

**THE ROLES OF RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE
MANAGEMENT OF POST ELECTION VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The election is one of the most important features of democratic governance in the world and the process ought to be violent free. However, post-independence Nigeria has witnessed much of the electoral violence with attendant casualties. The relevant stakeholders in electoral matters have played significant roles in making or marring the electoral process. In most cases, they have acted as triggers of post-election violence in the country. The importance of the electoral umpire, professionalism of the media organizations, effectiveness of security agencies, and integrity of the judiciary, a commitment of political parties, the effective participation of electorates and the sincerity of government are critical factors in the management of post-election violence in the country. However, all these critical stakeholders cannot be said to be above board in this regard. In other words, the roles of these stakeholders have in one way or other been called to question. The paper adopts descriptive and historical approaches and utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to analyse the issues relating to the management of post-election violence in Nigeria. The paper argues that election management is a major issue in democratic governance that requires the commitment of all the stakeholders towards achieving a peaceful electoral process. It notes that there is observed lacuna in the activities of the stakeholders that encouraged violence. This was found to be dysfunctional to good governance and development in the country. The paper, therefore, concludes that more training and sensitization should be conducted for the stakeholders with a view to nipping in the bud the remote and immediate causes of election violence to prevent reoccurrence.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Election, Violence, Management, Post-Election Violence.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Post-election violence in Nigeria has become almost a stigma to the electoral process to the extent that there is hardly any election in the country since independence without violence and attendant casualties. The division of the country along fault lines such as ethnic and religious occasioned by the forced amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 for administrative convenience of the colonial masters is a major problem. This is in the fear of domination of one nationality over the other, favouritism, control of the nation's resources are some of the factors that laid the foundation for post-election violence in the country. Adducing reasons for post-election violence in Nigeria, Attairu Jega posited that: "I think so many people expected the election to be credible, so perfect that in the perfection and credibility it is their candidate who will win, and once their candidate did not win, it was no longer credible and perfect and that I think would have explained to a large extent, some of the post-election violence" (Jega, 2011 cited in Bitrus, 2012:5). The perfect example of this is when one region or religion expected their candidate to win an election but reverse become the case, as in the case of post-2011 presidential elections in Northern Nigeria that resulted into widespread violence and killing.

The stakeholders in the electoral process are those independent entities and individuals recognised by law as having one thing or the other to do with the conduct of an election in Nigeria. The group includes the government, media, security agencies, electoral commission, civil society organisations, religious and opinion leaders, political parties, electorates/voters etc. These critical stakeholders in the electoral processes have played significant roles in making or marring the process. In most cases, they trigger post-election violence in the country. For instance, a situation where the electoral officer colludes with politicians to rig elections in the presence of security personnel in favour of one party to the exclusion of the others could mean a direct invitation to anarchy. However, some of the stakeholders are responsible for the management of post-election violence in Nigeria such as security agencies, the judiciary, the media, the voters, civil society organisations, political parties, religious organisations etc. Indeed, some of the above-mentioned stakeholders often compromised their positions invariably affects the conduct of free and fair elections. Though post-election violence will not just occur, it must have been triggered by certain observed anomalies in the electoral process either before or during the election. This must-have informed Fischer to argue that "when an electoral process is perceived as unfair, irresponsible, or corrupt, its political legitimacy is compromised and stakeholders are motivated to go outside of the established norms to achieve their objectives, then, electoral conflict and violence become tactics in political competition" (Fischer, 2002:7). He further described the electoral conflict as to any random or organised act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, and physical assault forced 'protection', blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination (Fischer, 2002:7).

The critical questions to ask at this juncture, therefore, are what are the causes of post-election violence in Nigeria? How effective are the stakeholders at managing or preventing the problem? What are the preventive mechanisms put in place to ward off violence associated with electoral processes? It is based on the above research questions that the paper is designed to interrogate the causes of post-election violence and the roles of relevant

stakeholders in its management in Nigeria. The paper is arranged into the following sections, namely: post-election violence in Nigeria; a conceptual analysis, causes of post-election violence; review of post-election violence, the relevant stakeholders and post-election violence; towards preventing post-election violence in Nigeria and concluding remarks.

2.0 POST ELECTION VIOLENCE: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Post-election violence is a specific act of violence that occurs after the election (Orji and Uzodi, 2012:10). It is an act that occurs at the last stage of the electoral cycle. The concept cannot be fully understood unless there is a proper understanding of the concept of electoral violence. Electoral violence is "any random or organized acts that seek to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, misinformation, physical assault, forced 'protection' blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination" (Fischer 2002:8). Electoral violence could mean an attack on electoral personnel, acid bath on political opponents and publication of offensive advertorial involving the use of abusive language in the electronic media against a political opponent (Ogboaja, 2007). Electoral violence remains a prevalent phenomenon in developing democracy in Africa countries in such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Asian countries as India, Pakistan, Philippines and Malaysia.

What then distinguishes post-election violence from other forms of electoral violence is the fact that it occurs just after polling, usually during or after collation and announcement of electoral results (Orji and Uzodi, 2012:10). But it has cumulative effects as a carryover from pre-election activities. This is underlying the electoral cycle approach with the assumption that while violence can occur at any time in the election cycle and exhibit similar manifestations, there are markers that differentiate the nature of violence that occur at different periods in an election cycle (UNDP 2009:20, Balogun 2003). The three stages involved in the electoral cycles are pre-election, election and post-election stages. "Most of the precipitating factors for post-election violence begin at the pre-election stage. The statement and comments made by politicians become potentially volatile, and could be construed by followers or supporters as a call to violence before, during and after elections (Ofili, 2011; 14).

Post-election violence is mainly a spontaneous or organized act of intimidation, coercion, or physical harm that arise in the context of electoral competition, intended to influence electoral outcomes, and occur after the election in response to how the electoral process unfolded on election day, or to election results (Okpotor, 2015). Post-election violence comes in two ways. The first, which we are all familiar with, include; protest, riots, arson and destruction of lives and properties under extreme circumstances. These violent acts that usually accompany the announcement of election results happen more or less because of that the perception that the election process was dishonestly rigged or manipulated to achieve a predetermined outcome. The second is more subtle and appeared in vicious mudslinging, innuendoes, lies propaganda, and hate speeches from different stakeholders regarding the outcomes of election(s) most especially when it is not favourable to the party.

The examples of post-election violence abound in Nigeria. The menace remains a recurring decimal in Nigeria's electoral process as it seems no single election in the history of Nigeria is devoid of violence since independence in 1960. The 1964/65 election violence in Western

Nigeria popularly referred to as "Operation wetie" in which hundreds of people were either killed or wounded (Iyayi, 2008:6). The 1983 election violence in the old Ondo State between Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) resulted to killing and wanton destructions of lives and properties (Alemika, 2011: 21-22). The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election resulted in violence and social disruption in form of strikes, riots and government repression of the press and civil societies (Bekoe 2011). The fourth republic was not different, in 2003 general elections, at least 100 people were reportedly killed and many more were injured (Cyllah, 2010:5). The 2011 presidential election was the bloodiest in Nigeria recent history, the post-election violence in form of three days of violent riots following dissatisfaction with the election outcomes resulted in about 800 people being killed and 65,000 people displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2011c) in northern Nigeria. The electoral process in every democracy across the world is hanged on the legal framework that defines and regulates the activities before, during and after each election. In the case of Nigeria, such legal framework includes the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Electoral Acts and other Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) guidelines serving as a framework for electoral politics and competition (Katsina, 2014).

The blatant violation of these legal frameworks calls for punishment. Where this is not the case, as in the case of Nigeria, it becomes difficult to restrain the people from resorting to extra-constitutional means to seek redress. The most notable, it would appear, is in the form of post-election violence (Katsina, 2015:6). The inability of the security agencies and the Judiciary to prosecute the violators of the legal framework on elections processes in the past to deter re-occurrence is another catalyst for post-election violence.

3.0 RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS IN ELECTORAL MATTERS

There are many stakeholders in the electoral process as earlier mentioned but the critical ones shall be discussed here.

3.1 Government

Government as a stakeholder in the electoral matter would be viewed in three components as the executive, legislature and the judiciary. The three arms according to Norman (2003) ensure checks and balances in government. The executive comprising the president and other chief executives at the states level who act as the chief security officers. The legislature set the framework for the conduct of elections based on its powers to screen and confirm the appointment of the chairman and other National commissioners and resident electoral commissioners of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). It amends the electoral acts from time to time for peaceful conducts of elections and set the parameters for dealing with electoral violence. The Judiciary is often referred to as the last hope of the common man; adjudicates on various cases of election malpractices that hitherto would have resulted in electoral violence. However, the chief executives have not been able to play their roles properly to prevent post-election violence due to party affiliation, ethnic and religious considerations and individualistic interests. The delay and alleged compromise of the judicial officers serving in election tribunals in most cases have also eroded the trust of the populace in their ability to serve justice thereby encouraging violence.

3.2 The Media

The media refers to various means of communication, for example, the print, radio, television, and social media i.e Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc. Then it's is a fundamental institution for disseminating information from one end to the other for the purpose of, among others enlightening the community (Norman, 2010:320). The media has immense power in a democracy because most people the world over get their news from the mass media. The media shapes the opinion of the people on how they perceive the world and what they consider to be important (Norman, 2010:320). Often referred to as the fourth estate of the realm, the media performs a number of important functions in the electoral process. Norman identifies some of the functions as follows:

The media report the news, serves as an intermediary between the government and the people, helps determine which issues should be discussed, and keeps people actively involved in society and politics. Every citizen has the rights to be kept informed at all times of various events in the country, and in the world at large which are of importance to the lives and activities of the people and also issues of importance to society. The power of the news media is tremendous and it's potential awesome. It is capable of informing, misinforming and even misleading the public (Norman, 2010: 321).

As important as the roles of the media to democracy may seem, the negative aspect of its activities is actually not helpful to Nigerian democracy. Some of the crises before, during, and after elections in Nigeria are caused by misinformation and misleading reportage of the media. The sensational reportage of events in order to catch the fancy of the readers and the ethnic and religious colouration in reporting political events are some of the negative impacts of the media in post-election violence in the country. Maduekwe blames the post-election violence on the media when he stated that: "the media have failed to be discreet in their reportage of inciting comments said to be made by Buhari, some ethnic groups, including the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) who kept insisting that power must return to the North" (Maduekwe, 2015: 8).

The indiscretion, misinformation and misleading report of events by both the conventional and social media have been affirmed as some of the primary cause of post-election violence in the country. Hate speeches capable of causing troubles are daily reported in the run-up to elections in the country. The 2011 and 2015 elections were prominent in this regard, where some of the media organisations threw caution to the wind even as against the Nigeria media code of election coverage by the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC). In this line of thought, Arogundade argues that:

The newspaper fell to the trap of reporting hate speeches by quoting directly from interviews, press statements and sometimes from alleged 'online sources' credit to aides of the presidential candidates of both the APC and the PDP against whom most of the hate speeches were targeted (Arogundade, 2015 cited in Maduekwe, 2015: 8).

In an interview with the General Manager Nigeria Television Authority Ado- Ekiti, Mr Folarin attested to the negative roles played by some media outfits that aired hate speeches that can incite people against each other but he cautioned that the best role expected of a responsible media outfit is to either reject or edit any statement capable of jeopardising the security and unity of the country. He cited an example of what his organisation did in a live broadcast if a politician is making an offensive statement, the audio would be cut off to prevent the populace from consuming the wrong message (Field Survey 2017). He, therefore, posited that to manage post-election violence, the media practitioners must be professionals and stop being sensational in the reportage of political and religious events in the country.

3.3 The Security Agencies

All the local security agencies, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) Department of State Security (DSS) Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) have important roles to play in every stage of the electoral process in Nigeria for maintenance of peace in the country. The effectiveness of the security strategy will be enhanced by good coordination between INEC as the election management body and the security agencies. A coordination mechanism will have to be established to smooth the progress and sustenance of effective information sharing and decision making at the national and all other levels of all the agencies (News Telegraph, 2015). The paper further stated that;

The NPF should develop an Election-Time community policing strategy that clearly set out guidelines that will enhance effective policing at the local government and rural community levels and also reinforces the code of conduct for police officers in their handling of issues resulting from intraparty conflict, with a clear demarcation or distinction of such conflict from electoral offences (News Telegraph, 2015).

The police and other security agencies including the Nigeria Army who is drafted to trouble spots to quell post-election crisis always maintain peace. They arrest offenders and charge them to court for prosecution, and they also settle minor disputes that have not degenerated into full-blown violence. An interview with Herbert Adeyemi the PRO of the Nigerian Police Force and Afolabi T of Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Ekiti State Command revealed the following as the roles of security agencies in the management of post-election violence in Nigeria.

Protection of lives and properties of the citizens in and around the conflict environment; make necessary deployment to critical infrastructure such as Electricity, Gas, Oil, Water installations to prevent vandalism; collate security reports and share intelligence (information) within their network and with other relevant stakeholders that can help in the management of such conflict; create joint monitoring and enforcement team to man flashpoints with a view to preventing further escalation of violence; employs the techniques of 'moral suasion' to manage little crisis while minimum force is applied to disperse crowd and effect arrest of culprits when violence has gone to the extreme and finally, when violence

involves bloodshed and destruction of properties, the police arrest, interrogate and prosecute the offenders (**Field Survey 2017**).

3.4 The Electoral Commission

The institution manages all activities relating to electoral processes. It is referred to as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria. The body is the creation of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Section 15, Part 1 of the Third Schedule. The body remains the most important stakeholders in the electoral matter because its actions or inactions determine to a large extent the success or failure of electoral activities and would determine whether there shall be post-election violence or not. However, to live up to its name, the body needs to be impartial and not favour any political party. The body must be able to perform its functions without any interference in its dealing with other stakeholders. It must be transparent and allow fair participation in the electoral process. INEC work best in the area of the preventive mechanism by following the laydown rules of the game fairly devoid of any secrecy or suspicion.

Interaction with the Public Relation Officer of INEC in Ekiti State, Mr Taiwo Gbadegesin revealed the following as some of the roles performed by the organisation in the prevention and management of post-election violence.

The commission advocate for violence-free electoral process during voters education and regular meetings with stakeholders; INEC partners with security operatives to maintain peace before, during and after elections; partnership with various media organisations to create awareness against any issues capable of causing violence after elections; the Department of Alternative Dispute Resolution of the commission do attend to disputes involving some of the stakeholders instead of going to court by making use of legal experts and traditional rulers and chiefs (**Field Survey 2017**).

Stressing the role of the media in collaboration with the election management body, Humphrey Nwosu posited that 'engaging in dialogue with the mass media community to inform the general public through the media of our efforts to build confidence in the electoral process and exchange views with the media on how best this can be done' (Nwosu, 1991:7).

3.5 The Political Parties

A political party is defined as an organised group of people with at least roughly similar political aims and opinions that seek to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public offices (Butler and Leonard, 1991). Political parties have a big stake in election management. The roles they played are crucial since they are the ones playing the game. Without political parties, there will be no election (Norman, 2010:325). A look at the functions of political parties suggests an inter-relationship of events that involves the different stages of human interaction that can lead to violence if not properly managed. The control mechanism within political parties used to manage internal crisis can help a great deal to control members in case of post-election violence to reduce the intensity of the crisis.

3.6 The Electorates/ Voters

The electorates/voters are the consumers of the services provided by the election management body. If the service is poor, the voters' attitude will be negative and their participation in the electoral process will be negatively affected (Norman 2010:323). The cultural, ethnic and religious diversities of the Nigerian state become an issue in their reactions to election results.

4.0 FACTORS FOR POST ELECTION VIOLENCE

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violence revolution inevitable" (J F Kennedy, 1962)

The above aptly captures the reasons for post-election violence in African states and Nigeria in particular. The phenomenon is a common feature of electoral process in Nigeria. As earlier stated, since independence, there has not been any time where the election was conducted without violence at the end of the process. Notable among them are 1964/65 in the Western Region, 1983 in the old Ondo state, 1993 in the South West and 2011 in Northern Nigeria. The question now is what are the immediate and remote causes of incessant electoral violence?

(i) Perceived Rigging and Irregularities in the Electoral Process:

Snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, thumb printing, result falsification are some of the common features of electoral processes in Nigeria. The Electoral Management Body, Political Parties and Security Personnel are in most cases culpable through their actions and tacit support for parties in the election. The open support for a party in the election by stakeholders who should be transparently seen as neutral in the election induces and precipitates violence. The army of the unemployed youth and extremely poor citizens created by this leadership failure becomes a ready tool for violence before, during and after elections in Nigeria.

(ii) Widespread hate Speeches and Negative Mass Media Reports:

Hate speeches, according to (Kukah, 2015) is communication that denigrates a particular person or a group on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or other characteristics. It can be in the form of any speech, gesture or conduct, writing or display and usually marks incitement, violence or prejudice against an individual or a group (Akubor, 2015: 3). The phenomenon of hate speeches that has been described above has taken the centre stage of the electoral process in Nigeria. Individuals and political parties are competing to outdo one another in this regard. This eventually creates a charged atmosphere in the polity that usually results in post-election violence. The media, both print and electronics are a tool in spreading hate speeches due to political or ethnic affiliation or for patronage system.

(iii) Ineffective or Compromised Security Personnel:

It is a common occurrence to see security personnel looking the other way when irregularities occurred during the electoral process. It may either be that they are supporting the ruling party or they have been compromised with financial inducement. Such activities undermine

security and can worsen the reactions of electorates who watched helplessly when their votes are manipulated without any help coming from the security operatives. According to Alemika, there were reported cases of widespread violence and intimidation at polling stations in different parts of the country during the 2003 elections where the political office holders used their orderlies to intimidate voters, disorganized voting process and snatched electoral materials (Alemika, 2007: 158).

(iv) Bribery of Electoral Body or Staff:

Some permanent and ad hoc staff of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) do compromise their position after receiving bribes and inducement from politicians to rig elections in their favour. This is done in active connivance with security operatives. For example, a respected scholar Alemika lends credence to this. According to him 'Security Agencies, INEC officials were muzzled financially to condone thumbprint and stuff ballot boxes in the 2003 elections' (Alemika, 2007). Alluding to this fact, the report of the investigation carried out on the irregularities during December 2016 re-run election in River State revealed that "out of the alleged N360 million bribe, N111 million and N300,000 were recovered from the electoral officials. Each electoral officer got N15m, while the three senior electoral officers for the senatorial zones received an extra N5m each which brought the total to N360m" (Omonobi, Iheanachor and Ajayi, 2017).

(v) Youth Unemployment

According to (Nigerian National Youth Policy 2001) Youths are referred to as a young person of ages 18-35 years (FRN, 2001:4). They are referred to as the most vibrant and resourceful demographic segment of human society. There can be no meaningful development in any society if it fails to harness the potentials of its youthful population. Despite the critical role of youth in the advancement of democracy, youths have been found to be major perpetrators of electoral violence in Nigeria (Etim, 2016:3). According to Aisha Mahmood, in Nigeria, there is the issue of youth and unemployment. 70percent of the 80 million youths in the country are either unemployed or underemployed. We are all witnesses to what happened during the immigration recruitment exercise and this is simply because 80percent of Nigerian youths are unemployed (Mahmood, 2014:3). Considering the above and the axiom that says an idle hand is the devil's workshop, the involvement of unemployed youths in electoral related violence cannot be far-fetched.

(vi) Poverty Occasioned by Bad Governance and Economy

Poverty is a condition where people's basic need such as food, clothing and shelter are not being met. Absolute poverty is synonymous with destitution and occurs when people cannot obtain adequate resources (measured in terms of calories or nutrition) to support a minimum level of nutrition (Business Dictionary .Com).

Bad governance has been understood to reflect a general tendency of a public institution not being able to manage public affairs and public resources. (Owoeye and Bissessar, 2009:1) sees bad governance as a symptom of institutional and leadership failures, explicitly manifested by its long list of dictatorial leaders, non-free media and undemocratic elections. As noted above, the leadership and institutional failures of past governments in Nigeria have

led to endemic poverty that has permeated every sphere of Nigeria society to the extent that it becomes practically difficult for many people to afford one square meal per day. Osodi noted that mass poverty in Nigeria is capable of turning a decent man into a beast within a twinkle of an eye. The political class in the country are aware of this fact, and they use it to their advantage, knowing that getting people on their side is not a big deal, so far they can flash the cash. It is also the norm to influence voter's decisions with cash and gift in order to gain their support (Osodi, 2016:8). Ezekwesili alluded to this fact when she noted that 69 per cent of over 100million Nigerians were living within the poverty bracket. Nigeria according to her is perhaps the best-known example of the African paradox. It is a country which has struggled with the development process over the last 53 years of her independence (Ezekwesili, 2014:3). The level of poverty in Nigeria occasioned by bad governance and institutional failure have turned so many able-bodied men and women to criminals who become a ready tool in the hands of unscrupulous politicians to use at will to perpetrate electoral violence.

(vii) Lack of Internal Democracy within Political Parties

Internal democracy in political parties could be described as a process that allows participation or that give voices to ordinary members in a party to express their views on issues without necessarily concentrating the decision-making mechanism on the leader or founder of such parties (Ayiti, 2016). Lack of internal democracy in Nigeria political parties is a threat to the country's nascent democracy. The party primaries throughout the country clearly show that Nigeria political parties are not operating within the norms of democratic principles (Egbosiuba, 2014:1) argued that pre and post-election violence in Nigeria were caused principally by do-or-die attitude of politicians, politics of hate and inflammatory comments as well as absence of internal democracy in the political parties which he regarded as failure of political parties to respect their constitution.

Many Nigerian political parties lack internal democracy and that is the genesis of their crisis. Party affairs including primary elections are not transparently done, the imposition of candidates and all forms of mismanagement were carried out and this has resulted in internal wrangling in political parties in Nigeria. Ordinarily, political parties supposed to be owned by the people, Omeiza noted that political parties are the expression of political pluralism; they contribute to the formation and expression of the will of the people and are a fundamental instrument for participation (Omeiza, 2015:2).

5.0 REVIEW OF POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

5.1 The First Republic

The 1964/65 elections in western Nigeria was allegedly rigged in favour of the ruling party laid the foundation for the post-election violence in the country. The announcement of the rigged election results quickly sparked off unprecedented acts of thuggery, violence, arson, mass murders and general acts of lawlessness in the western region (Adeeko, 2015). The election results were violently contested thus leading to the popular uprising known as 'operation wetie' in which hundreds of people were either killed or wounded (Iyayi, 2008:6). The above crisis truncated the democratic government in the country on January 15th 1966 when the military sacked the elected government officials who were alleged to be unable to manage their electoral success.

5.2 The Second Republic

The second republic followed the same pattern. Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1979 and to concretize this, the election was conducted by the outgoing military government of Olusegun Obasanjo. Perhaps because of the military government in power, there was no record of post-election violence. However, in 1983 during the civilian to the civilian transfer of power, the bubble burst again in the western region. In the old Ondo-State, the rivalry between members and supporters of the two major political parties in the state, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and National Party of Nigeria (NPN) got to the peak when the NPN candidate Akin Omoboriowo was declared winner in a landslide victory in a state considered to be the stronghold of UPN. This seeming abnormality resulted in killing and wanton destruction of lives and properties (Alemika, 2011: 21-22). Again, the military exploited the crisis with other alleged act of miss-governance to stage a comeback to power.

5.3 The Aborted Third Republic

The aborted third republic equally witnessed post-election violence. The election that was regarded as one of Nigeria's freest and fairest (Lewis, 1994 and Suberu, 1993) was annulled by the then military regime headed by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida. The annulment denied the widely acclaimed winner of the election Moshood Abiola a chance at the presidency. This resulted in violence and social disruption in the form of strikes, riots (especially in western Nigeria) and government repression of the press and civil society (Okpotor, 2015:3)

5.4 The Fourth Republic

The 1999 election was conducted after several years of military rule the pressure from civil society organisations and international community especially after the annulment of June 12 presidential election led to force the exit of the military. The electoral stakeholders and indeed all Nigerians were excited that the country was returning to the comity of democratic nations. Though, there were flaws in the electoral process during the period but did not degenerate into post-election violence. The 2003 and 2007 general elections witnessed a more sophisticated brand of electoral fraud than 1964/65 and 1983 elections. However, no significant incident of post-election violence was recorded (Human Rights Watch 2004, LeVan, 2003:36-38). The main reason why the widespread rigging of the 2003 and 2007 elections did not translate to violence is that the opposition could not sufficiently mobilise the people to protest the outcome of the elections.

The worst post-election violence in the recent history of Nigeria occurred in 2011 after the results of the presidential election conducted on 16th April were released by Independent National Electoral Commission. The political tension that surrounded the presidential election in the North in 2011, which resulted in violence when the results were announced, was rooted in the long-standing tension between the North and South of the country. More importantly, also, it could be traced to the zoning arrangement of key posts including the presidency- between different regions by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (NSRP policy briefs No7). Though zoning is not known to the constitution of the country there is an unwritten agreement for the rotation of the presidency between the North and South of Nigeria when the PDP was formed in 1998. The death of President Umaru Yar'Adua midway into his term on May 10th 2010 destabilised the arrangement and brought Ebele Jonathan a

Christian from Southern part of the country into power as against the wishes of the northern oligarchy, Jonathan fought and secured the ticket of the PDP to run for the 2011 presidential election and he won as against what Attahiru Jega referred to as 'crisis of expectation earlier quoted. The northern Muslim voted massively for Buhari of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and we're expecting him to win but the reverse was the case. Consequently, violence erupted in ten Muslim dominated Northern states of Kaduna, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe, Niger, Kano, Borno, Jigawa, and Yobe simply because Muhammadu Buhari lost the election to the incumbent Ebele Jonathan. An estimated 938 persons were killed while 735 persons sustained various degrees of injuries (Lemu panel report, 2011).

The 2015 elections raised probable fears in the minds of all electoral stakeholders especially when the electioneering campaigns was laced with hate speeches, derogatory remarks, slanderous documentaries and campaign of calumny. The violence of different kinds and dimensions resulted in deaths was recorded. Given the fact that the same characters that participated in the 2011 elections with catastrophic end were still the same gladiators, there were fears of the repeat of 2011 post-election violence. However, the events that follow the election proved every stakeholder wrong. "INEC was widely acknowledged and appreciated for conducting a relatively successful elections that elicited the spirit of sportsmanship" (Muheeb, 2016:21) and again, the expectation of many Nigerians yearning for change of government at the centre was met, but in all, the maturity, magnanimity and spirit of sportsmanship exhibited by the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan who willingly accepted defeat actually save the day for the country and averted the much anticipated post-election violence.

5.5 Preventing Post-Election Violence in Nigeria

Since elections have become a ritual in democratic governance across the world, constant efforts must be geared towards making it a peaceful exercise in Africa and Nigeria without the usual violence that is associated with the process before, during and after each election. To achieve this, party executives have the duty of ensuring that they guard their utterances during the campaign, they should abide by the code of conduct of the parties and refrain from inciting comments by their supporters. The people must be allowed to be the deciding factor. They must choose their leaders (Jemibewon, 2014). Hate speeches must be discouraged by all means possible. The parties and candidates should focus on issues rather than attack personalities, resort to the use of intemperate language and ethnocentrism. Political parties should not see themselves as enemies but rather opponents in order to sustain peace and prevent electoral violence (Larbi, 2012). The diversities of the country should be seen as an advantage; the citizens should downplay ethnicity, regionalism and religion affiliation and resolve to uphold the tenets of democracy to prevent post-election violence. Corruption and unemployment must be tackled if the country will record any success in this regard. Security agencies and INEC officials must not be compromised through corruption, otherwise, there won't be fair and that may act as a catalyst for post-election violence using the unemployed youths as a tool. Pre-election committee of eminent Nigerians was constituted to facilitate the signing of an undertaking to maintain peace by the two main contenders at the election to compel their supporters to accept the outcomes of the elections. Though, the step was criticized for the reason that; no undertaking can prevent spontaneous negative reactions to manipulation, harassment and unhealthy compromises (Muheeb, 2016:14).

The agreement to make the 2015 general elections credible and violent-free were formally sealed by fourteen presidential candidates for the contest including the two leading candidates President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP and Muhammadu Buhari of the APC. The letters and the spirit of the undertaking otherwise called the 'Abuja Accord' by the promoters of the parley particularly barred contestants from making inciting speeches that could cause the eruption of violence in whatever guise before, during and after the elections (Nwabughio, 2015). This initiative should be commended for providing the needed platform for preventing an outbreak of violence after the elections. The committee equally stepped in to meet with President Goodluck Jonathan immediately it was becoming obvious that the candidate of the opposition party, the APC was coasting to victory to douse the tension and to remind him of the agreement of the 'Abuja Accord'. This actually led to the historic telephone call of President Jonathan to Muhammadu Buhari congratulating him and conceding defeat even before the official declaration of result by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

6.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The paper has examined the roles of relevant stakeholders in the management of post-election violence in Nigeria. The study revealed that many of the violence that occurred after elections were caused by the following: recklessness of political elites, political parties, security operatives and the electoral management body. Others are sensational and offensive reportage from the media, lack of internal democracy by political parties, highly monetised political system, poor economy that causes unemployment, poverty and social inequality.

All the stakeholders must rise up to do what is right, play the expected roles allocated to individual and/or group stakeholder(s). The government should rise above partisan consideration and galvanise all the relevant stakeholders together for robust training and sensitization with a view to nipping in the bud the remote and immediate causes of violence to prevent reoccurrence. It is therefore important for the media to be circumspect with their reportage on insults, hate speeches and negative propaganda that are spewed out by politicians, and the so-called serial callers and political commentators. There should be laws regulating the use of social media. The television and radio stations could also equip their stations with delayed transmission devices to help cut vulgar language and negative contributions from serial callers, especially those who appear to have a fixed political agenda. Public enlightenment and regular interface between security agencies, traditional and religious leaders', political stakeholders and general public to shun violence and give peace a chance during electioneering process. The political stakeholders should educate their followers to avoid confrontations with opponents during electoral process at the slightest provocation. The government should provide employment for youths and the unemployed youths should not allow themselves to be used as agent of destruction by unscrupulous politicians during elections. The government should take steps to improve governance and intensify the war against corruption so that more resources can be devoted to social provision and, in particular, job creation and skill acquisition for the youth. The paper concludes that greater attention should be paid to preventive mechanism instead of management of conflicts.

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