THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Electoral Security and Its Implications for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

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Abstract:
The phenomenon of electoral violence has remained one of the defining characteristics of Nigeria's democratic process. The problem has continued to intensify with its corrosive effect on the democratisation process in the 4th Republic. This is expressed in the increasing manifestation of physical, psychological and structural violence perpetrated against political opponents, the citizenry and the system. Invariably, this has constituted a sense of insecurity, electoral apathy and legitimacy crisis in the polity. Despite the devastating consequences of protracted electoral violence in Nigeria, systematic academic research is rather scanty on the imperative of electoral security on the sustenance of democratic culture in the country. Using secondary sources of data collection, this study, therefore, seeks to explore the nexus between electoral security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Findings reveal that the threat to electoral security is a product of a complex set of interactive factors characterising various stages of the election process. Hence, the overwhelming coercive approach to electoral security which is informed by the assumption that the principal threat to electoral security emanates from undesirable activities on the Election Day is quite misleading and grossly insufficient to address electoral insecurity. Therefore, the study recommends democracy-friendly measures that spans across the three stages of the electoral process for electoral security management with a view to securing an enabling environment for 'good politics' and participatory democracy in the country's 4th Republic.

Keywords: Electoral violence, Electoral security, Democratic consolidation, Nigeria

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, the principles and practice of democracy have continued to gain more popular acceptability than any other system of government. The mass conversion of politicians, social analysts and political thinkers to the course of democratic ideals as well as the unprecedented extent to which various independent states that were hitherto autocratic or totalitarian in nature have embraced democratic culture in the post-cold war is an unbeatable testimony to this assertion. One of the major reasons for this increased wave of pro-democracy and democratization process across the globe is that democracy has gained universal recognition as a progressive force for social change, good governance, political stability and sustainable development. Evidence further suggests that democratically advanced societies particularly of the western hemisphere enjoy not only the highest standard of living in the world but also the most stable social and political systems, in addition to the fact that they represent a political and socio-economic bloc where the highest level of public accountability is apparent.

Africa is not left out of the spread of democratic values and ideals with which the post-cold war era is characterised. To that end, recent developments in extant literature have held the view that Africa will no longer witness the generalized chaos manifested by perennial political instability, bloody civil wars and brutal armed conflicts which became the defining features of the continent between the 1990s and early 2000s (Hutchful & Bathily, 1998; Adedeji, 1999; Anyaoku, 1999; Adedeji & Ayo, 2000; Akindele, 2003). This promising optimism arising from the benefits inherent in democratic principles and practice might, however, remain a wishful thinking unless concerted efforts are made in the direction of addressing the various factors that are set to thwart the process of conducting credible elections in various independent African countries. This is because the stability of democratic system in a given society is invariably gauged by the quality of its electoral process.

Following from the foregoing, this study posits that effective electoral process, which epitomises electoral security in its holistic terms, will provide the synergy for democratic consolidation, which in turn will provide a template for political stability and sustainable development in post-cold war Africa.   The point is that the 'third wave of democratization' in Africa may arrive at a dead end, unless committed efforts are concentrated on the process of building a viable and virile democratic system that guarantees freedom from electoral apathy before, during and after the election periods.

With particular reference to Nigeria, it is quite apparent that electoral violence has posed unprecedented security threat to the country's nascent democracy and democratic experimentation since the evolution of the 4th Republic. Nigeria's historical antecedent shows that political disagreements, especially those that are associated with electoral misconduct usually snowballed into national tragedy of unmitigated proportions. (Young, 1976; Adedeji, 1999; Anyaoku, 1999; Osaghae, 2002; Zack-Williams *et al,* 2002; Green & Luehrmann, 2003; Agbaje *et al,* 2004; Albert, 2005; 2008; Anifowose, 2011). This is expressed in the increasing manifestation of physical, psychological and structural violence perpetrated against political opponents and the citizenry, which include intimidation, vandalism, abduction, character defamation, and political assassination.   Invariably, this has constituted a sense of insecurity and electoral apathy in the polity. Despite these historical realities about Nigeria's political development, the democratic route in Nigeria is still fraught with dangers, considering the failure of subsequent elections to meet the minimum requirements for the conduct of democratic elections within the framework of international best practices. The questions are: what factors constitute threats to the conduct of democratic elections in Nigeria? How can we evolve an enabling environment for electoral security in the country? What are the implications of electoral security for democratic consolidation in Nigeria?

This paper seeks to provide answers to these questions by exploring the significance of electoral security for the consolidation of the nascent democratic values and practice in Nigeria's 4th Republic. This study postulates the thesis that no democratic society can develop its democratic process beyond the quality of its electoral security control mechanisms. The thesis is hinged on the premise that the evolution of an enabling environment for the sustenance of ideological-based and violent-free electoral process has always preceded democratic consolidation and provided a leeway for sustainable development, political stability and national integration in any modern society that has recorded success story of democratic tranquillity and political stability. The central Objective of this study is to take a systematic dissection of electoral security in view of its implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria's forth Republic. Other specific objectives are:

  i.   To document the prevalence of electoral violence in Nigeria arising from electoral insecurity in the country's history of democratic experimentation, particularly since independence;
  ii. To identify the determinants of electoral insecurity in the country;
  iii. Make necessary recommendations towards ensuring electoral security in the interest of enduring democracy in Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1. Election

Election is one of the most prominent features of political events in modern democracy. Although election and voting are not in themselves considered to be sufficient conditions for political representation, there is little doubt, however, that they are a necessary condition, germane to the entrenchment of democratic principles and practices. Indeed, given its conspicuous relevance in democratic political space, election has been described as the 'very heart of democracy' (Heywood, 1997:211). Put succinctly, Chukkol (2006) submits that periodic holding of elections is a *sine qua non* to any democracy.

The word "election" has been described as a "formal act of collective decision that occurs in a stream of connected antecedent and subsequent behaviour". To Heywood (1997:211) election is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by a designated body of people "the electorate". This definition is in accord with the opinion advanced by the Nigeria Court of Appeal as "the process of choosing by popular votes a candidate for political office in a democratic system of government". A fundamental assumption of democracy, argues Erhagbe (2003), is that the governed should have a say in the selection of those who govern them. On that note, election is said to be an "important means by which citizens concretize the philosophical fiction of their sovereignty and express their rights to political choices and participation". In other words, the significance of election in a democratic society derives from the importance attached to choice, participation and **public** accountability (Alemika, 2007:148, **emphasis mine**). Heywood (1997) submits that election aims to perform specific functions in any democratic setting. These include political recruitment, representation, making government, influencing policy, building legitimacy, shaping public opinion and helping to strengthen the elite.

Given these essential functions of election in contemporary democratic states, it is logical to argue that election is not just an Election Day activity, though a crucial component. Rather, election encompasses political activities before, during and after the election days. This explains why the phenomenon of election in modern democracy is an institution rather than a mere terminal composition of an electoral committee. In this way, democratization is understood as an ongoing, dynamic process instead of a singular achievement (Green & Luehrmann, 2003:305).

2.2. Electoral Security

Since ages past, the concern for the security of a nation is undoubtedly as old as the nation itself. In its broad sense, security has been defined as an atmosphere of guaranteed protection, and the condition of feeling happy and safe from danger and harm (Nwolise, 2009). Security gives meaning to human existence in time perspective. Hence, Nwolise (2009) submits that the security of a person, identity group, nation, or the world is not only a sacred and strategic value, it is the utmost value. This is because unless one can be assured of his physical security or safety, everything else will be meaningless.

From that broad understanding of security, electoral security, therefore, can be said to imply protection or safety from any form of hitch or impediment that can distort the conduct of credible election within the context of acceptable democratic tradition and culture. In a somewhat all encompassing perspective, Fisher (2002) quoted in Albert, (2007: 134) defines electoral security as "the process of protecting electoral stakeholders such as voters, candidates, pool workers, media, and observers; electoral information such as vote

results, registration data, and campaign material; electoral facilities such as polling stations and counting centres; and electoral events such as camping rallies against death, damage, or destruction". As Albert (2007) has aptly noted, the bodies expected to perform this task include security agencies, political parties, INEC, judicial officials, the media, electoral observers and the academia, among others (emphasis mine). This implies that electoral security has both coercive and non-coercive dimensions, spanning across the three stages of election process, namely; pre-election period, Election Day and post-election period. As a sensitive element of the democratic process, the peaceful conduct of election is sacrosanct. Hence, government in a democratic setting has the statutory responsibility to make provision for the sanctity of the election at the three stages of the process. The institutional, legislative, statutory and structural arrangements must satisfy the minimum requirements that condition the conduct of democratic election, so much that politicians and other important actors across party divide and ideological leaning may not see the use of violence and manipulation of the available mechanisms as a means of securing favourable electoral outcome. Thus, electoral security is all about securing the holistic integrity of the electoral process, especially now that elections are increasingly seen as a key component of peace-building process and a cornerstone of dynamic social interaction. Hence, electoral security must address protection from the physical, psychological and structural threats against the electorate and the citizenry at large, without undue consideration for party affiliation, ethnic sentiment, historical antecedent, religious divide, or any other form of social differences. The bottom line is that a political environment that is free from threat to electoral security is determined by ensuring that political parties and their candidates win in the scheme of power without jeopardizing the safety of rivals and the citizenry, and without distorting the sanctity of the electoral process.

Electoral insecurity is perpetrated in electoral violence, which manifests in physical, psychological and structural dimensions. Albert (2007:133) postulates that physical electoral violence is a situation where there is a physical assault, which may include any of the following acts: 'thugery' or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral stakeholders or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with the electoral process (Ladan, 2005).

Psychological electoral conflict manifests in terms of indiscriminate pasting of campaign posters, chanting slogans, intimidation of political opponents, bias media reportage, abuse of statutory responsibilities by the electoral institution, the security agencies and the judiciary, unequal access to public media by political parties of varying status, and abuse of office by traditional rulers in terms of intimidating the masses to perform their electoral rights against their political will (Alanamu, 2005; Ladan, 2005). According to Albert (2007:133) this type of violence explains the phenomenon of 'political apathy' in a democratic society. In other words, anxiety and apprehension are instilled in the people either to contest for public offices or to declare support for a particular political party or its candidates in the open. Moreover, the heavy presence of armed security agents at various pooling booths is associated with Election-Day psychological violence as eligible voters may be deprived of exercising their lawful and constitutional right of voting without fair of intimidation. The problem of electoral psychological violence becomes phenomena, says Albert (2007:134) in a society where the political parties, electoral commission, the judiciary, the media and the security operatives cannot ensure the citizens of 'electoral security'.

Structural violence is the third dimension of electoral conflict. It is usually indirect and inherent in the structure of society. Albert (2007:134) submits that structural electoral violence manifests in form of exclusionary or discriminatory policies against certain groups or political divides with the motive of sustaining the status quo in favour of a few within the polity.

In the Nigerian's context, Albert (2007:135) posits that structural electoral violence manifests in terms of how some social groups are discriminated against. Such people are literally excluded from political opportunities in that political parties or communities on account of their ethnic background, religious divides and gender. Sequel to the foregoing, people from different ideological divide will see elections in the context of "we" "they" dichotomy and would not mind becoming instrumental spoilers of the democratic process.

As a matter of fact, some degree of electoral conflict is inevitable in any democratic system, especially in its non-violent and low-intensity state. This is because elections have to do with competition for a limited number of public political positions by many contenders from different political parties and ideological enclaves. Malu (2006:97) corroborates this when he contends that election disputes are inherent in the electoral process and should not be viewed as antithesis to liberal democracy, but as proof of the strength, vigour, robustness, vitality and openness of the democratic system.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that electoral security is not just an event that must be undertaken on Election Day with a view to enforcing compliance to voting rules on the part of the electorate. Rather electoral security entails a combination of mutually reinforcing factors that work in tandem to ensure the sustenance of improved democratic process.

Given the axiomatic proposition that elections do not only allow for political competition, participation and legitimacy, but also permit peaceful change of power for continuity in governance, therefore, the need for stakeholders to embrace 'good politics' and ensure the security of the electoral process becomes imperative. A democratic society is said to operate in the context of good politics when the polity is free from forces that threaten electoral security, and when provision is made for due process in the conduct of democratic elections in an open, just and competitive atmosphere.

One of the ways in which the democratization process in various independent states of Africa is laid on a sandy foundation is their inability to guarantee the sanctity of the electoral process. Indeed, lack of an enabling atmosphere for electoral security has been central among the forces variously referred to as 'triggers' or 'catalysts' or 'occasions' for outbreaks of ethnic, political, religious and other forms of internal conflicts in post-cold war African society (Adekanye, 2007).

Hence, the third wave of democratization in Africa might not yield the desired 'democratic dividends' as many countries experience multi-party elections without concomitant productive improvement in the electoral system and governance process.

2.3. Democratic Consolidation

Democracy means different things to different people. Hence, scholars, political analysts, democrats and critics, have sought to explain democracy based on their understanding of the concept and subject to those things that interest them about it. In its classical context by Daniel Webster, democracy was defined as peoples' government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people (see Danjibo, 2012: 302). What this suggests is that originally, democracy involved the participation of all in decision making as practised in ancient Greece, and to some extent, in the traditional Igbo society. However, there is a paradigm shift from the traditional perspective of democracy to the contemporary notion of the concept. In the modern times, democracy is a government of popular representation. Hence, if Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "government of the people by the people and for the people" is anything to go by, the centrality of popular representation is sacrosanct. Suffice it to say, therefore, that representative democracy in its modern construct could be considered as republicanism as it involves popular participation through legitimately free and fair electoral process. To this end, democracy in its contemporary construct is conceptualised as that system of government, which, though requires majority rule but guarantees the protection of minority rights in the society.

Consolidation of democracy, as Larry Diamond puts it, is "a process by which democracy is so well established and legitimized that it cannot be subverted or destroyed" (See Obi, 2003:255). This position, according to Obi (2003) is hinged upon the strengthening of democratic institutions, the enthronement of a democratic culture complemented by a change from authoritarian to democratic attitudes. Obi stresses further that it presupposes the opening up of the democratic process, the supremacy of the rule of law and civil engagement with the democratic state. Perhaps, considering the outstanding input of ideological-based democracy to national cohesion and political stability, Juan Linz considered democratic consolidation to be a situation where "democracy is the only game in town". Reflecting on Diamond's standpoint, Obi (2003:235) submits that democratic consolidation points to the rule of law, constitutionalism, and political behaviour that coheres with a democratic ethos.

Emphasising the centrality of election in entrenching democracy and deepening political legitimacy, another school of thought underscores the imperative of "the rule of two turnover elections", in determining the basic elements of democratic consolidation. The whole idea is that democracy is consolidated when an elected incumbent government willingly surrenders power after elections, and the elected government similarly hands over power after another set of elected leaders. Thus, quoting Obi verbatim, democratic consolidation is a: process of democratic development and institutionalization in such a way that the risk of regression to authoritarianism or chaos is minimized or absolutely eliminated. It is an important element of good governance, and brightens the prospects for political stability and democratic peace (2003:255).

From the foregoing, it could be argued that democratic consolidation is all about the development of mutually reinforcing structural, institutional, political, constitutional and procedural arrangements that promote the sustenance of democratic culture and values such that the interests of members of that society are protected and their needs met without undue consideration for group affiliation or ideological cleavage.

With few exceptions, notably Botswana, South Africa, Senegal, Mauritius, Benin Republic, Malawi and Zambia, and (in some regards) Cape Verde and Ghana, emerging trends in Africa's political life have shown that many African states are displaying traits of democratic backsliding, rather than democratic consolidation. This is because some countries that demonstrated effective and constructive democratization capabilities after the cold war in 1989 have begun to sink in the ocean of democratic catastrophe. One major reason for this is that while many independent states in African claim to be moving away from the contemptible anachronism of authoritarianism towards and display some semblance of multi-party democracy, they have not done so much in developing mechanisms that could guarantee electoral security in their respective democratisation and democratic experimentation processes. This ugly development has not only deterred democratic advancement in post-Cold War Africa, but has also posed catastrophic threats to the people's collective existence in their respective post-colonial national life. For instance, violent electoral processes that tend to instigate unending tensions and national disintegration have been severally demonstrated in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Cote d'evoir, Central African Republic, and very recently, Mali, among others.

Hence, conceptual issues and constitutional framework in democratization process in post-cold war Africa need to concentrate more on implications of electoral security for democratic consolidation and political stability in the interest of sustainable peace, which are a *sine qua non* to integrated development, human security and national integration.

2.4. Electoral Insecurity: Bane of Democratic Consolidation and Political Stability in Nigeria

Violence has become synonymous with Nigeria's political culture such that virtually all elections held so far in the country are violent-ridden. Between 1960 and 2011, Nigeria had conducted seven general elections and several other elections at regional and state levels. The general elections were held in 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007, and 2011. A survey of the political history of post independence Nigeria shows that none of these elections was conducted in an atmosphere of appreciable electoral security, which partly informed the collapse of the previous three Republics and subsequent intervention of the military in Nigeria's political life. Electoral violence manifest in varying magnitude and proportions across the country at the three stages of the election process: pre-election period, Election Day and post-election period.

Findings have shown that pre-election conflict and violence often manifest at both intra-and inter party levels in issues such as the process of party formation, undemocratic internal arrangement for party primaries and fielding of candidates for elected positions, government sponsorship of certain party, manipulation by party stalwarts, undue godfather influence on party proceedings, zoning problems, lack of clear-cut ideology, political intolerance, manipulation of public and private media, among others. Election Day violence include lack of security of elected posts, partisan disposition of security agencies, abuse of responsibilities by security personnel, INEC officials and the media, winner-takes-all syndrome, which makes political contest a matter of life and death, logistic

failure on the part of the electoral bodies, which provoke electoral violence and so on. Post-election violence, manifest in terms of government repression of failed candidates, falsification of results, and declaration of falsified results by INEC, marginalization of areas controlled by opposition parties, judicial compromise and poor handling of election petition, among others.

In the political history of Nigeria, evidence abounds that the inability of successive governments to provide an enabling political ambience for electoral security had been central to the factors that constituted the collapse of the previous Republics.

During the first republic, series of unrests, particularly in the western part of the country in 1965 threatened the security and integrity of the Nigerian federalist structure. Despite the state of emergency proclaimed by the federal government as a political approach for stemming the tide of the crisis, the 1st Republic could not survive the problem, which culminated in the introduction of military dictatorship into Nigeria's politics in its post-colonial epoch. In the light of that, Nigeria could not engage in democratic activities until 1979, after 13 years of uninterrupted military dictatorship.

In 1983, a similar situation erupted after the presidential election, which was widely considered to have been massively fraught with all sorts of electoral malpractices and irregularities, was declared in favour of the incumbent president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the N.P.N standard bearer. The political unrest that emanated from that election threatened the integrity of the country again, thereby encouraging the military to have an excuse of re-appearing in the country's political scene. Hence, rather than providing a foundation for the consolidation of democratic culture, values and practices, electoral process in Nigeria has always heightened the political temperature, thereby intensifying a sense of insecurity in the country. In other words, poorly conducted electoral process has been a destabilising force in Nigeria's post-colonial history due to lack of political will on the part of the government for ensuring electoral security in the country.

Moreover, the premature defunct of the 3rd Republic was also informed by failure of the military to tailor a successful transition to civil rule. Despite the fact that the 1993 presidential election was adjudged to have been the most transparent, most peaceful, freest, fairest and most credible in Nigeria's political history, and produced the results that were most conclusive, decisive and widely accepted, the Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB)-led military administration went ahead to annul it.

At the evolution of the 4th Republic in 1999, the democratic process was not erected on any foundation that was more solid than what the country had had in previous Republics as the political environment did not reflect the prerequisites for electoral security. One major reason for this was that the military regime under the leadership of General Abdul-Salami Abubakar did not take enough time to evolve a workable template for credible electoral process. Perhaps, as a result of pressures from the civil society and other stakeholders within and outside the country, the military hurriedly engaged in transition exercise that did not reflect a promising electoral process.

Although the 1999 election that led to the evolution of the 4th Republic was not so fraught with physical violence, especially on Election Day, that was not an indication that Nigeria's electoral process has come of age compared to other relatively advancing democracies in Latin America or Asia. Rather, people reluctantly participated in 1999 election at least to ensure the vacation of the military from Nigeria's leadership terrain after another round of 15 years of undemocratic and oppressive leadership.

Given the weak proceedings to the 4th Republic, subsequent elections could not help the manifestation of another round of electoral violence. Rather than abating, electoral violence has continued to increase during subsequent elections, which intensified Nigeria's security challenges. This is because no part of the country, including Abuja the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was exempt from various dimensions of electoral violence before, during and after election periods. Thus, electoral insecurity has resulted in colossal waste of life and property, which is not in the interest of democratic consolidation. High profile politicians and statesmen as well as innocent members of the public, including minors have continued to fall victims of the ever increasing electoral violence across the country. From one state to the other, there have been gory accounts of events, including bloody clashes, killings and arson, vandalism, abduction, intimidation, victimisation, propaganda and character assassination.

In the build up to 2007 general elections, there were indications that the exercise was going to be fraught with rigging and other forms of malpractices. For instance General Olusegun Obasanjo was widely quoted as declaring during electioneering campaigns that the 2007 election was going to be a do-or-die affair. In reality, the 2007 general elections were inundated with another round of malpractices, which informed yet another round of electoral violence across the country. The elections were described as the most rigged in the history of Nigeria as almost all the rules that guide the process of 'good politics' were violated with impunity by 'electoral criminals' and 'political scavengers' within the polity.

The table below shows selected cases of electoral violence perpetrated against political rivals and the citizenry across the country from the inception of the 4th Republic till date.

Date	Location	Nature of Electoral Violence Perpetrated
March 4, 2003	Edo State	Pre-election conflict: Inter Party clash during electioneering campaign involving PDP/ANPP party members. One person was reported dead, while many others sustained injuries of varying degrees, vehicles were vandalized.
March 5, 2003	Abuja	Pre-election violence (Political assassination): Marshall Harry, ANPP Vice-Chairman for the south-south zone was shot dead in his Abuja residence by unknown gunmen believed to be sponsored by indiscriminate political rivals of the victim.
March 6, 2003	Cross Rivers	Pre-election violence: Attacks on ANPP Senatorial candidate's convoy. Several ANPP supporters were injured, four cars were vandalized
Jan 25, 2010	Ogun State	Pre-election violence (political assassination): Dipo Dina: ACN governorship aspirant for the 2011 general elections was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Abeokuta.
Jan 3, 2009	Ekiti state	Pre-election political assassination: Mr Kehinde Fasuba, coming from a political meeting held in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state.
July 2006	Lagos state	Pre-election political assassination: Engr. Funsho Williams, PDP Governorship aspirant was shot dead by assassins in Lagos state.
March 10, 2003	Kebbi state	Inter-party clash between PDP and ANPP: Two people were reported injured, 11 houses were burnt.
May 16, 2005	Ile-Ife osun state	Political abduction: Honourable Jide Omoworera, a former AG chieftain and the ACN senatorial candidate for Osun east senatorial District was kidnapped. He was released after some days of torture.
2006	Ede, Osun state	Political assassination: Alhaja Taibat Ajimobi (a.k.a Jeunkogbadun), an ex-PDP women leader was murdered on the night of her defection from PDP to ANPP. Her defection was informed by a disagreement she had with the PDP leadership during the run off of the party's primaries.
December 23, 2001 16, 2009	Ibadan	Political assassination: Chief Bola Ige was shot dead by unknown assassins in his Ibadan home. He was the first highest-ranking government functionary to be killed in active service in the 4th Republic. Chief Bola Ige was not only an influential leader of the AD in Osun State, but in the entire southwest.
January 9, 2003	Agege, Lagos	Intra-party clash: Intra-party conflict within the AD at Agege, Lagos State during primary elections. The conflict assumed a violent proportion as it degenerated into open confrontations. by political thugs, brandishing dangerous weapons to inflict bodily injuries on opponents.
January 13, 2003	Ibadan	Intra- party clash: Internal crisis within Oyo State branch of ANPP, leading to the death of two party stalwarts.
February 18, 2003	Jato Aku, Benue State	Attack on opposition: Violent inter-party conflict engulfed Jato Aku in Benue State involving ANPP and PDP Political thugs. Property worth millions of naira was lost to the attacks.
April 16, 2003	Effurum, Delta State	Inter-party conflict: A clash between suspected supporters of AD and PDP in Pankshin/ Kanam/Kanke Federal constituency. The attacks led to the killing of about three persons.

Table 1

Despite the colossal loss recorded from 1999 to 2010 as indicated above, subsequent elections in the country have continued to be associated with violence of increased intensity and magnitude, posing deadly threats to the survival of the emerging democracy in the 4th Republic.

For instance, in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom state capital, cases of horrific acts were documented as the 2011 general elections were fast approaching. On March 22, 2011, inter-party violence erupted in some parts of the city. Supporters of the PDP and the opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) clashed, wielding machetes, assault rifles and explosive. The crisis led to the death of over 20 persons, while scores of others were wounded. Several buildings, including the campaign office of President Goodluck Jonathan and Vice-president Nnamadi Sambo, were razed to the ground, while over 1,000 vehicles were vandalised.

Also in Kaduna state, a review of the 2011 general elections organised by the Police and Legal Advocacy Centre, Abuja revealed the intensity of post electoral violence in some parts of the north. The then Inspector General of Police (IG), Hafiz Rimgim, confirmed that Kaduna was one of the most volatile areas in the north as 518 people, including six police officers were killed in the post-election violence that beclouded the state. Basically, this was in reaction to INEC's declaration of Dr Goodluck Jonathan, PDP candidate as winner of the presidential election. The IG further confirmed that 77 persons sustained injuries of varying degrees, while 22,000 persons were internally displaced to other parts of the country where they could find relieve and protection. In addition, public and private property worth millions of Naira was destroyed. These included 157 churches, 46 mosques and 1,435houses that were razed to the ground. Moreover, the IG stated that 437 vehicles and 219 motorcycles were completely burnt.

The foregoing development is a confirmation to the fact that electoral security is not yet guaranteed in the country, which poses serious dangers to the consolidation of democracy and the survival of the Nigeria project.

The political parties without exception are to blame for the near-collapse of law and order across the country. This is because each party albeit at considerably varying degrees, accommodates men and women that were desperate for political power and determined to employ the crudest means to halt rivals and actualize their inordinate ambitions. Unless the key players in the process of governance take cognizance of the very essence of electoral security for democratic consolidation, the crisis of legitimacy and political apathy that characterize the polity will continue to be on the rise and assume more alarming proportions at the expense of Nigeria's political stability and internal security.

The application of coercive approach to ensure electoral security has become the character of successive governments in Nigeria. This is informed by the presumption that the principal threat to electoral security emanates from undesirable activities of the Election Day alone. This misleading assumption has accounted for the failure of successive Nigerian governments to conduct a violent-free election that accommodates popular participation without fear, favour or prejudice. This has invariably resulted in legitimacy crisis in the country's democratic experimentation, apart from the fact that it has intensified a sense of insecurity and political apathy in the citizenry. What this implies is that the application of force as a mechanism for ensuring electoral security on Election Day is not only inadequate but grossly misleading and counterproductive. Therefore, ensuring electoral security in Nigeria's political topography involves constitutional intervention and other social network initiatives at the three stages of the electoral process.

The unsecured circumstances that characterise Nigeria's political landscape since the emergence of the 4th Republic has made it extremely difficult for Nigeria to produce its 'best eleven' for leadership positions at all levels. Instead, political predators have had their way at the hallowed centre of governance in the country. For one thing, some ideologically-motivated minds who have vision and passion for leadership and social justice had been killed by ruthless and visionless contenders who display high degree of cowardice in politics by perpetrating physical and psychological violence on rivals. Many a patriotic Nigerian cannot make bold to declare their genuine ambition to contest for leadership positions at various levels of government in the country. This is against the backdrop of Nigeria's poor antecedent of justice delivery as those political scavengers who perpetrate and perpetuate electoral violence have not been brought to book. This has resulted in creating a deep sense of insecurity and political apathy in the citizenry across party divide.

From the foregoing, it could be argued that electoral insecurity has remained the bane of democratic consolidation and political stability in Nigeria since independence. Hence, the quest for democratic consolidation in Nigeria's 4th Republic is dependent upon the evolution of a political environment that is sensitive to the imperative of electoral security in determining the entrenchment of democratic principles. Although, Nigeria has succeeded in conducting four back-to-back elections so far in the 4th Republic, the assumption that democracy has come to stay based on uninterrupted conduct of elections could be grossly misleading as the nation is yet to develop effective electoral security control network. As Ladan (2006:52) has rightly contends, the continued intensity of electoral violence in Nigeria poses a serious threat to the national quest for stable democratic transitions, as well as to the attainment of the long term goals of consolidated democracy. Ladan contends further that unless concerned groups of stakeholders work assiduously to deal with the problems at this moment of our national life, they could grow and assume monstrous proportions, such as could not just truncate Nigeria's democratisation process, but also the national project. Suffice it to argue that if Nigeria fails to develop the quality of its electoral management measures, Nigeria's 4th Republic stands the risk of being prone to democratic backsliding, counter productivity and failed state syndrome.

3. Determinants of Electoral Insecurity in Nigeria
This study identifies a number of mutually reinforcing factors that militate against electoral security in Nigeria. This section examines those factors as follows:

3.1. Lack of Ideological-Based Political Parties
Since independence, one of the major challenges confronting democratic experimentation in Nigeria is the absence of ideologically-driven political party system. As a result, formation and administration of political parties have been subjected to personality or ethnic influence rather than reflecting national outlook. To a large extent, this has encouraged electoral violence in the polity as politicians mobilize populations for voting by asserting group sentiments such as ethnic consciousness and cultural distinctiveness, provoking their kinsmen to take to arms if need be, just to ensure victory at all cost.

Moreover, Sheer disregard for the principles and practice of multi-party system in Nigeria has not encouraged effective power sharing among the constituent units of the country. As a result, political gladiators have not allowed the sustenance of conditions that guarantee electoral security in the country. This has contributed to high degree of electoral violence at the three stages of election process across the country.

3.2. Economic Influence

In Nigeria, political power translates into unlimited access to public fund. Hence, Politicians and prospective office holders see elections as a war to be won at all cost, as that determines their chances of participation in the scheme of governance at any level of government in the country. Rather than embracing the rules of the game with a view to promoting the ideals of power-sharing in the interest of national integration, politicians and political parties are organized to secure group interest within the scheme of governance.
  In an attempt to control public treasury in perpetuity, successive regimes have always opposed the quest for structural adjustment and reformation of core institutions that could promote political legitimacy and transparent electoral system.

4. Elite Manipulation

Political rancour and violence have, regrettably, become permanent features of Nigeria politics. This phenomenon, however, has always been elite-inspired as key political stalwarts, political patrons (popularly called godfathers in Nigeria's political parlance) business men and money bags constitute the group of people that instigate the violence behind the scene and also make resources available for sustaining same.   They deliberately do this so as to realise their selfish, parochial motives at the expense of democratic development. For instance, as earlier indicated former president Obasanjo once declared that the 2007 presidential election was going to be a do-or-die affair, meaning that the PDP government was determined to win elections at all cost. It is this kind of dear devil attitude on the part of the political elite that leads the masses out of frustration, to take the law into their its own hands and resort to violence.

4.1. Weak Institutional Framework

The weakness of some key institutions and architectures associated with democratic culture and practice also account for the progressive intensity of electoral violence in Nigeria. For instance, the electoral body, (INEC), the police and the judiciary have always been alleged of playing politics with their respective constitutional and statutory responsibilities in terms of unequal representation of the interests of the political parties at one time or the other. Specifically within the current dispensation, these institutions are severally indicted of complicity with the ruling party at the centre- the PDP. It has been argued that the PDP's claim of securing power at the centre for the next 100 years is a confirmation to the fact that key institutions of democratic development in the country are being manipulated to distort the sanctity of multi-party democracy. The question is from which of the advanced democracies of the world did the PDP adopt the idea of determining elections ahead of time as part of displaying of political advancement, party maturity and the sanctity of the electoral process? Also, some leaders have attempted to manipulate the constitution and the electoral processes in order to unduly elongate their tenure in political offices. The third term saga during the tenure of General Olusegun Obasanjo is a good case in point. Hence, political predators have always provoked violent reactions to systemic mis-governance by members of the public, which has caused avoidable internal crises of unmitigated proportions, thereby crippling the promising pathway to the consolidation of democratic culture.

4.2. Complicity of Law Enforcement Agencies

As indicated earlier, electoral security has both coercive and non-coercive dimensions. The application of force for managing electoral insecurity has remained the exclusive statutory responsibility of security agencies. However, empirical evidence has shown that security agencies in Nigeria have failed to discharge their statutory responsibility with utmost sense of patriotism, commitment and impartiality. On many occasions, the law enforcement agents are alleged of taking part in intensifying electoral violence in favour of particular party or parties and their candidates. For instance, during the 2003 general elections, the Transitional Monitoring Group in its final reports on the elections affirmed that:
There were … troubling reports of police complicity in electoral malpractices in some states, reluctance to intervene in glaring cases of electoral misconduct on the part of some party agents, inability to maintain law and order in some centres, which gave room to some hoodlums to unleash mayhem.
In corollary, the police service commission also confirmed that it was aware of allegation of improper conduct by some police officers, which included collusion with politicians to scare opponents from polling centres, and looking the other direction when electoral malpractices such as snatching of ballot boxes or carting away other election materials are being perpetrated by miscreants.

4.3. Inadequate Punitive Measures for Electoral Offences

The prevailing challenges on the way of effective enforcement of the law in Nigeria include weak penalties against electoral violence, as it applies to other social vices in the country; the laws are not specific on certain criminal offences including threats to electoral security. For instance, the Constitutional provision of ' **Nolle Prosequi':** Section 174, sub-section 211 of the constitution confers on the Attorney-General of the Federation or his counterparts at the state level reserve the authority to withdraw a criminal case from the court on account of the interest of the state in the matter. The clause invariably encourages electoral insecurity as certain individuals or groups who hobnob with those at the helm of affairs could perpetrate electoral violence and still go unpunished.
Considering the foregoing, it could be argued that overcoming the challenges of credible elections and democratic consolidation in Nigeria is inherent in evolving a holistic approach to electoral security management rather than employing legitimate force on Election Day.

5. Concluding Remarks: Implications of Electoral Security for Democratic Consolidation in the Fourth Republic

This paper has established the nexus between electoral security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general. As Africa's microcosm, Nigeria must fix its electoral process properly in the interest of democratic development on the entire continent. As already argued in this paper, the near absence of the electoral security necessitated the collapse of the previous three Republics in Nigeria. It is the same tendency that has set to threaten the sustenance of the existing 4th Republic. Invariably, lack of an enabling atmosphere for electoral security has been central among the forces that instigate the outbreak of ethnic, political, religious and other forms of internal conflicts in post-cold war African society.

No society can secure a sound footing for democratic consolidation at the expense of an enabling environment for electoral security. Considering the progressive intensity of physical, psychological and structural violence that have always characterised Nigeria's democratisation process since independence, the implication is that the activities and conducts of past and present politicians have always negated the imperative of electoral security. Electoral security in Nigeria's political space will facilitate an enabling environment for 'good politics' and participatory democracy within the context of multi-party ideology, thereby ensuring political stability and sustainable development in the country's 4th Republic. In other words, electoral security is imperative for making democracy safe in Nigeria, in the interest of sustainable development, political stability, socio-cultural enhancement and national integration.

As Africa's microcosm, Nigeria cannot afford to fail in this nascent democratic experimentation in the interest of the collective existence of its constituent parts and considering its vantage position on the continent. Electoral security has considerable positive implications for democratic consolidation and national security, which include the following:

i.   Electoral security will infuse the valued principles of equity, truth, fair play and social justice as well as the culture of loyalty, patriotism and commitment to public good into our governance process and democratic experimentation.

ii. It has been discovered that there is a link between fraudulent electoral process and legitimacy crisis in any given democratic society. Hence, electoral security will promote mutual trust between the government and the governed.

iii. Electoral security will promote the legacy of good governance, and commitment to responsible and responsive leadership within the context of accountability and transparency in our governance process.

iv. The principle and practice of multiparty ideology will be entrenched in an atmosphere of electoral security as all legitimate contestants and electorate will perform their fundamental rights and obligations without any sense of insecurity or political apathy. Electoral security will enrich the entire democratic process as it tends to provide the template for victory of justice over injustice, defense of human rights over abuse of human rights, the rule of law over lawlessness, and participatory governance over dictatorship.

6. Recommendations

Effective and dependable electoral security network in its coercive and non-coercive dimensions is imperative for ensuring the electorate's confidence and commitment to the course of democratic consolidation in Nigeria's 4th Republic. Apparently, continued threats to electoral security before, during and after the election periods are capable of truncating the democratic process in the country. To this end, there is the urgent need for government and other stakeholders to evolve an enabling environment for the emergence of responsible and responsive leadership within the context of democratic culture. In realising this noble task, government must endeavour to evolve a grand strategy towards ensuring electoral security for the conduct of democratic elections which must be in tandem with international best practices. Although successful governments had made attempts towards ensuring electoral security in time past, the task has not been pursued with total commitment, high sense of political will and utmost sincerity, which inform the record of negligible success made so far in this regard. Thus, the following recommendations are made:

➢   A comprehensive reform of the electoral system: areas that require critical attention include the following:

(i) A balance composition of the electoral body devoid of prejudice so much that the interests of all constituent parts will be fairly represented;

(ii) A neutral authority to provide judicial overview of the electoral process;

(iii) Establishment of effective electoral offence and complaints commission to address violation of electoral laws and abuse of electoral procedures before, during and after election periods.

(iv) proper execution of all phases of election process as designed in the Electoral Act, including delineation and registration exercises, voting exercise, and collation and declaration of results, with a view to promoting political legitimacy on the part of the elected public office holders.

➢   The electoral body (INEC), security agencies and the judiciary should be insulated from partisan politics so as to discharge their statutory responsibilities with a deep sense of responsibility, commitment and patriotism, and without undue preference to any political party or any other groups or individuals within the polity.

➢   Electoral rules, regulations and legislation should be placed above sentiments and prejudice to command the confidence of all actors and offer a level playing ground and equal opportunity for all. In other words, contestants should be accorded fair chance to contest elections without undue discrimination based on gender difference, ethnic cleavage, religious inclination, ideological divide or any other form of group enclave within the political system.

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