Electoral violence has a very effect on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.	3.19	0.97	Agree
	Grand mean	3.9		Agree

The table above revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that electoral violence has bad implications on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The standard deviation did not show any dispersion among the respondents. It can therefore be empirical justified that electoral violence is capable of deterring fundamental human rights, leads to inflicting injury on persons, destruction of properties and causing pandemonium within a given polling unit and capable of disrupting the voting system which could all lead to legitimacy crisis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made by the respondents.

- Government agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be made to be functional in carrying out their responsibilities. Government can partner with the civil society in enlightening the citizenry on the need for violent free elections.
- The bill for the establishment of Electoral Offences Commission should be passed without delay. This will help in the speedy trial of electoral offenders to serve as deterrent to future violent actors.
- A review of the legal provisions for punishing electoral offenders is quite a farce. The fines are cheap and easily affordable. Thus, most politicians will end at nothing in the furtherance of violence since the fines are not quite expensive. The removal of fines and an increase in the prison terms remains a better option.
- Nigeria must improve on its existing security apparatuses in order to combat the dynamic and sophisticated 21st century security challenges. Recruitment of security personnel ought to be based on merit. Government should ensure that the funds made available to the security agencies are judiciously utilized for the acquisition of skills and the procurement of up to date equipment.
- The issue of **hate speech**and other comments that are liable to inspire violence in our politics must be discouraged with penalties equitable with the measures of the effect of such speeches and actions. It is violence- inspiring for a leader or anyone seeking political position to use such words as "If not me, no other person", if i fail, no one will go there or succeed". The government and indeed policy makers/law enforcement agents should look out for such persons for immediate prosecution.

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