



**Preventing Electoral Violence and Deconstructing
Verbal Violence in Nigeria**

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Recommended Citation

Adedimeji, M. A. (2019) Preventing Electoral Violence and Deconstructing Verbal Violence in Nigeria. *All Nations University Journal of Applied Thought*, 6(2):1-29.

Available at:

<http://anujat.anuc.edu.gh/universityjournal/anujat/Vol6/No2/1.pdf>

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ABSTRACT

Violence has often marred the conduct of elections in Nigeria since the attainment of political Independence in 1960. For instance, the elections of the years 1964, 1965, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 were marred by irregularities that resulted in violence, which claimed several lives and property. While much scholarly attention has been devoted to the extrinsic causes of electoral violence, little attention is paid to the intrinsic causes which chiefly bother on language. This paper investigated the negative use of language and the concomitant resort to verbal violence as a key trigger of electoral violence in Nigeria. Forms of verbal violence identified include outright lies, propaganda, distortion, insult, hate speech, stereotype, real abuse and branding/name-calling. Using the Frustration-Aggression Theory of Dollard, Doob, Miller and Mower (1939), the paper discussed how the forms of verbal violence being deployed by Nigerian politicians hurt and demoralize their opponents, which eventually propel their followers to retaliate by resorting to counter-violence. The paper suggested that a verbal code of conduct should be imposed by electoral bodies on politicians such that decency would be the hallmark of electoral process, especially campaigns, in Nigeria.

Keywords: violence, verbal violence, election, electoral violence, Nigeria.

Introduction

The history of electoral violence in Nigeria dates back to the first election that was conducted by the colonial masters in 1922. Rather than abate, the wickedness and destructiveness associated with electoral violence have increased exponentially over the years such that it constitutes a menace to nation-building. In the elections that were conducted in the years after the Nigerian Independence, violence was perpetrated in

various degrees of intensity such that the political culture of Nigeria has been considered synonymous with electoral violence (Karim, 2014). Various atrocities were committed and man's inhumanity to man was demonstrated in the years 1964, 1965, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 due to political reasons, resulting in the death and decapitation of thousands of Nigerians and loss of property worth several billions of naira.

Several factors have been adduced to the preponderance of electoral violence in Nigeria and beyond. These include: poor education, illiteracy and (or) ignorance; poverty; electoral fraud at all levels of the electoral process; undeveloped institutions of the state like the judiciary, law enforcement agencies; nepotism, tribalism and political patronage; lack of statesmen among our political elite; the undue interference of foreign powers and interests; corruption in high places and high levels of impunity among politicians and public officers. For Karim (2014), factors engendering electoral fraud and consequent violence include financial inducement, plums of office, attraction of official lucre, illiteracy and ignorance, monetisation of elective offices, Godfatherism, sit-tight-syndrome, election management bodies (EMBs), Law Enforcement Agencies, judiciary, the role of the media, religious sentiments, ethnic jingoism, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, frustration, election rigging, fraud and error, unemployment, poverty, role of the elite, structural imbalance in the electoral law, among others. These causes have been bifurcated as remote and immediate by Orji and Uzodi (2012).

However, apart from reference to the media, scant attention has been paid to the role of language, communication, inflammatory rhetoric or verbal violence as the precursor to electoral violence. As Harwood and Campbell (2010) and Ofili (2013) contend, the electoral violence in Kenya after the 2007 election and Nigeria's 2011 elections is mainly attributed to the inflammatory messages being circulated by supporters of different candidates. Unguarded utterances and incitement from politicians are also acknowledged to be responsible for the violence that often characterise the electoral process in Nigeria (Williams, 2011).

This paper is intended to examine the affinity between verbal violence or the abuse of language and the physical violence especially in

the context of elections. Apart from addressing conceptual issues bordering on elections, violence and its types, the paper establishes that the link between verbal violence and physical violence in election is both direct and dynamic. The paper warns that with increased recourse to verbal violence, which manifests in accusing without proof, lampooning, threatening, ordering, trivializing, silencing, blaming, name calling, overtly maligning and verbally attacking others, the ground is been prepared for violence in future elections. A political intervention, through which all parties would be asked to maintain decorum and desist from verbal abuse, is suggested as a way out of proving wrong those who had suggested an election year would mark the end Nigeria or that “the certainty of violence after the 2015 elections is higher than it was in 2011” and that “the violence of 2015 is going to be horrendous and worse than the one of 2011”, as posited by a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi, in a letter addressed to the two leading presidential candidates of the People's Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress on December 16, 2014 (Adedimeji, 2015).

Conceptualising Election in a Democracy

Election is the means by which people's representatives or leaders are chosen into leadership positions within a democratic system or order. It is through the process that chosen leaders are given the power to exercise authority for the orderly growth and development, security and welfare of the general citizenry while people still have sovereignty over those they elected. In other words, election remains the essential ingredient of transitory process from one civilian administration to another or from military rule to civilian regime. Elections have become an integral part of representative democracy that by and large prevails across the world as election is fundamental to democracy and governance though Hyde (2009) observed that not all elections are democratic. Nevertheless, every modern vision of representative democracy entails the notion of elections as the primary means of selection of political decision makers. In simple terms, it is a competition or contest for democratic power.

It is incomprehensible in contemporary times to think of

democracy without linking it to the idea and practice of elections. Ojo (2007) described election as the “hallmark of democracy” while Chiroro (2005) construed it as the “heart of the democratic order”. In all, elections constitute a core component of democracy, which is “how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belongs to all the people” (Wani and Fayeye, 2013 p.180) When the idea of democracy as enunciated by the ancient Greeks as “demos cratos” or “people's power” is put into consideration, the means through which people are able to exercise that power is through elections.

Democracy has been lauded as “the best form of government known to mankind since its ideals are people based” (Akinyemi, 1993). What makes democracy people-based is the elections in which people participate, hence contributing to governance and government. Joan Stuart Mill, as cited by Appadorai (2004), insisted that the superiority of democracy over other forms of government is based on:

The principle that the rights and interests of every or any person are only secure from being disregarded when the person interested is himself able, and habitually disposed, to stand up for them...stress must be laid on the rights of speech, publication and association. These rights are integral to democracy because they make possible free discussion and the continuous participation of the people in the government, not only in the time of general elections. Free discussion is necessary because democracy is based on a belief in the value of individual personality.

Elections constitute the heart of liberal democracy as the three conditions that such democracy must meet are :i) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups for major opposition to government power; ii) high inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major adult social group is excluded; and iii) a level of civil political liberties – freedom of expression, press, etc. Sufficient enough to ensure the integrity of political competition (Alabi, 2004 p.112)

Violence and its Typology

Many scholars have conceived violence in various ways. Corsini (1999) construed violence from its physical perspective as the expression of hostility and rage through physical force directed against persons or people. This is the common notion of violence, as supported by Dazinger (1998) who posited that violence entails the use of physical force, usually with the purpose of injuring or damaging the object of violence. However, violence is not only limited to the use of physical force, it also entails threats of violence and various forms of subjugation, intimidation, harassment, suppression, profanation, distortion, etc. Violence has been viewed as destructive aggression by Gilula & Daniels (1969) while the World Health Organization defines it as the intentional use of physical force or power, (threatened or actual), against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (WHO, 2002).

Violence is broadly categorised as direct and indirect. Direct violence refers to all forms of direct attacks on a person's physical and psychological integrity. This category includes all forms of homicide (genocide, war crimes, massacres, murders and terrorism) as well as all types of coercive or brutal actions involving physical or psychological suffering (kidnapping, torture, rape and maltreatment) which all corresponds to the violation of the most basic human rights. Indirect violence on the other hand, covers harmful or even deadly situations that are brought about without a direct relationship between the victims and the institution (Salmi, 1993; Alanamu, Muhammed and Adeoye, 2006).

Galtung (1991) identifies four types of violence, which are physical, psychological, cultural and structural. Physical violence concerns inflicting bodily injury on human beings and destruction of lives and property. Psychological violence manifests in making people live in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, with the dominant theme of “the fear of the unknown”, which includes instances of threat, fear, mistrust, racism, intolerance, etc. While structural violence is indirect as it is embedded in the structures of the society where limitations are imposed through social injustice, deprivation of rights by the systems

and laws, cultural violence concerns the belief systems which are manipulated for selfish goals. For instance, violence against women, exclusion of women from politics and proverbs that denigrate womanhood are aspects of cultural violence.

Types of violence include the following:

Political violence

Political violence is the sum total of violence that is associated with the political process. It could come from within or outside the country and manifests in various forms. Political violence is the use or threat of physical act or considerable destructive use of force by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or group of individuals and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage to property. The objective of this violence on the choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances implementation and effects have political significance, is to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangements of a power structure. It is directed to a change in the politics, systems, territory of government and hence also directed to changes in the lives of individuals within societies (Anifowose, 1982; Edigin and Obakhedo, 2010).

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project defined political violence through its constituent events, the intent of which is to produce a comprehensive overview of all forms of political conflict within and across the states. ACLED is the most comprehensive public collection of political violence data for developing states. Political violence is part and parcel of a broader epidemic of violence that has devastated the lives of ten thousands Nigerians since the country's return to civilian rule in 1999. According to a media survey and other sources undertaken by Human Rights Watch indicates clashes along political, ethnic, religious, and other reasons have characterised the polity between the handover of power to the Obasanjo government at the end of 2006.

Among the theories of social conflict, the Frustration-Aggression Theory proposed by psychologists Dollard, Doob, Miller and Mower is considered the most relevant to violence generally in Nigeria. The theory posits that people respond to stressful events by

striking out at others with aggression and violent behaviour. Aggression is defined as “any behaviour that is intended to hurt someone, either physically or verbally” (Karim, 2014 p. 52).

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence is an off-shoot of political violence. It is any form of physical force applied with the aim of disorganising the electoral process, ranging from the destruction of electoral materials to the intimidation of the electorate to vote against their wish, and physically influencing electoral officials to work in favour of particular groups or parties against the established procedure. There is an indirect relationship or inverse correlation between the transparency of election process and violence as the more transparent an election process is, the less is the likelihood of election violence. Electoral violence has regularly been reported in Nigeria to manifest in the three electoral stages namely, pre-election, election, and post-election.

According to Ogundiya (2003), electoral violence includes all sorts of riots, demonstrations, party clashes, political assassinations, looting, arson, thuggery, kidnapping, etc. which occur before, during and after elections. He further conceived the term as all activities regarded as “elections-motivated crisis employed to alter, change or influence by force or coercion the electoral behaviour of voters or voting patterns or possibly reverse electoral decision in favour of particular individual, groups or political party.” (Ogundiya, 2003 p. 36). Causes of electoral violence include poverty, unemployment, ineffectiveness of security forces/culture of impunity, weak penalties, weak governance and corruption, small arms proliferations and others. Effects of electoral violence include political instability, insecurity, cycle of violence (Ugiagbe, 2010).

It involves all manipulations and activities of politicians and non-politicians alike, whether covert or overt, to tamper with the electoral process at all stages, such as pre-registration, registration, election and post- election, that leads to election results that are incorrect or inaccurate, hence defective when subjected to electoral standards.

Fischer (2002) defined electoral violence (conflict) as any

random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced “protection,” blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination. Fischer's definition has been subjected to adjustment by Megan Reif (2010) as cited in Majekodunmi R & Adejuwon, K.D (2012) where electoral violence is defined as any spontaneous or organized act by candidates, party supporters, election authorities, voters, or any other actor that occurs during an electoral process, from the date of voter registration to the date of inauguration of a new government, that uses physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics aimed at exploiting, disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, or otherwise influencing an electoral process and its outcome.

Igbuzor (2010) saw electoral violence as any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities, including pre, during and post-election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. The International Foundation for Election Systems (2011) defined electoral violence as “any violence (harm) or threat of violence (harm) that is aimed at any person or property involved in the election process, or at disrupting any part of the electoral or political process during the election period.”

On his own part, Albert (2007) noted that electoral violence has to do with all forms of organized acts or threats – physical, psychological, and structural – aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process. These conceptions definitions of electoral violence typically captured the deeper nature and stages of electoral violence in Nigeria especially since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

Verbal Violence

Verbal violence is the abuse of language to hurt, disparage, malign or lampoon others. It is compatible with other forms of violence, including physical violence and psychological violence. For instance, in most bullying behaviours we do find all three variants of violence (and verbal violence seems to be the most essential form of violence to bullying – you can have no bullying without verbal threat). Verbal abuse is considered any language or behaviour that seeks to coerce its victim to doubt their perceptions or their abilities and subjugate themselves to the abuser. Many people consider verbal abuse as blatantly offensive language designed to humiliate and gain power over another person. Then, people are not only assaulted through only through the spoken words but also through body language that we learn to interpret into words. Behaviours unique to an individual and body language understood can contextually be translated to the verbal equivalents of violence.

There are different categories of verbal abuse which include withholding oneself from the intimacy needed for a close relationship, countering or opposing any thought, opinion or feeling, discounting feelings, emotions, thoughts and opinions, blaming and accusing, judging and criticising, trivialising, threatening, name calling, forgetting which includes denial and manipulation, ordering others about, denial, abusive anger, and others.

Deconstructing the Nexus between Verbal and Electoral Violence

The nexus between verbal violence and electoral violence is strong as harsh words provoke negative actions. Frantz Fanon, in the era of anti-colonial struggle, postulated that violence begets violence. Verbal violence is being perpetrated, it reinforces the mind and over time, a natural transition to electoral violence becomes the rule rather than the exception.

The 2015 pre-election period in Nigeria has been characterized by “unprecedented war of words, verbal assault and character assassination” (Baiyewu, 2015). The tension was mainly due to the

campaign tactics that were not based on issues but rather on *argumentum adhominem* (attack on person). Verbal violence was widely unleashed by the contestants and agents of the two parties, Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Party on their opponents.

Verbal Violence against General Buhari

At a point, a Senior Special Assistant to the Government on Public Affairs, Dr Doyin Okupe, in his reaction to the emergence of General Buhari as the presidential candidate of the opposition APC said, “How can you make a change with somebody who was part of our problem? The choice of APC or their decision to elect Buhari as their standard bearer is a fatal error.”

While speaking at his campaign at Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium on January 9, 2015 at Enugu, the PDP presidential candidate and President of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan said, “Is it now that Buhari cannot remember his phone number that he can change the economy of the country?” He also added, “We cannot run the government as if we are in the medieval age, we cannot run a government where somebody said he would throw people into jail. You are not a medieval king; a medieval king can throw you into jail but we have to follow the rule of law because we cannot go back to the old days”.

On his part, the National Secretary of the PDP, Prof. Adewale Oladipo, said, “The next election is going to be between light and darkness; it is going to be between a cosmopolitan highly focused PhD holder and semi-illiterate jackboot”. The reference is to General Buhari but the message was clear he was the target of the verbal assault.

The Director-General of the PDP Presidential Campaign, Ahmadu Ali, said, “In this 21st century where great nations of this world are fielding young men and women in their forties and fifties as presidents and prime ministers, it is ironic that Nigeria's APC is fielding a septuagenarian with fossilised ideas of how to run a government and social engineering. Nigeria deserves a better candidate than their candidate who has no certificates to tender as requirement for entering an election.” This utterance was aimed at maligning the presidential candidate of APC, General Buhari and it was unfortunate.

Historical Perspective on Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The history of political violence (electoral violence inclusive) in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial period. This means that a thorough understanding of the problem of electoral violence in Nigeria requires situating it within its political history. Scholars have argued that colonial settings laid the foundation of future political conflict in Nigeria. This argument was hinged on a number of British political experiments in West Africa in general and Nigeria in particular among which was the introduction of the elective principle in 1922 and on the emergence of the 1946 Richards Constitution. For instance, the elective principle, though to a very large extent was non-violent was too limited with income and residential qualifications, could be a potential basis for violence (Omotola, 2007).

This argument could be corroborated with what happened when elections were held into the regional Houses of Assembly in 1951 across the country. The elections which were held based on the then electoral system introduced by the 1951 Constitution led to widespread dissatisfaction among a vast majority of Nigerians in 1952. Thus, in 1953, there was increase in the intensity of political agitation. The 1946 Constitution paved the way for the division of the country into three regions in which each region was dominated by a major ethnic group. For example, the Hausa-Fulani dominated the Northern region, while the Yoruba and the Igbo dominated the Western and Eastern regions respectively. Thus, within each region, there were numerous other so-called minorities which were at a considerable disadvantage as far as political power was concerned. The emergence of political development in 1950s marked the genesis of electoral violence in Nigeria.

In 1951, for instance, elections were held into the regional Houses of Assembly based on the introduced electoral system of the 1951 Constitution. This electoral system created a widespread dissatisfaction among Nigerians. The first and immediate post-independence electoral violence in Nigeria occurred during the 1964 general elections, the first election to be conducted after independence. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) needed the elections to consolidate its power at the centre. The Action Group (AG) also needed it

in order to dislodge Chief S.L. Akintola from power in the West. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) on its own also wanted to improve its bargaining strength in the East.

It became obvious that all the major political parties were adequately anxious to participate in the elections. By the middle of 1964, two major political alliances had emerged from all the manoeuvres. The NPC and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) founded the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). The AG and the NCNC constituted themselves into the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The 1964 federal election was contested between these major alliances. Two main coalitions contested these elections: the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) made up of the NPC and some other minor parties; the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) comprising the NCNC, AG, Northern Elements Progressive Party (NEPU) and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). The campaigns by these coalitions generated much bitterness, acrimony and violence, especially in the West.

The elections which were said to have been massively rigged through different means led to widespread violence/conflicts in the West following the announcement of results by the Chairman of Federal Electoral Commission in person of Mr. Eyo Esau. This argument could be corroborated with the address of President Azikiwe and the then Inspector General Police, Mr. Louis Edet. In his dawn broadcast to the Nation, the President condemned the way and manner the electioneering was conducted and his disappointment. Whereas, the politicians in power have no right to employ instruments of power in order to perpetuate their stay in office. The President cited instances where Nigerian citizens had been deprived of their constitutional right to freedom of association. He warned the politicians that: "If they have decided to destroy our national unity, they should summon a round table conference to decide how our national assets should be divided for it is better that we should disintegrate in peace and not in pieces" (Anifowose, 1972). In a similar view, the Inspector General of Police, Louis Edet, made a nation-wide broadcast reporting that incidents involving violence had reached alarming proportions. He appealed to the politicians to protect Nigeria's enviable reputation as a bastion of democracy in Africa (Anifowose, 1972).

The attendant violence, including arson, looting, killing, wanton destruction of property and the total collapse of public order especially in the Western region, was unprecedented. For example, at Ishokun, Ilesha, twenty school children were murdered on the ground that they were in town to combat an impending riot. Also, at Isho, a village few miles from Owo, sixteen people were killed. As it was in the West, so also it was in the Middle Belt. A good example was the second Tiv riot of 1964 (Anifowose, 1972).

The last straw that broke the camel's back was the elections into regional assembly in the West in October 1965. The announcement of the election results by the Federal Electoral Commission, which led to the victory of Chief S. L. Akintola of NNDP as against the wishes of many people who expected that Chief Adegbenro of the UPGA led to large-scale violence in the whole of the Western region on the ground that there were irregularities in the election results. The decision of the Federal Government to recognise the election thus gave Chief Akintola the power to form a new government. This, however, made UPGA to embark on a spontaneous and violent demonstration known as “Operation Wet e” – an operation which required the spraying of houses, cars and persons with petrol and then setting them on fire (Ige, 1995).

There were series of protests and demonstrations carried out by angry students, market women, farmers and other groups in most towns and villages throughout the western region, and these were accompanied by looting, arson, killing on an unprecedented scale and burning of houses, vehicles and shops. Anti-governmental placards were displayed, party slogan (i.e. Awo! Awo! UPGA! UPGA!) -as well as war songs were advanced. In some cases, the demonstrations ended in clashes with anti-riot police squad, who did not hesitate to shoot. A typical song by the angry demonstrators was “E jeki a mura ogun, eleyi lon je iya (let us prepare for war, this is insulting) (Anifowose, 1972). The high rate of electoral violence (pre- and post-) following the 1964 and 1965 elections contributed in no small measure to the collapse of the First Republic (Osaghae 1998).

The electoral process of the Second Republic (1979 -1983) equally led to various cases of electoral violence across the whole of Nigeria. The most important one was the second election that was

conducted after the first administration in 1983. The structure of politics, despite the alteration in the structure of the federation from three (and later four) regions of the First Republic, to nineteen states, was still largely driven by ethno-religious forces, where each party maintained its stronghold in a given regional/ethnic domain.

For example, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) dominated the Northern region; the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) dominated the Western region while the National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) dominated the Eastern region. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), obviously NPC's successor, controlled the federal government between 1979 and 1983. In the 1983 elections, it wanted to extend its reach to other regions, either by fair means or foul. The attempt to achieve this underscored the massive rigging of the 1983 elections, which resulted in an unprecedented outbreak of violence in the Western region, where the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), AG's successor, held sway. In the then Oyo and Ondo States, the two UPN states were declared for the NPN. This announcement led to violence, which a writer simply described as "the house of war" (Babarinsa, 2003).

Although Ondo State was later returned to UPN at the Election Tribunal, series of violence that accompanied the disputed election results following various cases of alleged irregularities in the conduct of the election led to the collapse of the Second Republic; thus giving the military the opportunity to seize power on December 31, 1983.

In the aborted Third Republic, prior to the Presidential election in 1993, the local government and gubernatorial elections had already been conducted in preparation for the birth of the Third Republic. It is a known fact that Nigeria since independence has never had any peaceful election devoid of violence and other electoral vices. Thus, the 1992/1993 elections were no exception.

Meanwhile, the circumstances that led to the aborted Third Republic revealed that Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, a Military President, in spite of his long transition programme, had no intention of handing over power to the civilians. This became known when he annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election which was internationally acclaimed as free and fair; and as well described by local observers as the fairest election in the post-colonial Nigeria. The annulment of the election caused series of

crises especially in the Western part of Nigeria championed by some groups such as National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) among others. The post-electoral violence which followed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election was what forced Gen. Ibrahim Babangida to form an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Ernest Shonekan, who was later overthrown in what was regarded as a peaceful coup on November 17, 1993 by General Sani Abacha. This development made the Third Republic an aborted one (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

The above historical analysis of the electoral violence in the post-colonial Nigeria in particular contributed immensely to why democracy in the first two republics (first and second) could not only be consolidated but also be sustained. It could also be argued that the electoral processes as well as the kind of party politics (popularly known as zero sum game, winner-takes-all syndrome) played in the two republics were parts of the factors for which democratic rule could not be sustained.

Verbal Violence against Dr Jonathan

In his reaction to a statement of Jonathan, the APC National Publicity Secretary, Lai Mohammed, said “It is silly and petty to say Buhari cannot remember his telephone number. For the twenty months Buhari was in power, he ran a surplus budget and he was the first Head of State to introduce local content. Mr President is ignorant.” He further added, “He (Jonathan) is too lazy to read and understand this. It is sad and contradictory for him to rely on a speech made by a military regime.” This is an insult against the first citizen of Nigeria.

The National Leader of the APC, Senator Ahmed Bola Tinubu, said, “We must utilize the power of our vote to take back our country from the predators and scavengers in the corridors and bedroom of power that currently hold her hostage”. The recourse to name-calling by the Senator is unbecoming of a leader regardless of political affiliation.

The APC Vice Presidential candidate, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, said, “By God's grace, we would remove them from the seat of power. The people there presently cannot do anything because they don't know how to. They lack the capacity and capability to govern the country. Only

those comfortable with poverty and hunger and want to remain jobless will vote for the president to return” (Igidi, Olaniyi and Ibrahim, 2015). The tactic here is plain above.

When the President's campaign was attacked in Katsina, Mr Fani-Kayode, said, “Let us take this opportunity to serve them (APC) notice that if anything untoward happens to our candidate or his supporters during the course of this campaign we shall hold Buhari and his Party responsible and the consequences would be grave, unimaginable and far-reaching.” This is a threat, one of the worst types of verbal violence.

Some Incidences of Electoral Violence in the Fourth Republic Nigeria

Although it was expected that a long period of military rule would have made politicians more mature, the return to the democratic order in 1999, marking the birth of the Fourth Republic, also came with election violence. Based on Karim (2014), a catalogue of instances of political/electoral violence that constitutes a blight on the Fourth Republic is as follows:

Date	Nature/Location of Electoral Violence	State
2001	Abel Chukwu, Speaker of the Enugu State House of Assembly, had bullets pumped into his car.	Enugu
2001	Felix Ikebudu was murdered and drowned in the river with an engine block in Anambra.	Anambra
2001	On December 21, the Federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige, was brutally murdered in his bedroom at Ibadan.	Oyo
2003	A convoy of ANPP gubernatorial candidate,	Adamawa

- Alhaji Adamu Modibbo, was attacked by political thugs.
- 2003 Dr. Marshall Harry, the National Vice-Chairman (South-South) of the ANPP was brutally killed in his house in Abuja. Abuja
- 2003 6 persons killed by youths alleged to be supporters of an ANPP senatorial candidate, Hon. Heinkein Lokpobiri, Bayelsa West. Bayelsa
- 2003 Suspected thugs attacked Ebonyi Council Transition Chairman of Ikwo South Council, Mr. Alloy Agba. Ebonyi
- 2003 3 persons were shot dead and journalists manhandled by suspected party thugs. Edo
- 2003 Rally of PDP disrupted, one vehicle was burnt by suspected opposition thugs, while many people were injured in the attack. Jigawa
- 2003 Clashes between ANPP supporters at Jato-Aka village, Kwande Local Government Benue
- 2003 Youths burnt vehicles laden with ballot papers. Imo
- 2003 Kwara Chapter of AD decried continued defacement of the posters and billboards of its governorship candidate, Alhaji Lai Mohammed Kwara
- 2003 2 persons died when suspected party thugs attacked Governor Lawal's convoy, other sustained injuries. Kwara
- 2003 ANPP chieftain in Kwara State, Mr. Issa Z a r i a , Kwara

- was murdered by suspected party thugs.
- 2003 Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a crowd celebrating Dr. Bukola Saraki's victory as the next Governor of Kwara State. 3 persons were killed and many were injured. Kwara
- 2003 The Commissioner for Women Affairs, Mrs. Memuna Kataia and two others were feared dead in a political clash during the House of Assembly elections. Nasarawa
- 2003 PDP senatorial candidate, Alh. Ibikunle Amosun narrowly escaped being killed in an attack by six suspected assassins. Ogun
- 2003 Oyo State Governor, Lam Adesina, was attacked. Oyo
- 2003 Attack on PDP campaign train at Okehi LGA headquarters. Kogi
- 2003 PDP and AD clashed in Ute, Ose LGA. Ondo
- 2004 Mr. Luke Shigaba, until his death on 3 March in the hands of assassins, was the Chairman of B a s s a Local Government. Kogi
- 2006 On 22 July, Funsho Wiliams, a favoured candidate at the PDP primary election in Lagos State was assassinated in his house. Lagos
- 2007 An explosion rocked Asaba on Wednesday night. Delta
- 2007 Bomb scare at Delta's PDP's office and one Ekiti

person was arrested.

- 2007 Violence took the centre-stage in the governorship and House of Assembly primaries of the AC. Ekiti
- 2007 Gangs of armed youths broke up polling stations, snatched ballot boxes and tore opposition votes in Kabba. They filled the ballots with their own thumbprints and voted for the PDP, witness said. Election regulators in the State told staff the name of Prince Abubakar Audu, the ANPP candidate for the gubernatorial election. His picture and name were printed on the ballot papers, but scratched out with black markers or biros. Kogi
- 2007 A bloody clash of Agaka/Baboko/Idi-Ape area of Ilorin led to one dead and a Police Officer seriously injured. Kwara
- 2007 Three male adults were injured in Oro, repodun LG, when suspected supporters of two rival politicians clashed. Although no life was lost, both camps alleged the attack was unwarranted calling on the Police to start a prompt investigation of the crisis, which was described as the first of its kind in the area. Kwara
- 2007 At least 30 persons were hospitalised for sustaining various degrees of injuries after a bloody clash between the supporters of the PDP and the ANPP in Galadima Village in Lapai LGA. Niger
- 2008 On June 22, a group of political party thugs loyal Kogi

to the PDP attacked the Action Congress supporters at Obangege in Okehi LGA. During the ensuing fracas, properties such as louvers and electronics valued at about N500,000 were destroyed.

- 2008 On 22 April, there was a pandemonium at Okene-Eba and Idozumi, in Okene LGA when PDP thugs terrorised residents of the area by shooting sporadically into the air. In order to subdue the attack from the thugs, Mobile Policemen were drafted to the area. In the ensuing confusion, six persons, all civilians, were killed. Kogi
- 2010 On 26 July, a gubernatorial aspirant, Dipo Dina was assassinated. Ogun
- 2010 PDP thugs loyal to Gabriel Daudu, Council Chairman Ogori-Mangongo LGA and a group suspected to be antagonists to the Chairman clashed. During the incident, Deji Orifunmishe was critically injured and his entire household destroyed. These include vehicles and other valuables worth millions of Naira. Kogi
- 2011 Police lost two men, 3 AK 47 riffles in the face-off at Okengwe, Obehira and Ageva in Adavi and Okene LGAs. Kogi
- 2013 A supporter of Opeyemi Bamidele, the Labour Party candidate, was shot and killed after clashed between Mr. Bamidele's supporters and people believed to be APC members at Emure Ekiti. Ekiti

- 2014 Ado Ekiti, the State capital, was thrown into confusion as gunshots rent the air at the popular Adebayo area of the city. The attack allegedly occurred around 6pm when Governor Fayemi and his supporters were returning to Ado-Ekiti from a campaign rally in Ekiti East local government of the state.
- 2014 Unidentified number of people were injured in Kano Kura, Shanono and Bebeji Local Government Areas of Kano State as political thugs attempted to snatch ballot boxes during local government election in Kano.
- 2014 On Sunday, June 8, one person was killed in Ekiti violence that erupted in Ekiti State in the run up to the up to the gubernatorial election.

Strategies for Curbing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

There are various ways that Nigeria could use to curb electoral violence and strengthen democratic governance. They include: constitutional amendment; electoral reform; issue-based campaigns; pressure from civil society groups through agenda-setting; change in the character of the elite; political education; peaceful community; prioritising national interest; etc. The most important of them is political education which is a counter force to violence. All others rest on its effectiveness. It has been argued at several forums that the significance and utility of political education cannot be over-emphasised. This is because political education is the conduit-pipe through which the political cultural values and behavioural patterns of the society are imbibed and internalised. In any case, since Nigerians tend to be very religious, religious books emphasise the need for acquisition of knowledge as an instrument for guiding and guarding against the wiles of the enemy in all societies, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore, there is the need for Nigerians to have a deeper knowledge of causes, manifestations, dimensions, consequences and ways of curbing the phenomenon.

Since education has been identified as the launch pad of a nation-state's development agenda, political education constitutes a Herculean task for the several agents of education in Nigeria; namely: the family; peer groups; schools (primary, secondary, and tertiary); religious institutions; civil society organizations and the fourth estate of the realm (the mass media).

For schools, as agents of socialization and social change, the need to abhor all forms of violence must be incorporated into the curriculum. The political education that the pupils and students would receive will both in the short and long term deepen our political culture and socialization processes.

Therefore, Nigerians should know the dynamic nature of our politics, and the emerging trends that shape the political culture and determine the direction of political socialization, and in relation to electoral violence, should learn, imbibe and internalize the political sociology of electoral behaviour education. This would help the nation to develop its fledging democratic order.

Generally, politics marred by violence is synonymous with the politics of bitterness that would create an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and arson; and would not allow the people to choose their leaders. Such politics undermines competitive electoral politics and alienates the citizens and makes them politically apathetic, thereby creating a fundamental disjuncture between the civil society and the state. This deeply-rooted problem contributes to growing cases of mass disenfranchisement of the citizens with its attendant political normlessness and exclusion which does not help to deepen and consolidate our democracy.

The UNDP Guidelines on Prevention of Electoral Violence recommended the following:

- 1. Training programmes:** polling station staff training has to be more interactive (role play activities, scenario-building) in order to increase staff capacity to handle election day complaints effectively before they escalate to violence.
- 2. Dialogue among electoral stakeholders** (political parties, EMBs,

human rights organizations, security forces etc.) to create an agreement on the rules of the game, but also the build-up the commitment and relationships (exchange of information, regular meetings, contingency planning). Dialogue efforts are essential not only centrally but also on lower levels, ensuring that district/village level conflicts are resolved and that all actors respect the codes of conduct.

- 3. Efficient and credible complaint processes:** unresolved complaints are the main triggers for electoral violence (especially as they relate, for instance, to party registration), so the mechanisms to deal with them have to be efficient.

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) recommended five re-evaluation of conflict management and preventive strategies:

1. Victims need to be better taken into account and cared for;
2. Monitoring and education are activities that need to be carried out on long-term basis;
3. Conflict-mitigation measures should be included in the electoral process design;
4. To ensure security, a balance between deterrence and confidence building has to be found; and
5. To improve peace building around election times, the multiple actors involved need to coordinate activities to avoid overlap and to identify policy gaps.

Our own recommendations border essentially on politicians' use of peaceful language in the conduct of their political activities. There should be a verbal code of conduct guiding what politicians should say such that their utterances would not generate heat in the polity. The media

also should be circumspect in reporting stories and reports that are potentially combustible. It is strongly believed that if the language of with which politics is conducted is positive, it will influence positivity in the actions of the political actors and serve as disincentive to political instability and electoral violence.

Conclusion

The 2015 elections were eventful going by the barrage of accusations and counter-accusations among the major political parties in Nigeria (the People Democratic Party-PDP and All Progressives Congress-APC). Allegations have been made by all political parties against themselves without much of them substantiated. Corruption charges were levelled against key officers of the administration and the opposition. Inferences were even being made about some of the people being behind the dreaded Boko Haram. Reconciliation meetings have been held all over the country to see that the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity and of special importance was the work of the National Peace Committee which made the two leading candidates sign peace accords.

Empirical evidence shows that electoral violence affects the credibility of the electoral system, the democratic system and the rule of law. This ugly trend raises a fundamental question about the capacity and ability of the Nigerian state to curtail electoral violence and fraud since security agencies and INEC officials are implicated in the macabre dance of violence that dots the nation's electoral history. In fact, the nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria pose a serious threat to the national quest for stable democratic transition, as well as the attainment of the long-term goal of consolidated democracy (Malu, 2009). And as a problem that has ravaged and permeated the entire bloodstream of our political system, it has become imperative for Nigerians to know the danger that violence poses to strengthening and deepening the nation's democracy with concomitant effect on national development.

For Nigeria to be able to achieve development, strengthen her institutions and deepen democracy, politicians, their supporters and the

electorate alike should shun all forms of electoral and political violence. It is very crucial that stakeholders in the political process, such as the politicians, political parties, the electorate, the judiciary, security forces, civil society organisations and the media shun violence discourse tactics in the conduct of their political activities. Politicians especially should play politics with decency and decorum as the eschew politics of bitterness and its concomitant debilitating effects on the society.

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