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POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF 2019 GENERAL ELECTION IN TARABA STATE.

By

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Abstract

This paper explores the connections between political campaigns and electoral violence, arguing that political parties lack ideologies and manifestos that force candidates to base their campaigns on primordial sentiments of region, religion, and ethnicity as core campaign factors rather than issue-based approach. Political campaigns are synonymous with political and electoral violence in Nigeria, and Taraba State in particular. The 2019 general elections came with a character of their own in the context of prevailing political dynamics and the security atmosphere exacerbated by kidnappings, farmers/herders conflicts, rising youth restiveness, and political thuggery in the State. The absence of clear ideology and manifestos is blamed for electoral violence, or for the political gladiators' use of ethnic militia, political thugs, INEC officials, and security agency manipulation in electoral campaigns and wins. Secondary sources of data were used as the methodology for data collection. Results showed that political campaigns, in particular, were the primary source of the majority of political violence incidents. The issue was especially evident in Taraba State during the 2019 election. The study found that, among other things, voter illiteracy, offensive campaign speeches and slogans, intimidation, and ethno-religious and regional issues are the main drivers of the phenomena. Therefore, the article suggests that political parties should be ideologically grounded and well-spoken in order to avoid electoral violence in modern politics.

Keywords: *Political Violence, Election, Democracy, Political Campaigns, Taraba State.*

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Introduction

Since its independence, Nigeria has been a part of democratic and party-political violence, which has a serious negative impact on people's lives and puts democracy in jeopardy. For instance, Nigeria's military takeover of its democracy in 1966 was influenced by the political and electoral violence that occurred there in 1964 and 1965 (Osaghae, 1998; Human Right Watch, 2007). Similar to this, the Shagari-led administration organized a general election in 1983, but it was marred by widespread violence and major electoral tampering, which resulted in another military coup on December 31, 1983 (Obakhedo, 2011). Comparably, President Ibrahim Babangida called off what was regarded as the most legitimate election in Nigerian history in June 1993. This led to the post-election violence on June 12, 1993, which resulted in the establishment of the Interim National Government (ING), led by Chief Ernest Shonekan, for a brief period of time (Ukase, 2011).

From 1999 to the most current general elections in 2019, Nigeria's political and electoral history has been marred by political violence. Actually, the political climate in the nation is permeated with violence. According to Abah and Nwokwu (2015), widespread deceit and unparalleled political violence marred the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections. The political environment in Nigeria was severely damaged by the violence that marred the elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015, resulting in the loss of lives and billions of Naira's worth of property. As per Sesan (2012), referenced by Kalu and Gberevbie (2013). Even though elections are meant to be a legal means of transferring political power from one democratic government to another through the voting booth, Nigeria has continued to experience the opposite situation (Ugoh, 2004). Every election held in Nigeria since the country's independence has included electoral violence. As a result, concerns about the electioneering campaigns may have to do with violence and individual rights violations. Therefore, since Nigeria's independence, elections have turned into a major political issue that has produced political disorder and jeopardized the survival of corporate existence in the country rather than being a process and a means of exercising legitimate political rights (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015). With the twin tenets of political participation and accountability, elections are meant to be a crucial pillar of a nation's democratic process; however, these principles are rarely, if ever, violated. Win is what everyone wants, and losing is what nobody wants. Clearly, any political critic who wishes toany political office bearer who says something deemed "negative" about another must be prepared to face the possibility of harassment. A dispassionate analysis of Nigeria's political history would demonstrate that political violence has always been a feature of the nation, according to Adekanye in Alfa and Otaida (2012). The way that violence is now manifested in different forms, amounts, and outcomes is what's new. Under a climate of animosity and hatred, no nation can grow. Being the main source of wealth in Nigeria, political power makes winning political office a "do or die" situation. As a result, Nigeria's economy would have been among the best in the world, but it has moved in the opposite direction due primarily to massive resources being directed toward security votes, conflict resolution, and reconstruction as a result of ongoing political violence (Ake, 1981 & Tenuche, 2011 in Alfa & Otaida, 2012).

Election procedures are a nonviolent way to achieve governance, making them a better option than violence. A democratic process's political legitimacy is undermined and participants are enticed to violate established conventions in order to further their goals when it is thought to be unjust, unresponsive, or corrupt. According to Fisher (2002), electoral strife and violence become into strategies in political rivalry. When elections are rigged and misused, the legitimacy of the governing outcome is called into doubt and the value of choice is diminished. Election-related malpractice inevitably encourages the adoption of non-legal

methods to establish lawful government since choice matters in the democratic process (Murunga, 2011:8). Democratic governance has gained international recognition as a trend following the fall of socialist regimes. The nations of Africa are not excluded. Nigeria has been no exception to the rule that many African dictatorships have participated in, or at least feigned to participate in, numerous attempts at democratization during the 1990s. The primary purposes of support for democratization in Nigeria have been to establish broadly legitimate administrations, enforce accountability, and facilitate the resolution of conflicts amongst the country's many ethnic groups. It is anticipated that these institutional decisions will lessen political violence and enhance economic performance (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Carothers, 2007; Soudriette and Pilon, 2007). Democratic governance has gained international recognition as a trend following the fall of socialist regimes. The nations of Africa are not excluded. Nigeria has been no exception to the rule that many African dictatorships have participated in, or at least feigned to participate in, numerous attempts at democratization during the 1990s. The primary purposes of support for democratization in Nigeria have been to establish broadly legitimate administrations, enforce accountability, and facilitate the resolution of conflicts amongst the country's many ethnic groups. It is anticipated that these institutional decisions will lessen political violence and enhance economic performance (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Carothers, 2007; Soudriette and Pilon, 2007).

With a few exceptions, however, the recent record of African elections has sparked worries that, in societies with strong cultural divides, competitive electoral processes may actually be unstable because they deepen the divides between winners and losers and exacerbate already-existing divisions (Bardhan, 1997; Syder, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004; Mansfield and Snyder, 2005; Eiffert, Miguel and Posner, 2007). As a result, Collier and Rohner (2008) stated that elections in developing African nations like Nigeria have a tendency to greatly raise the likelihood of civil war and several other violent manifestations. The culture of violence that has spread across our institutions, polytechnics, and even during the most recent elections is ingrained in and fostered by political violence, or thuggery. There have been instances where young people have used violence against judges, journalists, police officers, INEC officers, political candidates, and defense attorneys. In some cases, this has been done on behalf of the political candidate; in other cases, it has been used as a cover for extortion and hatred. Murunga (2011) said.

Statement of the Problem

Undoubtedly, political violence has persisted throughout the fourth republic, continuing to be a significant issue since the start of the first republic. Election-related deaths have been common in this country, as have issues with tribalism, regionalism, and fear of dominance, sectionalism, godfatherism, and ethnicity. According to the perspective above, Taraba State, the case study, is not an exception to this issue: It is tough for the people of Taraba State to turn out on Election Day and cast their votes. Due to the nature of the ruling regime, the few individuals who do choose to participate in politics ultimately vote for the incorrect candidate. In certain instances, violence is also caused by ballot boxes being stolen from the voting place. It damages the government's reputation. Considering the aforementioned claim, the Nigerian government must establish new regulations in order to mobilize the populace and teach them the importance of abstaining from violent crimes while in the nation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine how political violence affects Nigeria's democratic system of government. Thus, the issues raised above are what led the researcher to start this investigation in an effort to identify long-term solutions.

Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative, documentary, and evaluative. In that sense, secondary data sources made up the primary data sources. These include online downloads, newspaper and book reviews, library research, and books and journals about Nigerian politics. To ensure authenticity and develop well-informed opinions, the secondary sources underwent thorough evaluation and verification. The study used data from to further confirm the validity of the instrument. Several writers on the same subject, such as the reasons behind and effects of the global reaction to the violence during the 2019 election.

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the causes of 2019 post-election violence in Taraba.
ii. To find out the causes of election violence in Taraba and how it has impeded the economic development.
iii. To look for the way forward in reducing the rate of election violence in Taraba.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Primordial theory of ethnicity serves as the theoretical foundation for our investigation. American sociologist David Riesman developed this hypothesis, claiming that familial or ethnic ties bind every community. According to the primal idea of ethnicity, a person is obligated to their kinsmen, neighbors, other family members, and other believers, as Eriksen (2002) went on to clarify. According to Opondo (2014), the primordial theory of ethnicity is a precise classification that classifies an individual based on his origins and background, defining his most fundamental identity. The idea of primordialism, which is based on the conviction of shared identity and heritage, demands ethnicity. According to Weber and Malesevic (2004), these are groups of people who, due to shared physical characteristics, customs, or both, have an irrational notion that they are descended from one another. Therefore, minority issues versus the majority or racial relations are discussed in the Primitive Theory of Ethnicity. It also refers to facets of interpersonal interactions between groups that both represent them and are recognized as culturally unique by outsiders. According to Opondo (2014), it is also understood as the interaction between groups whose members think of themselves as unique and which may be arranged in a hierarchical fashion within society. Eriksen (2002) cited Bath (1969) as saying that we place a lot of weight on the idea that ethnic groups are categories that actors themselves assign and identify with. He went on to say that ethnic identity includes standards for inclusion and exclusion as well as methods of showing membership. Kinship contiguity in our social existence is therefore implied by the primordial hypothesis of ethnicity.

Causes of 2019 Election Violence in Taraba.

Ever since Taraba State's democratic process began, elections have always been held amid varied degrees of electoral violence. This was made clear, for example, during the gubernatorial campaigns and elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015. But the 2019 election situation was even more obvious. During and following the 2019 gubernatorial election, there were concerning reports of deaths, harassment, and intimidation. An analysis of electoral and political violence in Taraba State from its founding, with a focus on the 2019 elections, reveals that regional, ethnic, and religious issues are the main drivers of this violence, which is further exacerbated by agitation among young people. During the 2007 gubernatorial race, this phenomenon gained prominence. Ever since, the phenomenon has continued to take on new dimensions with every election. Mohammed (2018) expresses regret at the rise in young

agitation as a novel phenomenon. In particular, the state capital of Jalingo is directly impacted negatively by this development on the political process in the state.

Historical Events of 2011 Election Violence

The January 2011 elections in Nigeria could be the first in the nation's history to include a true electoral competition between the mostly Muslim North and the predominantly Christian South. Political candidates may feel pressured to take advantage of Nigerians' ethnic and religious identities for their own benefit; nevertheless, doing so could spark widespread election-related violence or possibly a military takeover. Nigeria held a presidential election on April 16, 2011, having postponed it from April 9, 2011. The election was called in response to disagreements over whether a Muslim or a Christian should be able to hold the presidency given the custom of switching the top job between the two faiths and the passing of Muslim UmaruYar'Adua, who left Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, in office as acting president. There was a great deal of violence in the country's northern regions after the election. On April 19, Jonathan was pronounced the winner. Good luck. The incumbent People's Democratic Party (PDP) had a gentlemen's agreement that said power would alternate every two terms between the mostly Muslim north and the Christian south. As a result, the party's nominee for this election was expected to be a Northerner. Following the demise of Northern Muslim President Umar Yar'Adua, Southern Christian Vice President Goodluck Jonathan assumed the role of acting president. Yar'Adua had only had one of the two terms available to him following Southerner Olusegun Obasanjo, therefore the suggestion that Jonathan was thinking about launching his own presidential campaign was contentious. Because of the zoning setup, AtikuAbubakar, a former vice president, and Ibrahim Babangida, a former general and military dictator, both stood for president. The interim president Goodluck Jonathan announced on September 18, 2010, that he intended to run for president following early suspicions. Some people believe that, aside from Nuhu Ribadu, Muhammadu Buhari is the main opponent of Jonathan. Nigeria has 63 political parties that have declared their intentions, of which 21 have put forth candidates. The Director General of the Babangida campaign, Raymond Dokpesi, was called to withdraw from the race when an explosion occurred in Abuja during Nigeria's 50th anniversary festivities. He was then arrested and questioned. Others connected his affiliation to the explosions as well. Saying that it would be "idiotic to link" him with an attack, he responded. Some of his even prior to the explosions It is said that his "IBB Boys," or former supporters, urged him to withdraw from the presidential contest in order to prevent him from being disparaged by an Army General. The election commission requested a postponement of the polls in September 2010, claiming the need for additional time to correct the national electoral register. The idea infuriated the opponents. A new computerized voter registration program was released, which caused the election to be rescheduled from January to April. Yenegoa, Bayelsa State was the scene of a bombing at a gubernatorial campaign event in December 2010. Boko Haram was also blamed for other shootings and bombs that occurred in the north. Police and politicians claimed that the violent campaign's goal was to sabotage the election. The elections were described in the international radio as taking run smoothly with fairly little violence or voter deception in discrepancy to earlier elections, in particular the comprehensively disputed 2007 election. Indeed, one witness pronounced them the most smoothly run elections held since the restoration of democracy 12 years earlier. The United States Government was cited saying, that the election was "successful" and a "significant progress" over 2007, although it added that vote rigging and fraud also took place, Campbell (2010). "Irregularities", such as underage voting and stealing of ballot boxes were stated to have taken place. Buhari appealed that his supporters in the south were not allowed to vote.

The election sparked riots in Northern Nigeria and in the following months up to 1,000 people are said to have died in post-election violence.

Pre-Election Period:

Pre- Election violence can transpire during registration period and can lead to enormous subjugation of voters due to psychological fear. This can in turn threaten the very target of realising free and fair election in any political system. Abnormalities in voters register, blurred identity, and poor technical quality might lead to invalid registration and subsequently denials of voting right. This may not only disenfranchises the voters but is also a trigger to bigger scale violence on the Election Day.

Campaign Period:

Campaign period is also a prominent stage with extraordinary tendency for electoral violence. Manifestation is customarily during campaigns. Political meeting and rallies can be intra or inter party conflict. In the Nigerian context, the deployment of criminals and cults groups to attack opponents and supporters of rivals is usually the case. This is done with the target to intimidate opponents and send psychological panic to potential voters. Ayoade and Adoeye (2012).

Election Day Violence Result Conflict

Election Day violence also constitutes electoral violence. Normally, people have misinterpreted electoral violence as Election Day violence. Prominent in the list of Election Day violence includes burning of election offices and material including ballot boxes and papers, terrorisation of voters, snatching of ballot boxes, rigging and deviation of election materials. Okafor (2006), In steady democracies with contingency plans, alternative means of voting might readily be available but new democracies like Nigeria is prone to set back in such cases.

Post-Election/Result Conflict

Electoral violence can also transpire hours and days after elections. This can originate from clash over election results and the failure of judiciary system to handle election dispute honestly. Post result violence might take place where the judiciary is perceived to be partial. This might lead to low level of confidence on the judicial system by the candidates and as such would prefer taking laws into the hands than wasting time in a corruptible judicial system. The frustration and fear of partial judgment then leads them with the rigid decision of electoral violence. This can also lead to higher scale violence outside elections. Fischer noted that the manner in which election result are declared might also lead to electoral violence and in some cases lead to targeting of setting group or ethnic origin in a multi-ethnic society(Fischer, 2002).

Conclusion

This study examines the dynamics connected with elections and political violence in Taraba State. The paper starts with a general review of the phenomenon in Nigeria. However, the 2019 elections form the specific focus of the study. The study reveals that most cases of political violence emanate from the electoral process, particularly political campaigns. Among the factors highlighted as the major causes of the phenomenon include ethno-religious and regional issues exacerbated by voter illiteracy, unhealthy campaign slogans and utterances, intimidation, among others. The study reveals that the foregoing phenomenon was more pronounced in the 2019 elections in the state, resulting in the loss of lives and

destruction of property worth millions of Naira. It is also revealed that violence occurred even before, during and after the elections, which resulted in the imposition of seventh and the half year of curfew in Jalingo Metropolis. The paper identifies the nature of political campaigns as the major factor that instigate election and post-election violence in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular, especially, during the 2019 elections.

Recommendations

Best on the above discussions and elaboration, the following recommendations are made:

i. Political campaigns must be issue based.
ii. Political parties must ensure internal party democracy.
iii. Candidates/contestants must have strategies as a policy guide.
iv. Personality policies must be replaced by merit. v. Inculcation of democratic culture in the people.
v. Sentence of electoral offenders.
vi. Establishment of Electoral Crime Commission to handle Electoral crimes, and deal with cases like EFCC successes (Omodia, 2009). In the absence of legislation dealing specifically with political violence, offenders should be tried under existing criminal laws including conspiracy.
vii. Government and judicial authorities must carry out prosecutions of persons involved in political violence, include persons who ordered or organized the violence as well as those who carried it out.
viii. Federal and state governments should openly condemn discrimination on the basis of 'indigene' or 'non-indigene' status and accord all Nigerians full citizenship status and make them eligible to enjoy all political and ultimately dissuade inclinations for political violence. (Alfa, 2011).

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