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INCUMBENCY AND ELECTION VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Since it returned to civil democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed diverse election violence. This is worrisome because theoretically, elections should engender harmony, dialogue, legitimacy and constitutionalism. However, experience with democratisation in Nigeria, especially with regard to electoral processes has been on the contrary. Before, during and after polls, violence recurs frequently. Dominant explanations of this context borders incumbency factor, without necessarily demonstrating what makes incumbents have to use violence. This paper attempts a critical analysis of the frequent recurrence of election violence in Nigeria's electoral processes. Given the seemingly irreducible place of violence in electoral process in Nigeria this paper argues that, the core factors responsible for the inevitability of election violence in Nigeria defy the simple explanation hinged on incumbency power. They rest on factors carefully constructed and embedded in the system, thereby making election violence inevitable. Relying on careful analysis of secondary data and personal observation, this paper concludes that election violence will remain inevitable in Nigeria so long as power of incumbency is used in electoral processes.

Key Words:
Democratisation, Incumbency, Election, Election Violence, Nigeria.

Introduction

The prospect of the termination of decades of authoritarian rule, especially military rule, was widely cheered in most African countries. Indeed, it could safely be said that the euphoria that characterised the return to civil governance did a lot to delay the manifestation of the contradictions hitherto inherent in and further entrenched by prolonged authoritarian forms of governance. Although democratisation proceeded almost uninterrupted in most African countries, but for a few reversals in some West African countries (Niger, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire) what has come to characterise the process is the frequent and near unrestrained resort to violence as a means for negotiating space in the unfolding and increasingly liberal terrain. The current and third wave of democratisation came on the heel of the end of the ideological Cold War, and the onset of the process of the globalization of the ideals of neo-liberalism. This context is significant in several respects. First, it foisted democracy and market economic model on the global agenda. Ostensibly, this was rationalized as, among others, the necessary framework for availing peoples all over the world peace dividends following the victory of liberalism in the Cold War. Thus, according to

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Diamond (1988), the number of countries claiming democratic credentials increased phenomenally following the onset of the third wave of democratisation. This was more glaring in Africa. However, almost three decades now, the much vaunted and eagerly expected peace dividends have proved elusive. Instead, in most parts of Africa, violent confrontations seem to be a major defining character of democratic elections. For instance in Ethiopia (2005), Kenya (2007), Cote d'Ivoire (2010-2011), Mali (2012), Nigeria (2011), to mention but a few, periods of electioneering activities were characterised by violence. Explaining the causes, character and dynamics of election violence in Africa have generated a large body of scholarly works.

One of the most important events that dominated the second-half of the 20th Century is the decolonisation of many African countries. At the beginning of their journey to nationhood, almost all newly independent African States were led by governments that were not authoritarian. In their attempt to democratise their societies, some of the structural and systemic contradictions inherent in the complex socio- economic and political mosaic handed over by the departing colonial authorities began to manifest in the process of the democratisation of society, economy and the polity. It was within the context of such embedded contradictions that the stage was set for authoritarian, often military rule in most post-colonial Africa. As nationalities struggled to gain space and to position to access societal resources, this struggle got transformed into several conflictual response patterns, including violent forms of responses. Thus, almost consistently overtime, the struggle for the re/negotiation of space in most African countries has come to bear the dominant feature of violence.

Explanation of the causes of violence in the course of democratisation in general, and electoral processes in particular has generated quite a large body of literature, such as Galtung (1969), Ugiagbe (2010), to mention a few. Albeit, despite the yet burgeoning body of scholarship on this subject matter, violent patterns of responses have characterised electoral processes, even unto the current so-called third wave of democratisation. Although explanations such as rent seeking, prebendalism, etc., have been used to explain the causation and dynamics of election violence in Africa, very little attention has been paid to the underlying dominant causes such as the deliberate construction of electoral minorities and the desperation by the dominant groups to remain in power. Often, this carefully entrenched context conditioned the behaviours of ruling and opposition parties, thereby making violence inevitable.

Using Nigeria as a reference point, this paper argues that fundamental causes of election violence in most African countries are embedded in the several factors such as, but not limited to; character of the state, governance deficit, process of electoral administration, etc. Together with entrenched structural factors, such have come to make election violence not only a recurring feature of electoral processes, but even inevitable. In other words, in most African countries, democratisation is taking place within contexts that make for the inevitability of election violence. Our argument is made and presented in subsequent parts of this paper which is divided into six sections thus: first is the introductory section, the second and third comprises conceptual framework and theoretical framework respectively. The fourth segment is on the methodological perspective, while the fifth section attempts to account for the incumbency and election violence in Nigeria. The final section of the paper concludes and recommends.

Conceptual Framework

Like fashion, concepts come and go. However, as a concept, election has proved to be very resilient. Despite all the tugs it suffers, the concept has endured. This is an indication of the

importance of the meanings encapsulated in the notion. For instance, according to IDEA (2017, p.3), election is the process of determining leadership, and either continuity or change in this leadership. Election is the most fundamental element of modern day representative democracy. It is a means through which the electorates at designated periods choose their representatives into different positions of governance; it refers to institutionalised procedure for recruiting political office holders by the electorate of a country or groups. Thus, how a state arranges and conducts its elections is emblematic of the level of political development of that particular state (Igini, 2013, p.43). Adele (2012, p.206) opined that elections determine the rightful way of ensuring that responsible leaders take over the mantle of power. Election is one of the defining features of representative democracy, because it paves way for citizens who are within the voting age in a country to exercise their franchise in determining who govern them (Abah & Nwokwu, 2015, p.34). What is apt to add to these conceptions of election is that elections confer on elected public office holders the recognised right to exercise power. Election also confers the much needed legitimacy (on government) depending on the credibility of the process. Indeed, when elections lack the legitimating power, violence is one of the most likely responses to the outcomes of the process.

On the other hand, election violence is seen as any act of violence perpetrated in the course of political activities, including pre, during and post-election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes (Ujo, 2000) in Ladan (2005, p.33). According to Anifowose (1982) cited in Ikyase and Egberi (2015, p.33), election violence is the use of or threat of physical act carried out by individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or groups and property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons, damage or destruction to property, and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstance, implementation, and effects have political significances, that tends to modify or change the behavior of others in the existing arrangement for the political system. Although this definition of election violence tried to wreck-in virtually all possible manifestations of forms of electoral violence, it seem to gloss over the impact of election violence on the legitimacy of government. Further, both concptualisations missed it on the central question of the causation of election violence in Nigeria. This paper argues that there is engrained significant relationships between perceptions of justice and forms of relations in the electoral process, especially by interested participants who feel frustrated or almost so by the system. This is a key element most of the available treatments of this notion seem to overlook. In the context of electoral studies, violent forms of responses are not just the result of ballot stuffing or the theft of election materials, etc. but also the deliberate manipulation of electoral administrative processes for the purpose of attenuating or diluting the interests' determination of a bloc vote, or dispersing it to dilute the capability of blocs of vote. Often, this happens long before the periods of electioneering campaign or actual voting and the outcomes. Such variables elude conceptual treatments. They lend themselves to understanding and explication only within the ambit of theory. It is to such engagement that we now turn.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the "Elitist Theory." The theory became popular in Europe shortly after the World War II although its origin can be traced to Central America and European countries

where it was used to criticise democracy and socialism. The proponents of this theory are; Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michaels and Harold Lasswell.

The elite theory concerning the nature and distribution of power was originally developed by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) in their works *"The Mind and Society"* and *"The Ruling Class"* at the beginning of the 20th century. The theory states that a representative democracy is not really based on the will of the citizens, but that there is a cohesive elite group that makes almost all the important decisions (Dowse & Hughes, 1983).

Futhermore, the theory tries to explain the role of the leadership in governance as it is the main actor that affects public policy considering political and socio-economic matters. According to the leading American political scientist and theorist Harold Lasswell, the formal structures of governmen explains 'who gets what, when and how' (Lasswell, 1936). Elites control the formal institutions of government and are an influential element in governement and whole decision-making process. There are different views on the role of elites in democracy. Some scientists believe that elites are guards of democracy protecting it from the dangers of totalitarianism, while others believe that elites are main threat to the survival of democracy (Dowse & Hughes, 1983).

The elite theory assumes that public policy reproduces the preferences of the elite rather than demand of the society masses. Only some individuals have the power and the leading position in the strategic aspects. The rest majority are guided, controlled and governed by those who have the power. There is quite often, that elites do not hold formal or legal authoritative powers but are rather manipulating over political and policy activities behind the scene. Moreover, the theory tries to give a realistic explanation of the source of policy by establishing it in the elite rather than the majority.

Linking this theory to the subject matter, elections in Nigeria has always been an issue; whereby the incumbents and elite exercise their influence in retaining their political positions or hand-picking those that will represent their parties and interests in the general elections. In most cases, only the incumbents and elite choices are considered in party nominations up to the general elections, not that of the majority, which continues to pose a serious challenge to the Nigeria's democracy, especially in the fourth republic. The result of such challenges in most instances is election violence. It is on this note that the elite theory fits into this paper.

Methodological Perspective

This paper is guided by the interpretivist approach. The approach fits into this paper due to its interpretation, which is a logical research approach that basically relies on qualitative methodology of data collection. Data were gathered through both primary and secondary sources. While primary data were generated through personal observation, secondary data were generated through existing literature such as books, journals, articles, among others.

Accounting for the Incumbency Factor and Election Violence in Nigeria

Explaining the pattern of election violence in Nigeria has been almost a huge enterprise. What is dominant in the narratives so far is that rigging has been responsible for the spate of election violence in the country. However, very little space has been devoted to any critical explanation of why violence has become a recurring decimal in the electoral process in Nigeria. Even more engaging is the almost total neglect of how election violence has been carefully constructed into the democratisation process in Nigeria. It is to a consideration of the construction of election

violence in Nigeria that we now turn. Do the votes count? Answering this question requires that we put it in its proper context.

Election violence can occur prior, during or after election periods. From a sample survey carryout by Ladan in 2005, pre-election violence often manifests in issues such as the problem of party formation, government sponsorship of certain party or parties, manipulation by political stalwarts, competition for power or candidature struggles even during the period before primaries, zoning problems in the selection of candidates or party executives, lack of ideology for many parties, interference of government in the affairs of electoral bodies, sheer intolerance towards difference of opinion or ideology, and above all; use of force by the incumbents. During election, violence often manifests in issues such as lack of security of elected posts, partisanship of traditional rulers, abuse of responsibility by election officials, institutional weaknesses, the winner takes all, and lucrative nature of political offices. Meanwhile, post-election violence manifest in the following: government repression of failed candidates or politicians, especially civil servants; marginalisation of areas controlled by the opposition; poor handling of election petitions by the Judiciary, especially election tribunals (Ladan, 2005, pp.38-40).

Basically, political competition is an inevitable phenomenon in any democracy. Where competition for power is associated with misconduct, particularly in the electoral process to determine the outcome of election results, party politics is said to have a gloomy impact on the democratisation process with its likely attendant contestations and conflicts (Auwal, 2017, p.79). The competition among Nigerian politicians is far beyond just a normal political contest, but it is seen as a struggle for resource control and distribution. Anyone in power is not only in-charge of resource control and distribution, but also have a high tendency of controlling and making binding decisions on every sector. Therefore, so long as being in power is as good as being in-charge of resource control and distribution, every Nigerian politician always struggle to get there in order to get things for themselves and make sure that their community gets the lion share in terms of resource allocation. While the incumbents will use every force at their disposal to retain their seats, the opposition will also try all they could to unseat the incumbents. And so long as such struggles continue, clash of interest makes election violence inevitable in Nigeria.

In another instance, what makes Nigerian politicians to also have quest for power is the perception they have towards politics. Most of them see politics as the most lucrative investment; whereby what they spend prior and during election can be easily recovered within few months of assuming power. Therefore, this has been creating a clash of interest among those that are in the corridor of power (the incumbents) and those that are not, whereby out of greed, the former doesn't want to step aside, while the latter do all they could to replace them. In this process of quest for power, the incumbents don't mind using all forms of violence at the expense of others just to retain their seats. In doing this, they can go to a length of recruiting some jobless youths as thugs to create artificial problem just for them to win elections. It is in this line that Abdulkadir (2015) (cited in Abdullahi, 2017, p.222) observes that, "joblessness and poverty have built a reserve army of the unemployed that is 'frequently' and without any difficulty recruited by politicians to execute violence." To further express how desperate and intolerant the incumbents are, they sometimes encourage their followers to fight just for them to win elections. For instance, Barrister Ibrahim Shehu Shema the Former Governor of Katsina State was quoted:

> The opposition party in Katsina State are cockroaches, hence when you see a cockroach you should kill it because

> cockroaches live in the sewers. Any opposition party member who harms you, you must retaliate because we the PDP in this state will no longer tolerate the actions of the opposition party (Ladan-Baki, 2016, p.27).

Broadly speaking, in many third world countries, elections are reduced to warfare in which the winner is the one who amasses the most potent instruments of violence. This notion of zero-sum competition underlying electoral completion or what has been popularised as "do or die" mentality undermines election as a contest of ideas based on clearly defined rules (Hamalai, Egwu & Omotola, 2016, p.150).

For the matter of fact, all the above mentioned elements were displayed in the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. The members of the ruling party tried all they could to retain their seats and to even claim other states that are under the opposition, the opposition also tried all they could to retain their seats and to even take over the leadership of the country. However, while the ruling APC used all forms of violence in many places to intimidate people in order to achieve their aims, PDP being the opposition also used violence in order to be able to face the ruling party as they contend for the various political offices across the country.

The ruling party in Nigeria always enjoys the privilege of having all the apparatus of coercion under its control. Therefore, the instruments of coercion at the disposal of the ruling party, places her on the advantage over the opposition. The ruling parties in Nigeria have a long history of utilising the security agents to intimidate and disadvantage the opposition during election just for them to remain in power. For instance, in the 2019 general elections, some of the PDP caucus such as Engr. Buba Galadima was arrested even before the election. Such acts took place in almost all of the thirty six states. This has instigated violence in many parts of the country. These were done as a result of quest for power and the possession of the instrument of coercion by the incumbent government.

Furthermore, the ruling party had an agenda of winning the 2019 gubernatorial election in all the nineteen Northern States. One of the strategies employed by the ruling party was to use its power of incumbency at the apex to declare the gubernatorial elections in all the states that the PDP were leading inconclusive, with the exception of Taraba. The affected states were Adamawa, Bauchi, Kano, Benue, Sokoto, and Plateau, among which APC was leading in only Plateau State. The case of Kano was more controversial whereby; the election result sheet of Nassarawa Local Government Area was tore by the State Deputy Governor and the State Commissioner for Local Government in Local Government collation centre just to create room for the election to be declared inconclusive, which was achieved. The declaration of inconclusive election alone has caused violence in all the affected states. However, during the supplementary election in these states, the incumbent (APC) made it very clear that they really want to retain their seat in Kano by employing all forms of violence that scared some people away from voting, while those that were trying to stand on their way were killed and injured, through which they declared themselves winner. In Sokoto, Governor Tambuwal of the PDP retains his seat with a slit margin of less than one thousand votes. After the controversial re-run, PDP won Bauchi, Benue, Sokoto and Adamawa states, while on the other hand, APC won Kano and Plateau states.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that Taraba State election was not declared inconclusive, the election was a serious fight between the APC and PDP. The APC used diverse forms of violence prior, during

and even after the election just to make sure that they take over the state from PDP. For example, it was gathered that the Taraba State government accused the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the state of instigating violence that trailed the gubernatorial election in the state with the aim of portraying the election as not credible. Following the declaration of Governor Darius Ishaku as winner of the election, armed youths and miscreants had carried out series of attacks on thousands of people that trooped to the streets to celebrate his victory (Thisday, 2019). It is worthy of note that the quest for power is not only revealed during elections, but even prior to. Desperate Nigerian politicians especially the incumbents start strategising on how to maneuver their ways in the voters' registration processes.

The issues surrounding voters' registration in Nigeria is one of the factors responsible for the election violence in Nigeria. Registration of voters is the foundation of the electoral process, because an electoral process cannot be said to be free and fair if a majority or a substantial number of qualified persons who are willing to effectively participate in the electoral process do not succeed in getting their names on the voters register (TMG, 2003, p.49). Among the functions of the Independent National Electoral Commission as stated in the third schedule of the 1999 Constitution, is to "arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under the Constitution." The question now is whether this section of the constitution is practically in order.

The issue of improper voters registration exercise has always been one of the major problems to the fourth democratic republic in Nigeria. There has never been a successful voters' registration exercise since 1999. In most instances, this is deliberately done by the electoral body with the influence of the incumbents just to disfranchise certain group of people from voting. This has fueled various election violence in Nigeria, because the vast number of the eligible voters that are denied registration always feel marginalised or excluded. Patterns and roles of religious and or economic divide have come into play in the conduct of the registration of voters. So also do patterns of political affiliation. Party membership and eventual voting patterns (depending on the level of electoral contest). Thus, it is observed, for instance that either on the grounds of social, or political factors, voter registration personnel and material critical to successful conduct of the exercise are deliberately manipulated to engender exclusion and popular disenfranchisement. This happens as has been observed, when officials report to work of voter registration very late in the day. In most cases, where work guan so much behind schedule; it is often paused to allow for lunch break and, often prayers. Where this is not the excuse, shortage of critical registration materials plays in. It is either that there are no indelible inks to mark those who have been registered, or no power on devise for making bio-metric records. In some instances, the shortage or outright lack of the indelible ink allows for multiple registrations. Similarly, socio-economic patterns affect the patterns of voter registration.

It has also been alleged that major and dominant political influencers (mostly incumbents) affect patterns of voter registration by ensuring that their foot soldiers are the ones who get recruited as Ad-Hoc staff for the conduct of voter registration. Often, public/civil servants have to report to work not later than 0800hrs. In most instances, they leave for work even before registration officials report to work, and by the time they closed from work, at about 1600hrs, voter registration in most centres is closed owing to shortage of one critical material or resources.

On the other hand however, there are communities where most members thereof, owing to lack of or low levels of formal education, are not in formal public sector employment. Such are often

petty traders and menial workers. Such may not have to report to work at a specified hour of the day. As a result, they often could and did afford the convenience of waiting till voter registration officials report. Although it is not explicitly clear how this differentiated patterns of socio-economic differences in voting population affects the fortunes of parties in the polls or affect voter behavior, it is obvious that it feeds into the causations of violent reactions to outcomes of polls due to the exclusion of large numbers of voters.

As observed by TMG Report on the 2002 Voters Registration Exercise in Nigeria (cited in TMG, 2003, p.50), the National Voters registration exercise that took place within 2002 to 2003 was marred by various forms and degrees of fraud ranging from multiple registrations, under age registration, buying up of voters' cards etc. TMG (2003, pp.50-51) maintained that, these irregularities also played out during the 2003 elections as a substantial number of people had their names omitted from the register. Also, in the 2003 elections, the Commission was to display the register for claims and objections in close to 9,000 Ward headquarters across the country before the election, and this did not happen in a majority of the Wards across the country. Already such victims are being frustrated, any election result declared not in their favour most at times leads to an aggressive reaction such as violence. To them, they were deliberately disfranchised by the incumbents so that their votes will not be counted.

In another instance, observation has shown that in the 2019 Permanent Voters Card (PVC) registration, so many communities were not registered despite the extension of the registration. In many communities of the Southern Kaduna Senatorial District, it has been confirmed that people always queue at the registration centres every morning; patiently waiting to be registered, but at the end of the day, those responsible for the registration may not show up, and in many instances that they show up; they come late and register only few people and then close for the day. This scenario continue up to the last day of the registration; leaving many people not registered. However, the reverse is the case in Northern and Central Senatorial Districts of the State. Already, the Southern Kaduna people were feeling excluded from the registration exercise, with multiple interpretation attached to it. This is a case of almost every State in the country; whereby complains are being made for the inability of the INEC to register certain communities. However, this has contributed to election violence in the 2019 general election in some parts of the country. The way and manner in which voters' registration is done in Nigeria, signals the possibility of imposition of candidates and rigging of elections by those that have the power at their disposal.

One of the factors that cannot be ignored in accounting for the incumbency and election violence in Nigeria is imposition of candidates. Systematic exclusion of those who fall out of favour with the ruling party, that is within the party, including by the use of violence. This factor affects patterns of state or ruling party behavior as violence and other unconstitutional means are employed to exclude or disadvantage those in opposition whether within or outside the party. The face-off between Senator Shehu Sani and Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the Kaduna State Governor is a very good example. There is scarce evidence of internal party democracy in the governance of most, if not all political parties in Nigeria's fourth republic.

Incumbent government always try to impose their candidates on the electorate, even if it means breaching certain rules, which Ibeanu (2018, p.135) referred as "Rule crisis," whereby political parties breach and disobey rules, including their own rules and regulations. Intra party power tussle, either for party leadership position or for securing party tickets for electoral position has been a source of conflict, which is often characterised by the use of violence.

This scenario is not an isolated case as in states such as Zamfara, Kano, Benue, Rivers, etc., the imposition of unpopular candidates by ruling party elites, contrary to popular preference had led to forms of violent behaviours including the burning down of party secretariat, the use of thugs to violently disrupt party activities such as party primary elections, or campaign rallies, among others. For instance, a reputable national newspaper reported online that on 3rd October, 2018, a vast number of aggrieved youths matched into the APC headquarters in Abuja where they chased away party staff and security operatives at the secretariat. The protesters accused the national party Chairman of imposing candidates on them and, also of interfering with the party's primary elections in several states (Thisdaylive.com, 2018). In almost all instances, such patterns of violent behavior are observed where candidate or ticket bearer imposition was done in ruling parties. On the other hand, where it happened within opposition party, such was rarely, if ever followed by violent reactions. This shows that the stakes are higher in the ruling party, thereby informing the observed patterns of violent election behaviours.

Talking about high stakes must draw in the issue of the nature of the state in Nigeria, where enormous resources are concentrated in the state machinery with little mechanism for effective conduct of public governance with accountability and transparency. Indeed, because the scenario is one wherein the winner takes all and the looser loss all, both parties struggle to gain or retain power, as such affords them almost limitless access to state resources, or try of win power to enable them access state resources or to stem the loss of what they have. Considering the huge cost of contesting for an elective post in Nigeria, and the possible risk of losing, electoral contests are seen as a matter of "do or die'.

Meanwhile, as initially stated, rigging has been responsible for the spate of election violence in the country. In their words, Ikyase and Egberi (2015, p.36) stated that experience has shown that rigging has been a single most important cause that pervades free and fair election and this has been responsible for grave consequences for democratic stability in Nigeria.

Rigging in Nigerian elections did not only take place in general elections, it always begins at the level of party primary elections. Elections are rigged at this level because election is seen as do or die affair by many Nigerian politicians. Politicians can device any means to win the party primaries or the party caucus can do all they can to rig in favour of their preferred candidates. Such cases mostly lead to internal party crisis. Cases were recorded where party secretariats and branch offices were vandalised or set ablaze by aggrieved youths. Sometime it happens prior to the party primaries which mostly occur whenever there is a case of irregularities in constituting party delegates or it has been perceived of a plan to rig or impose candidates by the party caucus.

Meanwhile, in the case of general elections, from 1999 to date, we barely hear of free and fair election in any of the elections conducted in the country. For instance, the 1999 presidential election was alleged for rigging by even observers. Auwal (2017, p.86) posits that the 1999 elections that brought retired General Olusegun Obasanjo to power were blighted by such widespread fraud that observers from the Carter Centre concluded that "it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election." He also stated that, there was a statistical evidence of the 2003 election rigging, in the form of discrepancy between the gubernatorial and the presidential balloting.

The 2019 general election has proven to the whole world that as the country was ready to celebrate its six decades of independence, the country is not maturing in democracy but advancing in terms strategising on how to successfully rig elections. This was perceived even before the election. One of the indicators that revealed that there was a high tendency of rigging in the election was the postponement of the Presidential and Federal Legislative election which was initially scheduled to take place on the 16th of February. The election was postponed by the early hour of the Election Day because it was discovered that some sensitive materials made for the election were already in circulation. However, even with the postponement, there was no different because, there was a high level of rigging across the country by the incumbents.

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Rigging is the greatest factor that often leads to election violence in Nigeria. Rigging were done out of desperation to either remain in power which is done out of greed, or trying to get there by all means. However, as pointed out by Robert Dahl, "democracy requires not only extensive political competition and participation, but also substantial levels of civil liberties and pluralism that enable people to form and express their political preferences in a meaningful way" (Ogbu & Ladan, 2005, p.2). In most cases when the electorates are denied of these civil liberties, they become frustrated and aggrieved; ready to strike by any given opportunity. Therefore, so long as people's mandate will continue to be denied in Nigeria through rigging due to quest for power, election violence in Nigeria remains unavoidable and inevitable.

The Independent Electoral Bodies is also another institution that one must put into consideration. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is very fragile and not independent as the name implies. The Nigerian President is the one responsible for the appointment of the INEC Chairman, and the Commission also relies on the presidency for funding. The presidency fails to implement the legislation passed some years ago by the National Assembly to secure the autonomy of the INEC. This has always made it very easy for the incumbent government at both Federal and State level to manipulate the Commission in their favour in every election. This trend has made Nigerians not to trust and concur to most of the results announced by the Commission, because they see INEC as a toy in the hands of the political office holders. The influence of the incumbent political leaders makes election outcomes to lack credibility, which in turn creates room for protest and launching of violence by the losing candidates, especially where they are very sure of winning. This was confirm by Abah and Nwokwu (2015, p.41), when they opined that a situation when the electoral umpire is perceived either through its actions or inactions to have reneged from its constitutional duty of ensuring impartial administration of the electoral process could spell doom in the country. Non-credibility question arises whenever the electoral umpire (INEC) is seen to be romancing with the ruling or a particular party or certain high profile political figures to manipulate election results in their favour. In this circumstance, electoral violence will no doubt erupt as other secluded parties or contestants could incite their members and supporters against the electoral body. Unless political parties and the Nigerian people are convinced that the electoral body is independent, they will not have faith in elections conducted and returns made by the Commission (TMG, 2003, pp.52-53).

However, despite the fact that APC in Rivers and Zamfara States were initially denied participating in the 2019 elections because of their inability to conduct primary election, but APC in Zamfara were later allowed to participate after the postponement of the election. Many have seen the postponement of the election as a strategy used by the INEC to buy time in order to accommodate Zamfara APC in the election. The inconclusive declaration of election in some states, and the attitude exhibited by the INEC returning officer of Taraba State at the collation centre have revealed that the INEC were prepared to have a preferential treatment for the ruling APC. This alone is enough evidence that the INEC is too fragile and can be easily penetrated by the incumbent political leaders, especially the case of Zamfara, where INEC was not able to uphold to section 31 and 87 of the 2010 Electoral Act in which the ruling party in Zamfara has violated. Therefore, it is worthy of note that, the fragility of the Nigerian electoral body (INEC) always put the ruling party at advantage, on the other hand disadvantaged the opposition. Such actions displayed by the INEC most at times also serve as one of the factors that trigger election violence in the country. People in most instances prefer using violence to reclaim their stolen mandate because many Nigerians have no confidence on the judiciary.

The judiciary as an institution has contributed to the inevitability of election crises in Nigeria. The Nigerian 2010 Electoral Act has given every candidate the right of channeling their grievances after election through the Election Petition Tribunal, High Court, Court of Appeal, or the Supreme Court as the case may be. But record has shown that most of the petitions and court cases filled by the opposition parties against the conduct of elections are like a waste of time, because the court

mostly rules in favour of the ruling parties. In line with this, Bakare (2013) expressed that; the judiciary is not totally neutral in the past elections and post-election tribunal judgments.

In connection to the above expression, it was also observed that in Nigeria, the judiciary, which is central to electoral dispute resolution, enjoys a considerable degree of credibility at the federal level due to some landmark judgments it has given in the past. However, the credibility of Nigeria's judiciary was badly dented by revelations emerging from a dispute between the two most senior judicial officers in the country – the Chief Justice of the Federation and the President of the Court of Appeal. The disclosure by the President of the Court of Appeal that the Chief Justice of the Federation tried to influence the Sokoto State governorship election appeal indicates that the judiciary is prone to corruption and vulnerable to interference of the incumbents. This is, perhaps, why many politicians find it more rewarding to seek redress through violence rather than the judicial process (Orji & Uzodi, 2012, pp.13-14).

Furthermore, the Nigerian Judiciary has ruled many cases that are not in accordance with the Electoral Act. For instance, after the 2015 gubernatorial election in Taraba State, the APC candidate Sen. Aisha Jummai Alhassan filled a case through the Election Petition Tribunal. The Tribunal on 7th November, 2015 ruled in her favour by not judging based on the specific issue that she was aggrieved about, but declaring her as the winner of the election on the bases that, the PDP primary election that confirmed Arc. Darius Dickson Ishaku as the PDP flag bearer was not properly done. The declaration led to a very serious crisis in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State. Arc. Darius was later vindicated by both Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court that the Election Tribunal has no right to temper with the primary election of any party. But before the final ruling, the damage was already done in Wukari due to the improper ruling of the Election Petition Tribunal.

However from the foregoing, it can be agreed that sometimes election violence takes place in Nigeria due to the outcome of the bias ruling by the judiciary in favour of the incumbent political leaders, or due to lack of confidence on the judiciary which makes people to prefer taking law into their hands once they perceive any form of irregularities in an election, because to them; the Nigerian judiciary is not reliable and it is not giving hope to a common man as it supposed to.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has experienced diverse forms of election violence across the country. In fact, it won't be wrong to say that Nigeria has become an abode for election violence. This work made an attempt by justifying the relationship between incumbency and election violence in Nigeria, with focus on the Fourth Republic. However, the work holds that, the high premium placed by the incumbent political leaders on winning at all cost is the major factor responsible for the election violence in the country. Relying on the careful analysis of secondary data and personal observation, this paper concludes that election violence will remain inevitable in Nigeria so long as power of incumbency is used in electoral processes, which will continue to affect the defence, security and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Therefore, in order to mitigate the issue of election violence in Nigeria, the following remedies were recommended:

i. The voters' registration centers should be easily accessible to eligible voters, and there must be adequate registration materials and the registration period should be long enough to accommodate all those who wish to register. This will go a long way in addressing the issue of exclusion.
ii. Since democracy implies that power should flow from the governed, therefore the major attributes of democratic governance which includes choice, participation and accountability must be uphold. This will guarantee free, fair and credible election. Through this, the issue of election rigging by the incumbent governments will be minimised if not eliminated.

iii. Political parties should strictly adhere to the rules of the game and principle of true democracy by promoting internal democracy in conducting free and fair party conventions. This will help in solving the problem of imposition of candidates by the incumbents, and will pave way for legitimacy in Nigerian democracy.

iv. Government should empower security personnel to remain neutral in order to maintain law and order during the preparation and conduct of elections.

v. Government and judicial authorities should carry out prosecutions of persons implicated in political violence whatever their political affiliations; those prosecuted should include both the sponsors and the executors.

vi. Both INEC and the judiciary must be independent from the control of the executive. Through this, the INEC can conduct free, fair and credible elections in the country. In the same vein, the judiciary will be able to interpret law accordantly without fear or favour.

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