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ELECTORAL PROCESS AND VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper critically examines electoral process and violence in Nigeria .It adopts the theories of conflict as the theoretical framework of the study. After independence in 1960, the country could not conduct elections free of fraud, gerrymandering, intimidation and violence due to corruption and overzealous politicians who sees politics as a zero sum game, where the winner takes all. The result is that the country's politics is characterized with all kinds of riots, demonstrations, party clash, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping; all forms of organized threats aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder. Therefore, the paper recommends that the electoral body should be independent and freed from all forms of manipulations. Government and political parties should provide a level ground to encourage electorates to take active part in the electoral process. Political parties should encourage internal democracy and politics of inclusiveness, giving every party member the opportunity to have a say in party activities including selection of candidates for the general election. The politics of Godfatherism, imposition of candidate, and charging of nomination fees must be eschewed to avoid unnecessary litigations and confusions in the party by extension political system. The security such as the police, civil defense should not intimidate the electorates or connive with the electoral officials to rig elections in favour of a particular candidate.

Keywords: Electoral process, Electoral violence, Nigeria

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Introduction

Election and democracy are inevitably linked together. This is because popular participation which is one of the essential ingredients of liberal democracy, involves mass involvement of the citizens in the governing process of their country. The dream of every democratic country is to organize election devoid of manipulation, intimidation and violence, and Nigeria is not left out in this democratic exercise. After independence in 19**6**0, the country could not conduct elections free of fraud, gerrymandering, intimidation and violence. From the first federal election of 19**6**4, the western region election of 1965, the 1983 general election, the 2003 general election to that of 2007 and 2011 general elections, electoral process and the real conduct of election is marred with electoral and political violence.

Thus, the electoral and political violence encompasses all kinds of riots, demonstrations, party clash, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping, and all forms of organized threats aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder that has become the major features of electoral and political processes of Nigeria. The country has made serious efforts in terms of legislation, logistics, security, and provide enabling environment that could ensue elections devoid of manipulation and violence but the reverse has been the case.

The patrons of our politics have made nonsense of the nation's political system, they impose candidate to satisfy their selfish interest of primitive accumulation and hold firmly onto power; they monetize our politics where money becomes the determining factor in party politics; they designed our political parties in such a way that parties represent primordial sentiments and respond to primordial needs. This is indeed, the politics of prebendalism; and with prebendal politics the nation is bound to face crises which may lead to violence.

Therefore, the paper seeks to examine electoral process, rigging of election, electoral violence, and what can be done to avoid electoral violence in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The paper uses the conflict theories, particularly the conflict theory model of Dahrendorf (1958) as its theoretical framework. Conflict is a reflection of disagreements or contradictions emanating from divergences in thoughts, opinions, values, belief systems, ideologies and principles which may lead to violence. Conflict is not necessarily negative in its self. It is often a by= product of social change and may lead to constructive transformation (NOUN, 2010).

Conflict is an inevitable part of social, economic, and political progress of the society. It occurs when two or more people compete over scarce resources, political power, and ethnic/religious supremacy. Also conflict occurs over the psychological needs of individual and group; and manipulation of information by the media to satisfy the interest of one group against the others may lead to wide spread violence. For violence is an inevitable ends of uncontrolled conflict.

A structural balance theorist, Helder (1958) opines that Ego tends to like whom his friend likes, but dislike whom his enemy dislikes. Also Ego tends to dislike whom he dislikes, and like whom his enemy dislikes. Mazur, (1968) states that for every three persons or groups, there are four trials: like=dislike, support= conflict, conformity=divergence, and positive identity= negative identity. All these tend to balance. He further states that within any triad, an increase in magnitude of one sign leads to an increase in magnitude of all signs;

and relationship of like, support, conformity, and positive identity tend to coincide. On the other hand, the relationship of dislike, conflict, divergence and negative identity tend to coincide. The tendency increases with increasing intensity of the signs, and consonant relationship increase together.

Contributing to conflict theory Marx says that the degree of inequality in the distribution of resources generates inherent conflicts of interest. Dahrendorf (1958) conflict theory model brings to bear the idea of productive and constructive conflict. He argues that conflict is necessary for achieving an end in the society or for realization of societal goals. That conflict is endogenous and exogenous. The endogenous conflict is the conflict that occurs within the organization, system or society. His analysis of endogenous conflict is in consonant with Marx, who says that internal conflict comes from the present social structure. The exogenous is the conflict from outside.

The theory asserts that certain conflicts are based on certain social structural arrangements and hence are bound to arise whenever such structural arrangements are given…the dichotomy of social roles within imperatively coordinated groups, and the division into positive and negative dominance riles are fails of social structure (NOUN, 2010). Dahrendrf in his conflict theory model made the following assumptions in respect to some structural arrangements that could lead to conflict: In every imperatively coordinated group, the carriers of positive (status quo) and the negative (change of status quo) dominant roles determined two quasi=group with opposite latent interest. The bearers of positive and negative dominant roles organize themselves into group with manifest interests unless certain empirical variable conditions intervene. Interest groups which originate in this manner are in constant conflict concern with the preservation or change in the status quo. The conflict among interest groups in this model leads to change in the structure of social relations in question through changes in the dominant relations.

Clarification of Concepts

Election

Election refers to the act of selecting or choosing candidates for an office through voting. It is a process or means which the electorates choose their representatives into government positions (Nwankwo, 2002). As in all democracies the electorates have constitutional mandate to choose their leaders in free and fair elections without legal, social and political obstacles. It is therefore a democratic right to give their mandate freely to political parties and candidates of their choice (Agwu, 2005). Elections are also described as the processes and procedures by which citizens of a democratic country select either through direct voting or indirectly those who will represent them in the parliament and other positions in the government (Johnson, 1994). Ujo (2004) describes election as the procedure that allows members of an organization or community to choose representatives who will hold positions of authority within it. Election is associated with the concept of franchise or universal adult suffrage. Franchise or universal adult suffrage is in practice, voters are eligible to vote when they satisfy the following conditions: the voter must not be a criminal in the prison or a lunatic, the voter must be a citizen of Nigeria, the voter must attain the age of 18 years before he or she can be allowed to vote, the voter must have registered during the registration period to obtain voters card to enable him or her cast his or her vote on the day of election, and the voter may be required by law to reside in a place for a certain number of years, where he or she wants to vote.

Elections are direct and indirect. Direct election is a situation whereby citizens who have attained voting age cast their vote directly either openly or secretly in order to choose those that will represent them in government; while indirect election is a situation whereby citizens who are qualified to vote cast their vote indirectly through the Electoral College. The eligible voter chooses representatives called the Electoral College. The Electoral College will then vote the aspirants on behalf of the citizens. Election provides a peaceful means of change in government through voting.

Election provides opportunities for the citizens to air out their views on candidates, parties and government. It makes government legitimate as it is constituted through the consent of the people. Election enables people to select candidates for election; makes government and leaders accountable to the electorates; and election promotes franchise, which is the right to vote and be voted for.

An Electoral process involves procedure, modalities and methods by which people are elected into various positions in government. Electoral systems are methods or arrangements through which persons are elected into parliament or other governmental positions (Nwankwo, 2002). The main processes of election are as follows: The enactment of an electoral law that will guide the conduct of the election, the setting up of an electoral commission, like in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission charged with the responsibility of organizing free and fair election, the delimitation of a country into different constituencies or districts to ensure fair representation, registration of political parties, compilation of voters registers, display of voter's registration to clear all doubts, the election of polling booths before the election, revision of voters registers, provision of logistics such as transportation, communication, equipment, electoral officers and electoral materials, recruitment, training and posting of electoral personnel and adhoc officials to oversee the conduct of election, the announcement of a fixed date for election, the election proper which involves voting, collation, counting and declaration of the final result, campaign for votes and recruitment of party agents, and the setting up of electoral petition tribunal to listen to election complaints, the registration of candidates by the electoral body.

Violence

Violence is an act which involves physical force that is intended to kill or hurt somebody. Violence is associated with aggression, brutality, sudden, and strong emotions that result to instability and death. Therefore, electoral violence includes all forms of riots, demonstrations, party clash, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping and the like, spontaneous or not which, occurred before, during or after elections (Roberts and Obioha, 2005, Ogundiya, 2003). Electoral violence encompasses all kinds of organized activities aimed at harassing, intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political actor before, during or after election with a view to undermine the electoral process.

Electoral violence is of different forms, it could be physical, psychological or structural. Ochoche, (1997), notes that electoral violence need not be seen in physical terms alone. Physical violence constitutes the attacks politicians and their supporters meted out on another at political rallies or party conventions, during elections or when election results are declared officially, the attacks the security agents meted out on the members of the public or vice verse. It could also means the kind of attacks that the party supporters inflict on innocent people, killing of poor people, burning cars, private and public property all constitute another dimension of physical electoral violence. Psychological violence manifests itself in the form of anxiety or fear that the citizens entertain in respect to their level of participation in the electoral process. However, structural violence is manifested in the structure of the society

where certain group of people are being discriminated against because of their social, economic and cultural backgrounds; the manipulation of electoral process by "money bags" and "political god fathers", and the charging of unreasonable or arbitrary fees for candidate contesting election by the political party constitutes another dimension of structural electoral violence.

Rigging of Elections

Elections are said to be rigid when the electoral process is being marred with irregularities and misconducts. Rigging of elections are characterized with fictitious compilation of names, illegal printing of voter's cards, double voting, illegal possession of ballot papers, under age voting, stuffing of ballot papers, inflation of figures; intimidation of candidates, party agents and voters; and general electoral violent leading to formation of an illegitimate government.

Dangers of Rigging Election

Rigging of elections is an unacceptable act. It contradicts the tenets of democracy, rule of law and good governance. Jerry Gana, identified some dangers associated with the rigging of elections which include the imposition of powerless, ineffective and illegitimate government; lacking confidence and authority in the process of governance. The effects on the society are usually in several facets:

i. Rigged elections tend to produce poor leadership, with illegitimate, powerless and ineffective government.
ii. Rigged elections subvert the people's rights to elect their leaders, leading to the erosion of authority and lack of credibility.
iii. Rigged elections subvert the rule of law and due process, thereby creating a new social order of lawlessness.
iv. A social order of lawlessness can only produce a lawless society where might rules in place of the rule of law.
v. Rigging is a disgraceful form of corruption. Government formed from rigged election cannot have the courage to fight corruption.
vi. Rigged elections seriously erode the very essence of democracy; power to the people can only be meaningful if the people possess the power to freely choose.
vii. Violent measures are often taken in the rigging of elections, rigging can therefore set in motion a vicious cycle of violence leading to anarchy and possible overthrow of illegal government.
viii. Democracy has become the internationally acceptable norm of governance. Illegitimate government, arising from flawed election usually suffers from lack of credibility and acceptance.
ix. The security and welfare of the people is the primary purpose of government. But only those who respect the people can effectively promote their security and welfare. Electoral thieves have no respect whatsoever for the people, and as such social justice suffers; yet social justice breeds the fire of social conflicts.
x. Rigging of elections tend to produce a poverty of leadership leading to a severe paucity of development.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Elections and electoral process perceived by the electorates as either free but not fair or both, or the results announced do not reflect the true wishes of the electorates will at best lead to the enthronement of an illegitimate regime or at worse ginger political violence which, can ultimately result in the truncation of the democratic process (Olaitan, 2006).

Electoral violence and political violence are interwoven but not the same; electoral violence is a part of the political violence. Thus, political violence occurs in all political system be it democratic or authoritarian government. Anifowose (1982) describes political violence:

> As the use of threat or physical act carried out by individual within political system against another individual or individuals and/or property with the intention to cause injury or death to persons/or damage or destruction to property and who's objectives choice of target or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance, that is tend to modified the behavior of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

The struggle to acquire political power by the ruling class in Nigeria has in recent times degenerated into a do or die affair; politics is perceived to be a zero sum game where the winner takes all. The rationale behind these fierce competitions is to take over power and resources of the state. The perpetration of electoral violence are not limited to the socially uprooted youths seen on the street hijacking electoral materials, killing innocent people or burning private public property. Perpetrators also include party leaders who frustrated the rights of these to participate in the electoral process, electoral officials, the police and judicial officers who manipulate the structure at their disposal to violate the legitimate rights of others (Saka, 2008). Albert (2006) argues that electoral violence include all forms of organized act or threats aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during or after election with a view to determine, delay or otherwise influence the electoral process.

After independence in 1960, the ruling class in Nigeria could not organize election devoid of manipulation, fraud and violence. Electoral malpractices, gerrymandering, disturbances and violence have become the permanent features of the Nigeria electoral process and democratic experiments. From the first federal election of 1964, the Western Region election of 1965 to that of 1983 and 2003 electoral process and the actual conduct of elections in Nigeria has been characterized by brigandage and violence (Popoola, 2004).

The 1964 federal elections in the post independence Nigeria served as a bench mark in the history of electoral violence in the country. As the dominant political parties at the regions tried to get hold of the national politics, the Northern People Congress (NPC) led by late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and the National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) led by late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe formed coalition government at the centre; and they were later joined by the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) led by late Mallam Aminu Kano. Action Group which was the official opposition party at the centre was joined by the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by late Joseph Tarka.

By the end of the first republic, the coalition government formed by the NPC and NCNC at the federal level failed. The NPC quickly form a coalition with the Akintola's newly formed United Nigeria Democratic Party known as the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA). The NCNC on its own part form alliance with the AG called the United Progressive Grant Alliance (UPGA). Therefore, the 1964 federal election and the 1965 regional election were conducted under the platform of Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) and United Progressive Grant Alliance (UPGA). The rate of tension, violence and intimidation in the run up to the election was so tensed that NCNC called for a boycott of the elections; elections were conducted in the other regions and the NPC Alliance (NNA) predominated; and the Western region election of 1965 resulted to tension and violence, the Akintola's NNDP and

AG were the main contestants, with the NNDP backed NPC alliance emerged victorious amid allegation of electoral fraud by both the parties.

The AG was completely uncomfortable with the NNDP backed NPC Alliance (NNA) electoral victory in the Western region resulting to violence, protest and demonstration by its supporters. The inability of the Nigeria federal government to do the needful and deploy the military force to the trouble Western region added more salt to the wound. It was at the height of the burning in the West that the military stuck in January, 1966 (Osaghae, 1998; Akinwunmi, 2004; Dudley, 1973, Nwosu, Olaniyi and Oyedele, 1998). Seteolu, (2005) observed that the dialetics and contradictions of the 1965 Western region election engendered intra ethic rivalry, intra ethic suspicion and delegitimized the electoral process. For Akinwunmi 2004, the Western regional election of 1965 more than any political crisis whether at the federal or regional level, facilitated the collapse facilitated the collapse of the first republic. The military in the political system of Nigeria witnessed a lot of military regimes and series of transition programme aimed at launching the country to the path of democracy and democratization.

In the light of the above, the 1979 elections conducted by the military regime of Murtala/Obasanjo that ushered in the second Republic went smoothly and was a welcome departure from the warring politics of the first republic (Osaghae, 1988). The 1983 elections was greeted with violence, fraud, and intimidations as the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) deployed all the resources at its disposal including the security forces to maintained its hegemony. The build up to the 1983 general elections was characterized by threats, anxiety, and perceived intimidation of political opponents through agents of the state. Houses were burnt, properties looted, opposition politicians killed or kidnapped. It was in these state of violence that elections were held (Akinwumi, 2004), Osaghae, 1998, Ugoh, 2004).

Looking at the spate of 1983 pre election violence and killings, anxiety and fear overwhelmed the Nigerian Populace. The fear became a self fulfilled prophecy, as law and order broke down completely in several states with Oyo and Ondo being the most afflicted by the post election violence which turn out to be a reminiscence of what has transpired in the 1965 Western region election crisis (Ademolekun, 1985; Akinwunmi, 2004; Osaghae, 1998, Ugoh, 2004). The aftermath of the 1983 general elections in Nigeria was calamitous and deadly agreed with the assertion that the civilian politicians were incapable of conducting, free, fair and credible elections in the country. The state of anarchy, violence and insecurity that followed the announcement of the 1983 elections results provided the most important justification for the military coup of 31st December, 1983 that terminated the experiment at civil rule in the second republic (Osaghae, 1998, Akinwunmi, 2004, Popoola, 2004; Ugoh, 2004).

The 1993 elections conducted by the military regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida which were adjudged to be the most fairest in the electoral history of Nigeria, still was nullified by the Babangida Administration. The nullification of the presidential elections on June 12, 1993 resulted to serious protests, demonstration and violence particularly in the Western part of the Nigeria where the acclaimed winner Late Moshood Abiola hailed from and almost threw the country into another civil war. The annulment was by far the greatest catalyst of Nigeria's descent into anarchy (Osaghae, 1998). President Babangida stepped aside and instituted an Interim National Government (NG) led by Chief Ernest Shonekan amid dissatisfaction by the civil society groups, concerned Nigerian citizens as well as international communities. The constitution of the interim national Government was a part of the political tricks of the self acclaimed military president of Nigeria, IBB to continue to rule

the country indirectly but such political trick was brought to an end with the Minister of Defence, Late General Sani Abacha, who staged a palace coup and the subsequent resignation of the head of the Interim National Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan.

The death of General Sani Abacha ushered in a new government headed by General Abdulsalam Abubakar. The military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar conducted general elections in Nigeria in 1999 that brought to power Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the second executive president in Nigeria. But the 2003 general elections in Nigeria by civilian administration was a complete departure from the reasonable free and fair military supervised election of 1999. The 2003 general elections in Nigeria was characterized with violence, intimidation, fraud and assassination of powerful politicians like the serving Minister of Justice of the Federation Late Chief Bola Ige, Late Dr. Henry Marshal, Ahmed Patigi, among others. Omotola (2004) argues that the road to the 2003 elections were full of lapses which were either left unaddressed or addressed haphazardly before the conduct of the elections. The tendency for the controllers of the state to manipulate, subvert and flout the rule of law and those rules guiding the electoral process with impunity laid the foundation for the blatant irregularities and open fraud perpetuation during the 2003 elections (Okolie, 2005). Both the local and foreign election observes admitted in their reports (Okolie, 2005, Ezeani, 2005).

Having a causal look into the violence and electoral fraud that characterized the pre and post 2003 general election, there was wide spread fear that 2007 general elections will be worst as politicians from different geo political zones of the country (particularly South-South, South-East and North) are threatening fire and brimstones if denied the chance to produce the president of the country by 2007 (Albert, 2006). In the buildup to the 2007 general elections in Nigeria, political assassination, killing, destruction of lives and property were abound. The attack on the convoy of the former Benue State Governor, Dr. George Akume, on March 3, 2004, his friend Mr. Andrew Agom was killed; Chief Aminosari Dikibo, PDP National Vice Chairman was killed on February 17, 2004, on the Kwale Ogwashi Uku road, Delta state; Hajiya Sa'adatu Rimi, wife of the former governor of the old Kano state in the second republic was hacked to death, on January 15, 2006; Engr. Funsho William, a PDP aspirant in Lagos state was slaughtered in his 184B Dolphine Estate, Ikoyi on July 27, 2006 and many more. The spate of political violence was alarming, perceived intimidation of political opponents by the state agents like the EFCC, ICPC, among others; killings and assassination of the political opponents, violence and thuggery became the order of the day. It was in this state of violence and disturbances that the 2007 elections were conducted. The ability of the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) to manipulate the electoral process and other state institutions or agencies to maintain its hold onto power thwarts the nations effort at ensuring credible elections. The electoral situation of Nigeria became even worse in 2011; with the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, the vice president of the country, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan took over the leadership of the country.

The north felt with the death of President Yar'adua is still their turn to produce the president in 2011. But the South-South and South-East argue that geopolitical zones that have not produced the president in Nigeria's history should be allowed to take the leadership of the country come 2011. It was in the face of this argument and counter argument that the 2011 elections were conducted. The 2007 and 2011 elections were greeted with manipulation and violence, the situation was worst in the northern part of the country where the houses of Vice President Arch. Namadi Sambo, former speaker, Alh. Gali Umar Na'aba, Kaduna State Governor Mr. Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa was burnt; lives and properties worth millions of Nigeria were destroyed. Corps members who are used as adhoc staff were attacked and killed; bomb blast at INEC office in Suleja, Niger state claimed the lives of innocent corpers,

other corpers lose their lives in Bauchi and Gombe states: the palace of the Emir of Kano, Alh. Ado Bayaro, was attacked and a number of car damaged, unconfirmed reports revealed that about 30 people lost their lives to the protest in Kano; the convoy of three cars belonging to the presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) Gen. Muhammadu Buhari was attacked in Jaji, Kaduna State and over 15,000 people were rendered homeless following the recent post election violence. The president of Nigeria Dr. Goodluck Jonathan soon after been declared by the INEC as the winner of the presidential election says:

> "My dear country men and women, I have received with great sadness the news of sporadic unrest in some part of the country which are not unconnected with the last Saturday's elections… therefore it is with the deepest sense of responsibility that call on all our political leaders especially the contestants to appeal to their supporters to stop further violence in the interest of stability, peace and wellbeing of this great country… no one's political ambition is worth the blood of any Nigeria please remain calm, law abiding and patriotic at this very crucial moment of our history. Thank you and God bless Nigeria". (Leadership, Tuesday April, 19, 2011:5).

On his own part the presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) Gen. Muhammadu Buhari says:

> "… in the last 24hrs there has been a spate of violence across certain part of the country. What started mainly as a political protest reportedly included the burning of worship places? This is sad, unfortunate and totally unwarranted development. I must said that this is a dastardly act is not initiated by our party. I will therefore like to seize this opportunity to disassociate myself and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) from any such act. I must emphasize that this is purely a political matter, and it should not in any way turn into an ethnic, religious or regional one" (Daily Trust, Wednesday, April 20th, 2011).

The former Sokoto State Governor Attahiru Bafarawa observes:

> "… violence will not correct the failings in our electoral system and the failures of government. Our country is better served where we employ legal and constitutional means to express our disagreements… my senior brother Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, my brothers Gov. Ibrahim Shekarau and Mall. Nuhu Ribadu are men of honour, integrity and peace. This orgy of violence cannot be their legacy. The violence must stop now… some are disappointed, many are jubilating. There have been reports of arson, killing and looting…. The people killed and maimed are our brothers and sisters… we kill, burn and maim each other anytime we have a minor disagreement. Let our ideas fight, not our base instincts" (Daily Trust Wednesday, April 20th, 2011: 5).

Political and electoral violence have become the major features of Nigerian political system. This phenomenon can be attributed to the failure of the Nigerian state and the inability of the ruling class to reconcile between the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the Nigerian society in their bid to allocate resources; and the inability of the Nigerian security forces to fish out the perpetrators of political violence led to the emergence of different dangerous and reactionary forces such as Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), South-South, Movement for the Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB), South-East, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) South-South, Odua Peoples Congress (OPC) South-West and BOKO HARAM in the north. The

activities of these reactionary forces have threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria as a federation. They adopt violence as a means to achieve their goals, leading to destruction of lives and property worth millions of naira. The BOKO HARAM sect in the Northern part of Nigeria has claimed more than one thousand lives, the recent attack was carried out in Kano where more than one hundred and eighty six lives was lost and properties worth millions destroyed. The spate of post election violence in Nigeria attest to the fact that transition elections are relatively more peaceful, orderly and reliable than elections conducted and supervised by civilian administration (Okolie, 2005).

However, the 2015 rescheduled elections were not as violent when compared to the elections previously conducted in 2003, 2007, and 2011. General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC won the Presidential election against the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People Democratic Party (PDP). The 2015 general election in Nigeria were adjudged to be credible, both the local and international observers' reports attested to this fact. As the road to 2019 general elections is widely opened, there are some cases of manipulations, electoral gerrymandering and violence during the party primary elections, particularly the APC and PDP primaries. There were series of intimidations and violence in states like Delta, Rivers, Imo, Ogun, Niger, Adamawa, Taraba, Zamfara among others. Also the killing of Mr. Ade Moses, APC Ekiti state treasure points to the fact that the 2019 general elections may not be peaceful. There are many unresolved issues within the parties; Zamfara state APC has no candidate for the 2019 National Assembly election, Hon. Uche Nwosu has headed to court over his substitution as the authentic Governorship candidate for Imo state, in Ogun state, Governor Ibikunle Amosun anointed governorship candidate, Hon. Abdulkadir lost out, pointing accusing finger to the APC National Chairman, Adams Oshomole, some APC stakeholder are calling for the removal of the APC National Chairman, Adams Oshomole for the negative and undemocratic role he played during the party primaries. This situation if not controlled could lead to violence in the 2019 general elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper concludes that election and democracy are inevitably linked together. The dream of every democratic country is to conduct election free from manipulation, intimidation and violence, and Nigeria is not left out in this democratic exercise. After independence in 1960, the country could not conduct elections free of fraud, gerrymandering, intimidation and violence. From the first federal election of 1964, the western region election of 1965, the 1983 general election, the 2003 general election to that of 2007 and 2011 general elections, electoral process and the real conduct of election is marred with electoral and political violence. The resultant effect is that the country is characterized with all kinds of riots, demonstrations, party clash, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping; all forms of organized threats aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder, despite t he country's efforts in providing enabling environment that could guarantee elections devoid of manipulation and violence. The paper recommends that:

i. The electoral body should be independent and freed from all forms of manipulations.
ii. Government and political parties should provide a level ground to encourage electorate to take active part in the electoral process.
iii. Political parties should encourage internal democracy and politics of inclusiveness, giving every party member the opportunity to have a say in party activities including selection of candidates for the general election.

iv. The politics of Godfatherism, imposition of candidate, and charging of nomination fees must be eschewed to avoid unnecessary litigations and confusions in the party by extension political system.
v. The electoral body and civil society organizations should educate the electorates on to law abiding and adhere strictly to the electoral law that guides the electoral process.
vi. The electoral body should be independent to conduct elections in lines with the electoral laws and global best practices.
vii. Appointments into the electoral body should be done by an independent body to avoid unnecessary executive interference.
viii. There should be independent of judiciary to enable her adjudicate without any fair or favour.
ix. The political class should not see election as a do or die affair.
x. The election observers, civil society organizations, traditional institutions and religious bodies should educate the electorates to behave themselves before, during and after election.
xi. The security such as the police, civil defense should not intimidate the electorates or connive with the electoral officials to rig elections in favour of a particular candidate.

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