

Electoral Violence, Disability and Internal Displacement: A Critical Assessment of Popular Participation in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

This paper argues that the concept of popular participation has been seriously eroded by the pervasiveness of electoral violence in Nigeria due to the nature and characters of political elites as electoral violence has contributed to increase in the number of internally displaced people and person with disability and impacted negatively on the entire socio-economic and political wellbeing of internally displaced persons, people with disability and the nation at large. Thus, this presentation provides: a conceptual clarification, an examination of the history of electoral violence in Nigeria, an investigation of the causes of electoral violence, clarify the place of internally displaced person and people with disabilities within the concept of popular participation in Nigeria, and study suggests ways on how to move forward.

Keywords: electoral violence, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, popular participation.

Introduction

The history of electoral violence is as old as the history of elections in Nigeria. Significantly, the consequence of electoral violence is far reaching on the people and socio-political economy of Nigeria. Indeed it is glaring that electoral violence directly influences political participation through voter turnout as a result of fear and frustration, created by the violence. More importantly, it has far reaching effects on the socio-economic status and leverages of people with disabilities, and internally displaced persons. It is therefore, leaves the victim with the trauma of years after the violence has occurred, and sometimes, electoral violence leaves permanent damages to individual citizens and to the overall development of the nation at large.

It is instructive to note that, the election has become a generally acceptable global norm for the selection and removal of elected authority in a democratic setting. Thus, political scientists and development theorists link free, fair and credible elections to democratic good governance, peace and development. In brief, they argue that free, fair and credible elections provide the basis for the emergence of democratic, accountable and legitimate governments with the capacity to initiate and implement clearly articulated development programmes. In the same vein, free, fair and credible elections also empower the electorate to hold the government accountable and to demand strong credentials and feasible development agenda from prospective government officials.

Nigeria's electoral politics from independence has been tumultuous. The politicians, in Nigeria, have over the years "become more desperate and daring in acquiring and retaining power; more reckless and covetous in their use and abuse of power; more intolerable of oppositions, criticism and efforts at replacing them" (Electoral Reform Committee Report, 2008, Vol. 1: 19). Besides, civil wars/communal wars, natural/made disasters, Boko-Haram terrorism and nefarious activities of Fulani-herdsmen in Nigeria, electoral violence has also contributed to the increase in numbers of internally displaced persons and people with disabilities and hinder their leverages to actively exercise their enfranchisement.

The focus of this paper shall be to provide a general background to the subject matter in this paper, give conceptual clarification, examine the history of electoral violence in Nigeria, investigate the causes of electoral violence, elucidate on the place of internally displaced person and people with disabilities within the concept of popular participation in Nigeria, suggest ways forward and end with conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification: Violence/Electoral Violence

It is very important to note that, the word violence is ambivalence in nature; it depends on motivation and expected outcome. Therefore, it defies any precise, generally accepted definition. Instructively, it connotes coercion, forceful imposition, militancy, brutalism, violation, intimidation and destruction which usually lead into fear, frustration and death. To Henry Bienne (1968), is the use of illegitimate force. In many occasions violence has been used by groups holding power, and by groups seeking power, and by groups in the process of losing power.

In same vein, Nwolise, (2007:159) also describe electoral violence as all kinds of organised acts or threats in terms of physical, psychological, and structural, targeted at frighten, harming, and blackmailing a political opponents and stakeholder before, during and after election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process.

This paper therefore, describes electoral violence as “any deliberate attempt through the employment or threat to utilise illegitimate force to subjugate oppositions, influence or affect the outcome of a competitive election. In a more concrete sense, UNDP, (2009) define electoral violence as any haphazard or unified act that seeks to determine, postpone, or otherwise influence an electoral process via threat, language provocation, hate speech, misinformation, physical conflict, forced ‘safety’, extortion, demolition of property, or assassination’. The target of electoral violence can be material or non-material resources, people, data, or installations. In an attempt to influence the electoral process, perpetrators of electoral violence may attempt to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll and determine the winners of competitive races for political office.

Similarly, the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) defines electoral violence as “any act or threat of physical or psychological harm to a person or damage to property, directed at anyone directly involved in an electoral process (voter, candidate, party officer, election worker, election monitor, journalist etc) which may disrupt or attempt to process any aspect of the electoral process (campaign, registration, voting, counting etc).

In essence, electoral violence can thus, be describe as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination. The victims of electoral violence can be people, properties, materials or data. The acts associated with electoral violence include [physical harm (e.g. homicide, sexual violence, assassination, torture, assault, threats (e.g. physical, verbal), intimidation, destruction of property (e.g. arson, damaged from stones or sharp objects and forced displacement.

As right noted by Ochoche, (1997:15), any attempt at any stage of the electoral process to corrupt, influence or determine the outcome of an election beyond what it would have been objectively permitted, does damage to the election and could be said to amount to electoral violence. Fischer cited in USAID (2010:2) further stressed that any random or organised act that seeks to intimidate physically harm, unjustified threats to make a gain to cause loss to another unless a demand is met or abuse an electoral stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay or otherwise influence the electoral process. Electoral violence as an aspect of political violence is specifically referred to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to impending electoral contest or to announced electoral results (USAID Ibid).

Consequently, electoral violence is therefore an isolated harm perpetrated by and/or through the mobilisation of private security outfits, ethnic militias, thugs, community vigilante groups and privatisation of security with serious implications for electoral democracy Sam Oyavbaire: 2000:174)

Internal Displacement/Internally Displaced Persons

The most commonly used definition of internally displaced persons (IDPs) comes from the United Nation's (UN) Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Guiding Principles define IDPs as "people or groups of persons who have been subjected condition of forced or obliged to flee or to move from their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of or in order to protect themselves from the consequences of armed conflict, vulnerability to human rights violation, situations of generalized violence, or natural/human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (United Nations, (1998).

Given the definition above, unlike refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) have not left the shore of their home country to find succour, even-though, the circumstances that warrant their displacement may be similar to that of refugees, the IDPs remain under the protection of their home government. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council's Geneva-based, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) by the end of 2014, a record-breaking of 38 million people had become displaced within their own country as a result of violence. A massive 11 million of them were newly uprooted during 2014 – equal to 30,000 people a day.

The guiding principles also offer some instances of how internal displacement can be identified. This situation can occur as a result of – prevalence of rampant violence, persistence of human rights violation, or during the outbreak of natural or human-made disasters. Experience has shown that victims of natural or human-made disaster gradually constitute a significant number of internally displaced persons. Thus, their new status made them susceptible to human rights violations such as discrimination due to unintentionally movement to an area where they constitute minority.

However, whatever the definitions of IDPs provided, it does not confer legal status on the affected persons: becoming displaced within one's own country of origin or country of habitual residence does not confer special legal status in the same sense as does becoming a refugee. This is because the rights and other privileges to which internally displaced persons are entitled stem from the fact that they are human beings and citizens or habitual residents of a particular state.

Importantly, the protection of internally displaced persons is complicated by the fact that internal displacement can occur in three different situations: (1) during peace, for instance, during natural or man-made disasters or other forms of disturbances that did not involve internal armed conflict where human rights law applies; (2) during non-international armed conflict governed by some of the most important principles of humanitarian law and by many human rights guarantees; and (3) during interstate armed conflict where the detailed provisions of international humanitarian law become operative, and at the same time, many important human rights guarantees remain applicable despite the fact that internally displaced persons are often forced to leave their homes and, thus, find themselves in refugee-like situations, refugee law is not directly applicable to them as international law defines refugees as persons who have fled across international borders and are in need of international protection by virtue of their being abroad and having no access to protection provided by the authorities of their country of origin (United Nations, (1998).

Disability/Persons with Disabilities

In the contemporary world system, it is more problematic to define disability given different prevailing socio-cultural circumstances that surround the persons involved. However, several scholars have identified different dimensions of disability; ranging from physical, psychological, medical, socio-cultural, economical, legal and metaphysical. Indeed, it could be argued that the disability has no class, age, sex, religion, race or environmental restriction. Unsurprisingly, different sex, social classes, age groups, race and environment are prone to different forms of disabilities depends on prevailing situation. It is instructive to note that, disability can strike anyone, regardless of his or her social rank or status (Barnes, 1985).

According to Mitra, (2006), the medical dimension of disability describe disability from health or medical condition of individual as being unable or less able to function as a "normal" person. However, the social dimension of disability maintain that, disability occur when people are challenged by physical, cultural, political and economic structure of the society in which they live which does not accommodate their impairment (Oliver,1996; Shakespeare,2001).

Consequently, disability is simply referred to a condition or situation judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment mental illness, and various types of chronic disease. More importantly, the definition provided by World Health Organization, (2001), has gained wide acceptance among scholars, policy makers and developmental theorists.

To WHO, disability is an umbrella term, embracing impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. In this context, impairment is a limitation in physical and/or intellectual function; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; a participation restriction is encountered by an individual in relation to the surrounding physical, social or cultural environment. In same vein, the Office of Population Census and Surveys (1960) refer to disability as the impact of impairment upon the performance of activities which are commonly accepted as the basic needs for every living – walking, eating, and using the toilet among others.

Generally speaking, many literatures have argued that certain people could be considered as person with disabilities particularly, when their human conditions fall within the following categorise challenges; albinism, visual impairment, amputations (upper & lower), arthritis, brachial plexus injuries, brittle cone disease, cerebral palsy, congenital deformities, dwarfism, epilepsy, hearing impairments, learning difficulties and dyslexia, medical disabilities, muscular dystrophy, neurological, orthopaedic injuries, osteogenesis imperfect, paraplegia, partial paralysis (paraparesis), physical disabilities, poliomyelitis, psychiatric disorder, quadriplegia, scoliosis, speech disabilities, spinal bifida, strokes, traumatic head, visual impairment among others;.

The History of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The history of electoral violence in Nigeria predated the formal political independence of Nigeria as a state. As rightly documented by Nnoli, (1980:122), the 1951 election in Kano signal the pace for electoral violence in Nigeria, although at a very minimal level. The Northern allies of Southerners that opposed to the preferred candidates of the Emirs were intimidated by the colonial administration: these so called ‘allies’ were refused to hold public meetings and they also faced with harassment and victimisation of greater magnitude.

Thus, by the beginning of 1966, it had become obvious that the democratic constitution of Nigeria was unworkable in the hands of the corrupt, ineffective and self-serving politicians. The negative consequences of the Federal Election of 1964/65 and the 1965 election in the Western region had combine to threaten the faith and sustainability of democratic process in Nigeria. At that particular period all the contending political parties were audaciously willing to acquire political power at all cost: to all the political parties the 1964/65 federal election was a must win. Thus, suppression and oppression of the opposition by regional governments with the backing of the federal government became a familiar pattern in Nigerian politics.

The collapse of the Nigeria’s First Republic as a result of the 1966 military coup was caused by unprecedented level of electoral violence of 1964 and 1965 in western Nigeria but bolstered by coincidental and persistence crisis in the North at that particular period: in particular, the Tiv crisis of 1963 and 1964; as well as the crisis generated through controversial 1963 census. For instance, the official reported figure of the death in the 1965 electoral violence was 153 people, out of which police killed were 64.

However the unofficial figure reported a total number of about 2,000 deaths (Anifowose, 1982). The Western riot became the last straw that broke the camel: the military capitalised on inability of the civilian administration to curb the pervasiveness of violence and wanton killing of political opposition and took over power from the civilian by January 15, 1966. The 1979 elections were not elections supervised by the civilians rather, they were supervised by the Obasanjo's military regime. There was not much violence given the fact that the military played midwife to the elections and transition. The only outstanding disagreement was the controversial Supreme Court decision on the winner. Earlier, both FEDECO and the military had 13 as the two-thirds of 19. But after the elections, controversy was raised over the meaning of one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the States in the Federation. The military in collaboration with FEDECO, decided to appoint Shagari as the president by reinterpreting the meaning of one-quarter of two-thirds of nineteen (Falola and Oyavbaire, 1985:70).

Meanwhile, the 1983 election which gave Shagari a landslide victory contributed to the collapsed of the Second Republic. For instance, in Ondo state the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) declared Chief Akin Omoboriowo of National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as the elected Governor. However, a counter announcement was made over the state radio by the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) pronounced Adekunle Ajasin as the true winner. The later allegedly went round Akure the Ondo state capital, calling on his supporters to come out and defend their votes (Sokoto, 2011:48). Similarly, in Oyo state Chief Bola Ige and Sam Mbakwe of Imo state in press conferences and radio broadcast threatened that if NPN went ahead to rig the election as planned, the wives of those who helped them will become widows and their children orphan. Indeed, both Oyo and Ondo states experienced monumental violence that eventually led to the collapse of the second republic. As rightly observed by Osaghae, (2005), the weight of rigging in the 1983 election was so devastating that they were not only calls for its cancelation but there moves towards confederation.

The aborted Third Republic elections witnessed lesser violence, except after the cancellation of the presidential election of June 12, 1993 in which Nigeria and Nigerians were confronted with high degree of violence protest and civil unrest which eventually forced Babangida military administration to step aside in August 1993. General Abdusalami Abubakar's transition programmes ushered in the current Fourth Republic in May 1999 after the sudden demise of military junta General Sani Abacha. The 1999 elections were reportedly to marred by irregularities and frauds by many local and international election observers. However, the irregularities and violence recorded were claimed not to be sufficient to affect the integrity of elections.

Consequently, the subsequent elections of 2003 and 2007 conducted under the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo were widely reported to be marred by irregularities high scale of electoral violence at different period of elections: pre-election, election and post-election periods. According to Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) that monitored the 2003 election reported the irregularities and violence that decorated the election when it stated that:

... twenty-nine of the registered political parties that either contested or did not contest the elections have variously rejected the results as announced by the INEC declaring the results as fraudulent. Both Domestic and International Election Observers documented massive irregularities that characterised the elections and refused to endorse the elections as free and fair. Some political parties and their candidates decided to challenge some of the results before the various Election Petition tribunals and have gone ahead to do so while others declared “mass action” to pressurise a government without popular mandate to abdicate power (Iyayi, 2005:11).

In the same vein, the 2007 elections also follow similar trends of gross irregularities, frauds and high level of electoral violence in order to ensure that the then ruling party People Democratic Party (PDP) retain power against the general will. As rightly publicised in most of the national newspaper and captured by Nwolise, (2007:165) in the build-up toward the 2007 election, former President Obasanjo publicly told Nigerians, other African people and the world at large in a press conference that the 2007 elections would be a ‘do-or-die affair’. Obasanjo’s statement speaks volumes of the intensity of the desperation and Machiavellian approach to winning election by the incumbent in Nigeria.

The 2007 elections when it actually came were most deadly and frightening in nature. Thus in Rivers State, a police station was attacked and burnt by unknown assailants a night before the election day. In Anambra and Rivers States, voters were faced with violence and intimidation. The INEC offices in Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Nnewi South and a local government office in Akwa North, Anambra were burnt in protest. In the same vein, violence marred election in other parts of the nation. In Ekiti State, there was a confrontation between the PDP and Action Congress supporters and election results were blatantly falsified in many areas. Violence was equally reported in the northern state of Katsina, where opposition supporters burnt down government buildings in protest as the announcement that the PDP had swept the state’s gubernatorial polls. Soldiers clashed with angry voters in Nasarawa state. In Oyo state, PDP thugs beat up opposition party officials and hijacked ballot boxes. The 2007 election therefore was generally perceived as the worst in the history of election administration in Nigeria (Adele, 2012: 211).

According to European Union- Election Observation Mission, (2007), violence was a major issue of concern throughout the 2007 election process. While in some states peaceful campaign activities were observed, incidents of violence increased as the elections drew nearer. Overall, credible reports, including that from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and international and domestic media indicate that at least 200 people, including police, were killed in election-related violence. This is a higher number than what was reported for the 2003 elections and is unacceptable with respect to the fundamental right to life and the democratic process (EU Election Observation Mission, 2007).

During the campaign toward the 2007 elections, numerous violent incidents were reported by EU observers and other credible observer groups. These often involved destruction of campaign material as well as INEC buildings and party offices, harassment, intimidation and violent clashes between party supporters.

This particularly occurred in the south-west⁵² but other areas such as Gombe State were also affected. Similarly, inflammatory speech or indigenous references like “sons of the soil” or “home boys” further aggravated the tense atmosphere. Some minorities informed EU observers that they felt threatened by pro-indigenous campaigns or felt frustrated at being excluded from the political process. In some areas, such as Assakio in Nassarawa State and Wukari, Takum and Jato Aka in the border area between Benue and Taraba States, people belonging to minorities were killed, displaced or rendered homeless because of election motivated clashes (The Vanguard newspaper, 4 April 2007). Although, it is difficult to determine whether incidents related to minority groups were part of the longstanding history of violence and exclusion, or whether they were manipulated for political election purposes, the observed cases of Assakio and Takum show at least that people from ethnic extraction were significantly affected in their fundamental rights to vote and stand for election.

Throughout the election process, political sponsorship, recruitment and use of thugs, young unemployed, uneducated area boys sometimes addicted to drugs and often armed with traditional weapons or fire arms, remained a problem previously highlighted by EU EOM in 2003. This activity was observed by EU observers in Borno, Ogun, Abia, Taraba, Gombe, Bauchi, Kaduna, Zamfara, Niger, Oyo, Osun, Cross River, Sokoto, Kogi and Edo States. Although most political parties accused PDP of being the main party having the financial resources to hire thugs, EU observers reported that this seemed a common practice for many political parties, especially the well-established ones (PDP, AC, ANPP) in areas where they were dominant, such as ANPP in Okene in Kogi State or some areas in Borno and Kaduna States and AC in Okene, in Kogi State and in Taraba State. In Gombe, thuggery seems to have been particularly well organized and widespread with several thousands of young area boys, under the appellation “Kalare boys”, allegedly hired by the PDP party and local government structures. While opposition parties have acknowledged to EU observers that they felt forced to use the same means to protect their votes and to retaliate.

IRI, (2007), reported that, Election Day violence was, in terms of magnitude, higher on April 21 than during the previous week. In downtown Abuja, there was an attempted attack on the national headquarters of INEC with a gasoline tanker at 4:00 am. Other attacks included arson attacks on INEC headquarters in Kaduna and Katsina states, and a polling agent in Benue State was murdered allegedly in order to facilitate the theft of that polling station’s ballot boxes. More than 200 Nigerians are estimated to have been killed in Election Day-related violence. As would be expected following the breadth and depth of election fraud witnessed on April 14 and 21, a large number of cases were filed with the tribunals with roughly 1,250 petitions as of June 1, 2007. As observed by Ploch, (2011), in the aftermath of the elections, President Obasanjo reportedly acknowledged some electoral irregularities, notably “logistical failures,” violence, and ballot box theft, but indicated that elections would not be re-held, saying “the magnitude does not make the results null and void.” (“Obasanjo Appeals to Nigerians Over Election Results,” Radio Nigeria-Abuja, April 23, 2007, and “Nigerian”).

Meanwhile, election related violence prior to the 2011 included clashes between party supporters and several assassinations. Poll-related security concerns were further heightened by a spate of bombings during political rallies, predominantly in Bayelsa and Delta states. There were at least six bombings in April in Borno state in the north (most in the capital, Maidiguri), where Boko Haram, a local militant Islamist group, has been most active. Boko Haram claimed responsibility in January for the assassination of the state's leading gubernatorial candidate and several of his supporters. On the eve of the legislative elections, a bombing at the state election commission headquarters in Niger state killed at least 10 people. President Jonathan and INEC Chairman Jega had both pledged to increase security during the elections, and observers generally commented positively on the presence and behavior of security forces during the polls. Despite positive preliminary statements on the conduct and orderly nature of the April 2011 legislative and presidential elections, election-related violence surrounding the polls was higher than in previous years and highlights lingering communal tensions (Human Right Watch, March 13, 2011).

Protests erupted in Nigeria's northern states on April 17, 2011, the day after the presidential election, with supporters of General Buhari, a northern Muslim, alleging that the ruling party had rigged the election to favour President Jonathan, a southern Christian. The protests devolved into violent riots and, in some areas, killings, largely along religious and ethnic lines. In some parts of the north, the violence lasted for three days until soldiers were deployed to enforce stability. The highest level of violence recorded was in Kaduna state, with as many as 500 killed in sectarian clashes in the southern part of the state, and more than 180 killed in northern Kaduna. There was also significant property destruction, including the burning of villages, in some areas of Kaduna, a state with a roughly equal population of Muslims and Christians that had not seen a major outbreak of violence in almost a decade.⁵² Dozens were reportedly killed in riots in several other northern states, including Bauchi. Among the dead in Bauchi state were ten members of the National Youth Service Corps (university graduates who are required to perform a year of national service), who were reportedly targeted because they had served as poll workers. Human Rights Watch has documented reports in three states (Kaduna, Bauchi, and Gombe) of police and soldiers beating people who had been detained during the riots. State elections (gubernatorial and state assembly) in Kaduna and Bauchi were postponed from April 26 to April 28 to allow for a lowering of tensions and improved security. Turnout in those elections was low, and in both cases, the ruling PDP retained control of both the governorship and the state assembly (Ploch, 2011).

Causes of Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Orderly transfer of power from one government to another in accordance with democratic norms has been problematic in the Nigerian polity. Indeed electoral violence has become a fundamental obstacle to democratic progress in Nigeria: as the pervasiveness of violence has continued to marred all stage of electoral process, particularly, pre-election, election and post-election periods. Significantly, a number of factors have been linked with the persistence of election related violence in Nigeria.

For instance, electoral violence in Nigeria has been associated with the perception of politics and political office as investment opportunity for money bag and as avenue for personal aggrandisement. In essence, the intense struggling for political power and high premium placed on wielding of such power has also encourage electoral violence, corruption and impoverishment of the masses. (Badmus, 2014: 173). As a result of this perception and the political reality in Nigeria, politicians Nigeria have turn electioneering and elections into warfare in which violence, money, ethnicity, religions and other forms of primordial sentiments and prejudices are employed. It is against this background that former President Olusegun Obasanjo declared before his party members that the 2007 election is a ‘do or die’ affair (Alemika, 2011).

Electoral violence can occur in the pre-election, election and post-election periods, for instance, during the voter registration exercise, when either or both the ruling and opposing parties attempt to manipulate the voter registration exercise to perpetrate fraud, under age registration, registration by proxy, registration of unauthorised foreigners, or double registration as part of pre-rigging strategy. Thus in this situation, disadvantage parties or candidates may try to resist this form of rigging or result to similar strategy and the situation could result in violence. Electoral violence could happen during campaigns or during balloting/Election day, especially, when some parties attempt to snatch, stuff or hijacking the ballot box or intimidating the oppositions. In the same vein, the post electoral violence has remained the most volatile election related violence: this usually occur as a reaction to manipulated election result results or electoral injustice in favour of one party against the other..

It is instructive to note that, the causes of electoral violence in the Nigeria have been widely discussed by several jurists and scholars. For instance, Justice Sowemimo in his judgment of the treasonable felony levelled against Obafemi Awolowo and his ‘accomplices’ observed that:

On the evidence before me, it would appear that politics generally in Nigeria has been conducted with a certain amount of bitterness. It appears that a person belonging to a party becomes an enemy of another who belongs to a rival political party. Political parties are equivalent ... to, warring camps- elections are conducted with party thugs protecting the campaigners and this state of affairs has been described to have assume a pitch that no method would be spared, however, vindictive or extreme by any rival political party as against another in order to score over one or another (cited in Anifowose, 1982).

In the same vein, Dudley (1961), posited that in Nigeria, “the shortest cut to affluence and influence is through politics. Politics means money and money means politics ... to be a member of the ruling party is synonymous with avenue to government patronage, contract deals and the like”. The implications of this are as follows:

- a. prebendal politics; in which political office is sought primarily for the aggrandizement of self, family members, associates and cronies, tend to become a preoccupation of the vast majority of the politicians and electorates;
- b. patron-client relationship becomes entrenched in the polity and economy;
- c. the logic and desire to belong to government party undermine the sustainability of viable opposition in the political system;
- d. Instrumental use of violence by both ruling and opposition parties as a mean of retaining or capturing power at elections independently or in contempt of electoral choices of the citizens at the poll.

Similarly, Dudley (1965), further stressed that, once the politicians recognize or know “the profitability of having power, the party and the individual members politicians naturally uses the same governmental machinery to stay in power. The leadership becomes a self-recruiting oligarchy-and no self-recruiting oligarchy has been *known to tolerate opposition to itself”. In such circumstance, violence becomes instrument for seeking, gaining and retaining political power. In the same manner, Ojo, (2009) referred to the documented statements credited to a former Senate President, Adolphus Wabara that:

Membership of the National Assembly is an investment, because most of us sold our house to get to the Senate, but the ability to recoup whatever you have spent legitimately becomes the problem.

From the foregoing, the attractiveness of public office engenders investment mentality. Political investors and other major financiers of the political process for individuals seeking political office expend huge sum of money on the electoral process with expected return in form of cash, contracts appointments, and other forms of patronage. Therefore, to many Nigerian politicians, no amount of money and lives is too much to expend provided that electoral violence would yield a desirable electoral outcome (Badmus, 2014:161)

Importantly, the nature of Nigeria as a state is also instrumental to electoral violence, according to Claude Ake (1996: 73) the nature of the Nigerian state and regimes contribute to endemic violence in the electoral process. In effect the state has been privatized: it remains an enormous force but no longer a public force, which could no longer guaranteeing the rule of law and has become a formidable threat to all except the few who control it. In essence, it has actually encouraging lawlessness and with little capacity to mediate conflicts in society .In the circumstance where the state is privatized, those in power will use violence and state repressive apparatus to retain power. The people excluded from governance (especially in a society where politics is a license to oppress other citizens and to rob the public treasury with impunity) will resort to violence in their quest for office.

Nigerian political parties and politicians employ fraudulent and violent means. The Political Bureau reported that Nigerian politicians and parties rigged elections “in most blatant fashion ... violence, corruption, arson, and brigandage were employed in the mad desire to win and retain power both in the regions and at the centre” (Report of the Political Bureau 1987: 25). The Constitution Drafting Committee (1976: v) observes the country’s politics is primarily geared towards securing “opportunity to acquire wealth and prestige, to be able to distribute benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarships, and gifts of money and so on to one’s relatives and political allies”.

Consequently, abuse of the rule of law manifested in form of; non enforcement of laws and non-adherence to same in the electoral process has also promotes violence during elections; due to lack of political will by the political class (Aluigba, 2008). The ruling party, opposition party, political actors, party supporters, voters, security personnel, members of electoral body often violate the law that governs the rule of politicking with impunity due to inability of the government and other law enforcement bodies to compel obedience. It worthy to note that when the administrators of the political process is unwilling to enforce the rules, a lot of opportunities are created for violence and if the law does not prevail, it is tantamount to the absence of rules governing the conduct of elections (Smah, 2008 in Olayiwola, 2014). Therefore, the weak legal framework in Nigeria forms the fulcrum upon which the culture of violence is built and sustained resulting in violence, arson and assassination. As rightly observed by Aiyede (2007), when the rule of law is weak, the judicial system becomes ineffective and there are ineffective penalties that make the probability of punishment of offenders low, thus creating a fragile and corrupt system.

Given the huge population and economic mismanagement in Nigeria, illiteracy and wide spread of poverty have contributed to incessant of electoral violence in Nigeria. To Abiola and Olaopa (2008), the scourge of poverty in Nigeria is an incontrovertible fact which results in hunger, ignorance, malnutrition, diseases, unemployment as well as general level of human hopelessness. The massive poverty that engulfs the body polity is a great asset to the politicians. The alarming rate of unemployment gives youth away as willing tools for the perpetration of violence with little financial inducement. In the words of Danjibo and Oladeji (2007) the high spate of deprivation and human hopelessness of the Nigerian youths force them to take the readily available “job opportunity” –implementers of electoral violence. The endemic poverty easily plays the gullible youths into the hands of unscrupulous politicians, who manipulate them by dangling irresistible baits for the youths to undertake electoral violence (Usman, 2009). More often than not political violence is paid for, used as a tool by prominent Nigerians to bolster their political and financial positions.

Rigging in a competitive election is also a predisposing factor that easily makes the entire process violent (Balogun, 2003), experience from the past elections conduct has reveals that subverting the electoral process through massive organized fraud do engender violent upheaval, before, during and after elections. The use of political thugs by politician to manoeuvre electoral process in perceived unflavoured area does cause violence if resisted by the opposition or the citizenry. Also, when an unpopular candidate is declared the winner of election, violence always greeted such announcement.

The Western Regional election of 1965-1966 that was characterized by wanton destruction of lives and properties is a reference. Also, violence greeted the announcement of 2007 gubernatorial elections in some states of the federation as a result of perceived rigging resulting into arson and loss of lives and properties. Curfew was imposed in part of Edo, Osun, Ondo, Oogi and Kano states to calm the violence (The Punch,17 April 2007:8). Elections were later overturned in Edo and Osun states.

The media indulgence in campaign of calumny, mudslinging and defamation or slanderous attack on other political actors cannot but be mentioned as a causative instrument for electoral violence. The media spread of sensational political and motivated opinions engender violence by succumbing to the influence of selfish politicians to use their outfit as propaganda launch pad (IRI, 2007). All the factors discussed above, though not exhaustive, are causal factors triggering election related violence in Nigeria. I will now turn to their implications for national development in Nigeria.

The Impacts of Electoral Violence on People with Disabilities and Internally Displaced Persons

According to UNHCR, the numbers from 2014 indicate that Nigeria had 3.3 million displaced people, the third highest index in the world. Thus, from this 3.3 million, some 650,000 are displaced within the boundaries of Nigerian states, while over 2 million have fled to other neighbouring countries like Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin Republic among others. In general, Nigeria is ranked behind Colombia with 5.7 million IDPs and Syria with 6.5 million IDPs on a global scale. For several years, the IDPs have been confronted with critical challenges of life-threatening issues such as; lack of access to first-aid/medical supplies, outbreak of intractable diseases, starvation, sexual abuse, human right abuse and extra-judicial killing...

In the same vein, Quinn and Degener, (2002a) stressed that disability is a human rights issue. Thus, people with disabilities experience inequalities; for example, they are denied equal access to health care facilities, employment opportunities, education, or political participation, because of their disability status. More often than none, they are also subjected to violations of dignity; for example, they are subjected to violence, abuse, prejudice, or disrespect because of their disability. Sufficed to say is that, both internally displaced persons and people with disabilities have become majorly the victims of electoral violence. Essentially, millions of Nigerians who have narrowly escaped death during electoral violence attacks have become bodily disabled and several others have been force to abandon their place of abode for safety during the same period.

At this juncture, it is crucial to categorise the impacts of electoral related violence on internally displaced persons and people with disability as affecting the ability to meaningfully participate in political process. These impacts can be categorise as follows; economic and developmental impact, political impact, socio-cultural impact, and psychological impact.

Economic and Infrastructural Impacts

Electoral violence impacted negatively on social amenities and other national facilities for the improvement of lives and general wellbeing of Nigerians. For instance, the damage done to a country's healthcare infrastructure such as; physical damage to hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities: These impediments lead to lowered quality of health care services and medical errors leading to death of people with disabilities and internally displaced persons. Similarly, several billions of Naira that are meant to support economic development agenda for the benefits of Nigerian people, are now been set aside to cater for internally displaced people at different IDPs camps across Nigeria. Thus, in this situation both internally displaced persons and people with disabilities are at the receiving ends in accessing healthcare services, education, and employment opportunities among other economic benefits which could also aid their chances to meaningfully participate in political activities.

Political Impacts

Given the nature of electoral violence in Nigeria which usually involves wanton destruction of lives and properties, person with disabilities (PWD) and internally displaced people are the most vulnerable victims of attack, because of their inability to compete at equal level with able and free persons in the outbreak of electoral violence. Therefore, people with disabilities and internally displaced persons may be automatically disenfranchised as a result of perceived electoral violence and lack of access to information for participation in the decision making affecting their lives.

Socio-Cultural Impacts

Electoral violence that result in displacement and disablement of people usually creates social tension in forms of discrimination in both private and public setting, it increase poverty among the victims: as most of the victims of displacement and disablement are automatically denied active role in economic production and their new situation make them to be susceptible to crime related attacks. Similarly, for the displaced people their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society also become a big issues; as the fear of contracting transferable diseases from a long time internally displaced persons living away in a crowded camp pervaded the society and result in segregation of internally displaced persons.

Psychological Impacts

Electoral violence in many occasions can result to distortion of family ties and communal life. This is one of the most painful psychological effects of violence, particularly as related to internally displaced persons. In most cases of electoral related violence, political thugs, hired assassins, and party supporters usually unleashing their nefarious activities such as,

maiming, killing and burning of houses and other valuable properties, in this situation several thousands of people have been bodily disabled, many have lost their lives, several others have lost their loved ones and many others were forcefully displaced from their homes and communities. The manifestation of the electoral related violence has invariably bestowed hardship on many of its victims while others are still undergoing emotional and psychological trauma resulting from the act of violence and insurgency.

How to Curtail Electoral Violence in Nigeria

The need to amicably accommodate differences and diverse nature of the configuration of Nigeria is imperative to economic development, democratic sustainability and political stability of Nigeria as a state. Indeed, without everybody having the sense of belonging, the future of Nigeria federalism is still very bleak. Therefore, zero-sum politics and the politics of 'We' against 'Them' must be discouraged to foster national integration, peaceful election and national development.

It is instructive to note that, the discouragement of politics of 'do or die' to a greater extent will discourage election related violence and in return, this will lead to reduction in the number of displaced and disabled people, especially, those that are usually caused by electoral violence. Following are recommended as part of the policy suggestions that could help to ameliorate the incessant occurrence of election related violence in Nigeria;

1. Nigeria must invest and reinvest in government led initiatives for peace and conflicts management at federal, state and local government levels,
2. Nigeria security forces require additional training toward understanding and managing electoral and other related violence.
3. Adequate security must be provided, both in term of intelligent and physical. Particularly, at the entire area cover by polling units; security personnel such as police, civil defence, and where necessary military that have sound knowledge of electoral matters should be deploy to safeguard security of lives, properties and poll during elections.
4. Sensitization of person with disabilities and internally displaced persons: civil society organizations should partner with relevant governmental agencies in sensitizing the above group of people on the danger associated with electoral violence, how to conduct themselves during election in order to ensure their safety and necessary assistance should be provided for IDPs and PWD by the security, election officials
5. Government must ensure both IDPs and PWD are given equal opportunity to participate during election and other political matters. Through provision of special assistance mechanisms.

6. Electoral violence mostly occurs towards the end of voting when the outcome of election is gradually becoming obvious, persons with disabilities should leave election venues immediately after they have casted their votes. It is also important that PWD and IDPs should be provided with separate voting units with adequate instrument to aid their voting procedures.
7. Government should implement policies to reduce wide spread poverty, particularly, by providing employment opportunities for its teeming unemployed people and create enabling environment for individual citizen to thrive in their respective endeavours. This would in a long way reduce the involvement of youth in the act of violence. More importantly, the root cause of electoral violence should be genuinely addressed without fear or favour.
8. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be made to remain unbiased in their dealings with political parties and other stakeholders irrespective of the party that appointed the Chairman and other National/State Commissioners of the Commission (INEC). Similarly, INEC should strive to establish a solid trust network relationship between itself and other stakeholders.
9. It is also very crucial for government and INEC to establish a legal framework that will allow internally displaced persons to register during voter registration exercise, vote during election and be allowed to participate in any other relevant political activities.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of displacement and disability is not entirely new among some of the challenges confronting modern state, particularly developing countries in the global system. However, the link between electoral violence, internally displacement and disability has not been given adequate attention in the literature. In Nigeria, beside boko-haram terrorist attacks that have forced millions of Nigerians to flee their homes and communities to seek peace and safety in entirely new environments, and natural/human made disasters, accidents, biological and hereditary causes of disability, electoral violence has emerge has second propelling factor that is exacerbating the problem of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and people with disability (PWD) in Nigeria. Indeed, electoral violence apart from been part of the factors that is currently leading to increase in number of IDPs and PWD in Nigeria, It has also created economic development, social-cultural, political and psychological problems to the victims of displacement and disabilities, therefore, denied Nigeria of the opportunities to maximise its human resources potentials which is highly instrumental for economic growth, democratic consolidation, peaceful coexistence and political stability.

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