

African Research Review

International Multi-Disciplinary Journal

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

AFRREV Vol. 12 (4), Serial No 52, September, 2018: 28-39

ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v12i4.3>

Election and Violence In 2016 Rerun Elections in Rivers State, Nigeria

Joab-Peterside, Sofiri

Department of Sociology,

University of Port Harcourt,

Phone: +2348033401408

E-mail: sofiri_004@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Nigeria's democracy suffers from special problems of free, fair, non-credible, and violent elections drowned in vote buying. To be stable, democracy must be deemed legitimate by the people and will not be valued unless it deals effectively with social problems and achieves a modicum of order and justice. The 2016 Rerun elections in Rivers State revealed threats against election officials, violation of human rights of voters and citizens by non-state armed groups and state security forces energized by politicians. Pervasive corruption and the resulting political instability make for very poor investment climate. Unfortunately, without growing investment in legitimate enterprise, corruption and electoral violence will retain their appeals to the army of unemployed youths. The paper therefore examined the numerous factors impeding constitutional democracy in Nigeria. This paper took a step further to demonstrate how some of these factors exacerbate the challenge of development. In doing this, our overarching philosophical framework is that the nature of the state is dialectically related to the securitization of political contestations, monetization of the electoral process and violence. The paper also argued that the role of youth in electoral violence is an evitable consequence of structural violence in society and the nature of the Nigerian state.

Key Words: Nigeria's democracy, special problems, violation of human rights, corruption and poor investment climate

Introduction

Election represents a modern and universally accepted process through which individuals are openly and methodically chosen to represent a body or community or entity of government, is one of the cardinal features of democracy. This implies that without elections, democracy can neither be practiced nor institutionalized. It is because of this importance of elections in the democratic process that any

problem associated with the electoral process that any problem associated with the electoral process may have direct impact on democratic institutions and governance.

A major tragedy of Nigeria's electoral process is the feeling among the vast majority of Nigerians that their votes do not count and there are no remedies available to them. This is worrisome because when people feel ill at ease about seeking constitutional remedies, then "clubs become trumps" in the Hobbesian parlance. People believe in elections when they know that their votes count and that credible elections can make a difference in their existential conditions. The Rivers State experience teaches that the electoral process is not fully democratic and free. This derives in part, from inherently "endangered" and capricious nature of democratic transitions; historically derived problem of social and distributive justice which also arises from the failure to use freedom as an organizing principle of state construction; rising unemployment and increscent ant-democratic solutions to social and political problems.

Consequently, understanding and explaining out breaks of election related violence is a complex task, predicting whether forthcoming elections will turn violent, which factors may underlie or trigger violence, and what can be done to prevent violence, is contingent on understanding the causations and escalators of violence in the 2015 re-run elections in Rivers State.

Statement of The Problem

Sceptics of democratic consolidation in Africa have advanced two main arguments challenging the therapeutic value of democratic consolidation for African States. First, they argue that competitive multiparty and open elections necessarily bring regional, ethnic, religious, and radical identities into play, intensifying disintegrative pressures on fragile states without contributing to either stability or legitimacy. Second, the consolidation of democracy involves the wide spread acceptance of rules to guarantee political participation and political competition.; and that elections which empower ordinary citizens to choose among contestants for political office- clearly promotes both sorts of roles.

Although there are divergent views on the role of elections in consolidation of democracy (Kal, 1986; Huntington, 1991; Zakaria, 1986; Mitchell et al, 1995), elections do not in themselves, constitute a consolidated democracy, this end-state also requires civil rights and due process of law; checks on arbitrary executive power; civilian control of state security forces and an independent press and civil society. In a consolidated democracy, citizens and politicians alike accept that this array of institutions is the only legitimate arrangement for governing public life. Paradoxically, these institutions have been used as instrument of political motivation for violence in Nigeria with wide ranging security dilemma (Bratton, 1999)

Of the numerous factors impeding constitutional democracy in Nigeria, none appears more significant than the upsurge of political violence, because the political or democratic consolidation process is associated with a story of limited achievement in terms of conduct of free and fair elections with tragic consequences for social institutions (Ibeanu, 2007; Ogunidiya and Baba, 2007, Joab-Peterside, 2016). While elections and democracy are not synonymous, elections remain fundamental, not only for installing democratic governments, but as a necessary requisite for broader democratic consolidation. The regularity, openness, and acceptability of elections signal whether basic constitutional, behavioural, and attitudinal foundations are laid for sustainable democratic rule. I cannot agree more that it is meaningful to study elections for the simple reason that while a country can have elections with democracy, it cannot have democracy without elections.

1999 was a watershed in Nigeria's political history because it marked a return to civilian rule after agonizing years of military rule. But the 2016 rerun elections in Rivers State amply demonstrated that military governance had not curbed the civilian penchant for violence which necessitated the intrusion

of the military into politics. Politicians appear to have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Corruption, elite capture of state institutions, non-prosecution of wealthy sponsors of political violence, and interference by political leaders underscore these facts. These causes are quite comprehensive and indeed, cover most of the factors discussed in this paper. The paper went further to demonstrate how some of these factors exacerbate the challenge of development. In doing this, our overarching philosophical framework is that the nature of the state is dialectically related to the securitization of political contestations, monetization of the electoral process and violence.

Dimensions of The Violence

Due to several post-election petitions contesting the results of the 2015 General Elections in the state, Rivers State Election Tribunals nullified results for 37 out of 48 legislative seats in the Rivers State House of Assembly as a result of irregularities and widespread violence associated with the elections. In addition, elections in three Senatorial Districts, 12 Federal House of Representatives Constituencies were also annulled. The rerun elections were the outcome of a Court of Appeal judgement which nullified 22 House of Assembly seats, 12 House of Representatives and 3 Senatorial seats won by the PDP in the March and April General Elections following a petition by the APC challenging the results declared by INEC. Consequently, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was accordingly ordered by the Tribunal to conduct fresh polls to fill the affected seats.

Intensification of political party electoral activities in the run-up to and conduct of the 2016 re-run elections increased electoral violence on a larger and more decimating scale, partly because electioneering campaigns were disruptive rather than play more functional and supportive role for the democratic process and its consolidation in the State. Amaechi and Wike stood out as the “ferocious combatants. In fact, many voters may not have known the names of the contestants but they know the names of Amaechi and Wike because the two of them are like two peas in the same pod. “Wike was Minister of State for Education in the Goodluck Jonathan government. Now he is the Governor of Rivers State. Amaechi is the immediate past Governor of Rivers State. Now he is the Minister of Transportation in the Muhammadu Buhari administration. Each of them has held two offices: Governor and Minister of the Federal Republic (Ekpu, 2016, p. 14).

The political atmosphere in Rivers state became tensed on the eve of the election as leaders of the All Progressive Congress (APC) beat the drums of war by calling on their party members to prepare for war on election day. APC National Chairman during the party’s rally held at the Yakubu Gowon Stadium in Port Harcourt declared that the full might of the Federal Government had been deployed to the state for the elections. He urged APC supporters to retaliate any act of violence meted out to them “The whole federal might is here, the whole federal executive is here. The entire federal might has heard your cry. There is only one thing: we respect Rivers people. Enough is enough. If they push you, push them. We are here on a rescue mission. This state will be rescued” (*The Guardian*, Friday, December 9, 2016, pp.1-2). This inflammatory statement raised the expectations of violence and abuse of the process and reduced public participation and confidence in the elections. Against the backdrop of mutual antagonism, the electioneering campaigns from the beginning to the end were not focused on governance issues and on the candidates of the parties particularly for the APC hence, it squandered the opportunity to seize power from the PDP.

It was in this charged political atmosphere that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on 19th March, 2016 conducted the rerun elections which were suspended midway because of widespread violence and disruptions purveyed by political parties and their agents. Announcement of selected results of the second re-run elections added fuel to and accelerated implosion of electoral activities as allegations of rigging, killings, and maiming over took the political environment. In the

mayhem, a member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), who served as a poll staff of INEC, was murdered and another lost his sight. These were among several other casualties of mindless violence (INEC, 2017).

Apart from national and international condemnation of the re-run elections, there was palpable anger among, on the one hand, the losers who felt cheated in alleged massively rigged elections, and the other, the electorate who were denied their constitutional rights to either vote for their preferred candidates, or whose votes were hijacked by merchants of political violence and rendered inconsequential. The outcome of the March 19, 2016 elections in the state brought into sharper focus the contest of supremacy between former governor, Chibuike Amechi and incumbent governor Nyesom Wike (Handel, 2016).

Although Rivers state had a long history of politically motivated violence, gangsterism and kidnappings, the unparalleled level of brutality and savagery that ran through its recent electoral experience left many in shock and disbelief. In fact, the existential conditions in the State during the rerun elections appeared to approximate the Hobbesian state of nature where life of man is solitary, poor nasty, brutish and short (Appadorai, 1975). People lived in fear and were in danger of violence because peace and stability in the state were under threat of politically motivated violence and other forms of criminality, few examples will suffice. The gruesome murder of a chieftain of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Franklin Obi, his wife and son in Omuku best explained the situation. Similarly, Isaac Ikechukwu Chinedu, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman in Obite and Chinedu Saidey, ward 9 PDP Assistant Secretary from Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area were also gruesomely murdered.

Two weeks before Franklin Obi was murdered, some armed men invaded Omoku at 7.30am and held the entire community hostage till 11.00am amid sporadic shootings which forced residents to remain indoors while the gun men moved from house to house in Odieta, Usomini and Obakata quarters of the town, slaughtering some targeted persons most of whom were decapitated. The bloodletting in Omoku is the product of the bitter rivalry between criminal gangs aligned to the PDP and APC. Similarly, in March 2016, Mr. Tubotamuno Wariso, an alleged member All Progressive Congress (APC) in Opobo Town was attacked and beaten to death by known gun men, while one Gabriel Cookey was allegedly clubbed to death also in Opobo Town in Opobo/Nkoro Local Government Area.

Another chieftain of All Progressive Congress (APC) in Yege Community in Khana Local Government Area, Mr. Paddy Koryene, was abducted and buried alive, while four others were killed in Obibi, in Etche council area (Ebiri, 2016). The prevailing atmosphere heinous acts of violence in some parts of the Rivers State prompted the State government to ban the operation of commercial motorcyclists which the assailants often use in their dastardly operations in Abua/Odual, Ahoada West and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA) which has Omoku as its headquarters. These Local Councils have witnessed series of gang wars and associated killings in recent past. The worst affected was ONELGA where over four hundred youths have been killed since 2013.

The spate of violence and killings in some parts of the state necessitated a military offensive aimed at “flushing out perceived criminals”. However, these operations deepened the political rivalry and bitterness between the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) and the main opposition political party, All Progressive Congress (APC). The military offensive which was spontaneous in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Khana and Gokana Local Government Areas was precipitated by the mass murder of twenty persons in Omoku. The point of interest is that the military offensive in the Ogoni axis of the State elicited mixed reactions emanating from the political insinuation attributed to the operations. The Ogoni area had prior to the military offensive become crime heaven due to a mix of economic disadvantages fuelling youth unemployment and poverty that scar most communities.

Before the military campaign in the Ogoni axis of the State, the liaison office of the APC candidate in the Rivers South-East Senatorial District in the rerun election, Magnus Abe was attacked by gunmen clad in army uniform and carrying sophisticated weapons threw dynamites into the liaison office. It was this attack that led to the invasion of Yeghe by the military in search of an alleged PDP chieftain and ex-militant, Mr. Solomon Ndigbara, popularly called “Osama Bin Ladin” who had been declared wanted by the army for gun running. However, some Ogoni indigenes claimed that deployment of soldiers to Yeghe and other Ogoni communities was purely political as the APC was using “federal might” to create a situation of insecurity in a futile bid to thwart the rerun State and National Assemblies elections. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) both placed a question mark over the military operation. For instance, the spokesperson of MOSOP Fegalo Nsuke, accused the military of shooting indiscriminately around Bori and advancing into adjoining communities, including Zaakpon. He alleged that the shooting had sadly seen to the cold-blooded murder of innocent persons, infliction of serious gunshot injuries on others, paralysing of activities in the Ogoni capital (Bori) and its environs as well as, arbitrary arrests thereby forcing natives and residents to flee to safety.

After due consultations with selected stakeholders, The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) subsequently fixed the 10th December, 2016 to complete rerun elections that commenced on 19th March, 2016 were yet again marred by violence and irregularities, mostly perpetrated by politicians. This time around, two policemen on election duty, DSP Alkali Mohammed and his orderly were murdered and elections were disrupted in several areas across the 22 constituencies where elections took place. In the end returns could not be made for one House of Representatives seat and one State Assembly seat, to wit Etche/Omuma and Etche II respectively (INEC, 2017).

The Commission in furtherance of its resolve to investigate the causes of the violence and disruption of the rerun elections on 20th December, 2016 instituted an administrative inquiry as part of a comprehensive review of the Rivers Rerun Elections of 10th December 2016. The Terms of Reference of the Committee are:

- (i) Review the preparations and deployment of personnel and materials on the eve of the elections.
- (ii) Identify the factors leading to the apparent failure of processes in some Local Government Areas.
- (iii) Determine the involvement and possible culpability of INEC officials in the conduct and outcome of the elections.
- (iv) Recommend appropriate sanctions against officials involved in any infractions and commendation for exceptional performance.
- (v) Advise the Commission on any matter considered relevant to the assignment (INEC, 2017: 2-3).

The report showed that if there is any remote systematic factor fanning election crisis, it is the aloofness of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The indecisiveness and shoddiness of INEC suggest that the commission has not got its bearing with new helmsman. The Commission hardly lived up to its responsibility because it created the impression that it is taking instructions from a vested interest. The report of the administrative inquiry into the 10th December 2016 Rivers State Rerun elections revealed that:

- (i) The ballot papers and result sheets, which were supposed to arrive the State office on Wednesday 7th December, instead arrived on Thursday 8th December, ostensibly for security reasons. While it is understandable that security was taken into consideration, this

affected the timely distribution of materials. The situation became chaotic with too many unauthorized party agents and excessive presence of security officials, which inhibited the free flow of vehicles collecting materials for distribution.

- (ii) Deployment was further delayed by the insistence of political party agents, who grossly outnumbered the approved one-party agent per party, that the Resident Electoral Commissioner must sign all Result Sheets before they were distributed to the Local Government Areas. This impasse took some time to be resolved.
- (iii) The movement of material from LGAs to RACs were delayed by the following factors:
 - (a) Late arrival of Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPOs).
 - (b) Inadequate transportation arrangements.
 - (c) Undue interference with the process by political party agents.
 - (d) There were real and perceived threats that materials would be snatched if distribution continued into hours of darkness
 - (e) Some security agents were hostile, uncooperative and reluctant to accompany materials to various RACs.
 - (f) Many of the RACs were not operational because of security threats, which delayed the process. For instance, movement to RACs was impossible in Etche, Okrika and Opopo-Andoni. The situation was worse in riverine areas because of non-availability of gunboats for escorts (INEC, 2017, pp. 6-7).

Other issues identified by report are credible allegations that staff of INEC in Port Harcourt were split down the middle between the two main political parties in the state namely, the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC). It was clear that confidential information, including documents, was routinely leaked to political parties from INEC office. Among other things, this created a deep crisis of confidence that affected the administration of the elections; Non-use of the prescribed full complement of personnel at the polling units; doubtful recruitment and delayed deployment of Supervisory Presiding Officers (SPOs); Despite provisions made by the Commission in funding, personnel and other materials for Voting Points, they were not used for elections throughout the state; Late deployment of Electoral Officers (Eos); Lack of due diligences in selecting Electoral Officers; Late deployment of sensitive materials; inadequate charging of Smart Card Readers (SCRs) generally, the smart card Readers deployed for the elections were only partially charged.

The delay in releasing the results caused anxiety and heightened tension as people believed that the result of the elections was manipulated to serve the interest of the Commission's masters. INEC cannot go on concluding what it calls "inconclusive election" under the guise of peace making, for it is not equipped with the faculty to discuss peace. The excuse that elections are inconclusive is becoming too frequent and is unacceptable (The Guardian, April 13, 2016). By withholding the results INEC created an enabling environment for siege.

The Rivers Rerun Elections brought to the fore the fact that privatized violence and politicized state security forces in Nigeria remain a potent threat to democratization. The more ambitious politicians in the State often exploited their masters' control of the state coercive apparatus to unleash terror on citizens and election officials who are reluctant to do their biddings. This has been identified as one of the factors that led to the apparent failure of aspects of the election process in some local Government

Areas. The report of INEC's Administrative Inquiry into the 10th December 2016 Rivers State Rerun Elections captures it thus:

One of the low points of the Rivers rerun elections of 10th December 2016 was the flagrant intervention of security operatives in the process, this was widely identified by staff of the Commission and inadequate observers alike as one of the major factors that led to the failure of the process in some Local Government Areas. There were too many security agencies involved in the process outside the framework of the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES). It was not clear whether many of them were acting as part of the various organizations or groups and individuals serving political interests. Most importantly, many of showed profound political partisanship. Ironically then, security operatives, who were expected to protect the process, turned on it. There were reported cases of wilful obstruction of the process by security operatives, including snatching of materials and intimidating voters. In other cases, they refused to accompany and protect men and materials for the elections (INEC, 2017(6)).

But the most mind-boggling were cases of hostage taking, hijack of materials and physical attacks on INEC officials perpetrated by security operatives. Of singular note was a certain Policeman named Akin Fakorede, who ostensibly is a Commander of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Rivers State. Mr. Fakorede first tried to lure INEC staff to travel with him from Port Harcourt to Emohua LGA under the pretext of enabling them to collate results. But for the intervention of National Commissioners, we suspect that he would have put our staff in harm's way. When he failed in his initial bid, he stalked the INEC officials to the Collation Centre in Port Harcourt and physically assaulted Dr. C. Odepke and Mrs. Mary Tunkuyo. In fact, Dr. Odepke ended up with a gash on his head and both spent days at the Air Force hospital in Port Harcourt (INEC, 2017: 7-8).

In addition to the presence of SARS, ahead of the Rivers State Rerun elections, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Ibrahim Idris while addressing security agencies in the State announced an increase in the number of policemen deployed to Rivers State for the exercise to 28,000, 28-gun boats were also deployed to secure the water ways in the state, while 20 police dogs, and 26 units of riot police had also been deployed. Also, 350 patrol vehicles to be manned by riot policemen and the Rapid Response Team (RRT) were deployed with a medical team in the event of emergency and checkpoints to check the movement of arms and fake officers during the elections. The unleashing of full weight of Federal might, was no doubt in keeping with the statement credited to Chief John Odigie-Oyegun that APC will bring the federal might to Rivers State. Also, about the same time, the Chief Security Officer to the Governor of Rivers State was surreptitiously withdrawn (Chinwo, 2016).

Youths have been increasingly linked to violence which in turn, have been linked to the phenomenon of rising youth bulge- the preponderance of young people in society as well as astronomical rise in the rate of unemployment among the youth. At the heart of the youth bulge discourse in context of explanation of the incidence of electoral violence is the view that youth unemployment facilitates low political participation and easy recruitment for violence. While not discounting that the fact large number of youths is an inherent factor in electoral violence, in most situations, youths are manipulated by older political actors (Olonisakin, 2014).

This paper also argues that the role of youth in electoral violence is an evitable consequence of structural violence in society and the nature of the Nigerian state. In many communities, misery was growing except among the privileged governing strata. Against the backdrop of inherited unproductive economy, bloated public payroll, crippling poverty and eroded physical infrastructures, the ruling party is

compelled to produce economic miracles or be swept aside. Without improving the productive base, the quest for survival and social mobility upward through any means (either legitimate or illegitimate) make the youths susceptible to electoral violence. Put differently, economic vulnerability of the youth coupled with the prevailing culture of impunity of the power elite make this resourceful and creative segment of the Nigerian population ready army of electoral violence.

The character of democracy is determined by the property relations prevailing in the society and by the class which holds power. Bourgeois democracy is therefore, the implementation of the power of the propertied minority over the exploited majority. Large sums of money are required to lubricate the political process on or before election day. Consequently, money and other gifts (such as bags of rice, gallons of groundnut oil and bags of salt) are distributed to voters. This is possible because majority of the people are hungry hence want money rather than a programme of action (manifesto) from politicians. It is therefore not a surprise that the elections were characterized by the menace of vote buying. Vote buying in its literal sense means a simple economic exchange in which candidates “buy” and citizens/electorates “sell” votes as they buy and sell goods. opine that the act of vote buying within this context is a contract or an auction in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder (Schaffer & Schelder, 2005)

Vote-trading may target either electoral choices or electoral participation. They may be intended to persuade individuals to vote in certain ways, or to vote or not to vote in the first place. Strategies to alter turnout may focus on demobilizing active opponents or on mobilizing active opponents, or on mobilizing passive supporters. Political parties also use money to buy the cooperation of party agents, election officials. Elections must be free and fair in order to pass as democratic in an electoral democracy, any electoral system that thrives on vote buying will not ensure transparent government because when candidates have invested much money before being elected or appointed into public office, simple economic rationality will impel it on them to recoup the money they have invested in as many folds as possible (Ojo 2006).

Free and fair elections can hardly thrive in any society confounded by hunger and poverty. The people are the foundation upon which any democratic government stands. Where the people are economically too weak to freely elect, to sustain and to keep a democratic government in check, the government will inevitably wish to retain power by any means, this stokes violence. Re-run elections revealed that political parties usually send agents to polling units/stations to represent their interests and observe the election process to ensure that is proceeding as it should. Facts at the disposal of the paper revealed that these party agents were paid a small stipend. Consequently, they were diverted from their purpose by another political party that offered a much larger stipend.

Worse still, top level election monitoring body officials were also purchased by both sides of the divide. However, only the ruling political party in the state was indicted in this regard. A Police Panel constituted by the Inspector- General of Police (IGP), Ibrahim Idris to investigate electoral and other offences perpetrated during the December 10, 2016 legislative re-run elections in Rivers State claimed it recovered N111 million from 23 officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as bribe to rig the elections. The chairman of the panel, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Damian disclosed that, “the sum total of N111.3 million was recovered from twenty-three (23) officials of N360m”. out of this amount, three senior electoral officers collected N20 million each out of the N360 million given to them by the state governor, while the remaining officers received N15 million each. The point of interest is that the panel “discovered that failure of leadership and followership rather than law enforcement was responsible for the political upheaval in the state (Ugwuanyi, 2017).

State security forces were also vulnerable in the electoral process. For instance, they provide security for transportation sensitive election materials and often times are compromised to allow tampering of these sensitive materials. In some areas, election violence was used as a strategy to cause confusion and discourage voters from going to the polls. Security forces were also paid to ignore, incite, or take part in such violence. There were also reports of paying off election officials at the polls or collation centres. Some of the predisposing factors of vote buying include the inability of the major political parties and contestants to produce comprehensive manifestos for scrutiny by the electorate; political cynicism on the part of voters who believe that political office holders are self-seeking; politics is a dirty and dishonourable enterprise and that demanding and accepting money is another way by which the people receive their own share of the national cake; while the candidates who purchase votes believed that they are investing against electoral failure. The peoples' appetite for money are energized by arrogant displace of opulence by public office holders and ostentatious life styles of many politicians and the perception that every elected or appointed officers is amassing wealth from the public treasury.

The implications from the above, is that political parties manifesto becomes less important to the electorate as the focus is on the candidates and what the money offered rather than their message. This has obvious consequences as accountability and transparency which are the hall marks of good governance and democracy are jettisoned (Davies, 2003). Any polity where voters are not completely or as much as possible insulated from undue outside pressures, most especially money, they cannot choose freely. The concomitant effect of this is simply that wrong choices are made in terms of candidates who are political merchants or reluctant money bags that may not be able to impact positively on the democratic development of the polity (Ojo, 2006).

Rivers State rerun elections have shown that the power of incumbency is one of potent variables of electoral victory because of its association with access to the state treasury. Within the context of escalating cycle of monetization of political contestation processes, millions are spent to secure electoral victory. The incumbent party both at the federal and state levels used the state treasury to fund the elections. The chances of the parties which lacked access to state fund were severely handicapped in their ability to contest the elections. Although the People's Democratic Party (PDP) led state government had access to the state treasury, the All Progressive Congress (APC) federal government facilitated access to state resources and alliance with state security forces to the detriment of the state government. This development is not unconnected to the centralist nature of the Nigerian version of federalism. Based of directive from the Central Bank of Nigeria, banks were given directives on reduction limits of amount withdrawable by customers few days to the elections. This was to incapacitate the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) party in terms of access to money to fund the election since the All Progressive Congress (APC) is the opposition political party in the state.

Development Implications of Violent Elections

The State capital -Port Harcourt was the country's second largest commercial and agricultural centre and had the second busiest seaport in Nigeria. This cosmopolitan city has a busy international airport with regular local and international flights to all parts of the country and major cities of the world. Rivers state also have four-degree awarding institutions, two refineries, petro-chemical plant, fertilizer and a liquefied natural gas plant as well as home to one of the oil majors in the Nigeria's oil industry, an Oil and Gas Free Zone and have abundant natural resources in vast land and waters.

In fact, the State has enormous advantages that made it the preferred prime investment destination. But present realities tell a different story. In fact, several businesses have in recent years moved out of the state with no discerning new ones moving in. Worse still private citizens are relocating with their families to other states that cannot boast of any natural or business advantages over Rivers State. Facts

at the disposal of this paper shows that the situation is not unconnected with the growing perception of the state as a theatre of violence. This association of Rivers State with violence stems from the type of elections the state continues to witness. Elections are characterized by electoral fraud associated with political tensions, crisis, and frightening levels of violence. The obvious consequence is that elections in the state rather than result in democratic consolidation, indeed have more or less been the subversion of the democratic process.

While it is an incontrovertible fact that the violent elections the state have witnessed can be linked to the general state of insecurity witnessed after election, what may not be obvious to many residents, is that violent elections reinforce the perception of insecurity which scare away businesses hence deprives the youths of the much-needed employment opportunities. The state is thus confronted with the cynical paradox where the youths mostly being used to perpetrate electoral violence, are themselves deprived of opportunities for employment because the violence unleashed on the state during elections have scared away businesses that would have provided the so much desired employment. This situation creates a toxic cycle because being unemployed the youths become ready tools for recruitment to perpetrate violence during elections.

Conclusion

Election is an essential aspect of any political system because it is the means or mechanisms by which citizens are chosen or elected to occupy certain positions based on expressed preference both in favour of available political parties and candidates. It also important in the selection of political leadership and the useful purpose to renew or build-up enthusiasm and support for either in-coming or incumbent regime. In other word, election serves the purpose of legitimatization of government. However, facts at the disposal of the paper have shown that poor socio-economic conditions, political exclusion, presence of non-state armed groups/actors, organized criminal groups and violation of human rights of citizens by state security forces deployed for securing elections undermined the sanctity of the electoral process.

Also implicated in the electoral violence are provocative and violent actions by political parties, poor performance of the electoral management body and monetization of political contestation processes. Monetization of the electoral process meant that great majority of the citizens, in reality lack active franchise since they can neither provide the fund needed for running for office nor allowed to vote according to their preferences. The range, extent and magnitude of the problem which confront elections in Rivers State require a committed and determined effort on the part of relevant stakeholders and citizens. For a start, the problem of youth unemployment needs to be urgently addressed so that this active, emotionally laden, pliable but productive segment of the population can be empowered and enabled to play active roles in shaping the political future of Rivers State and by extension, their own destiny.

References

- Ake, C. (1992). The legitimacy crisis of the state, in structural adjustment and the crisis in Africa. In David Kenneth & Lumumba-Kasongo, T. (eds.) *Economic and political perspectives*. New York: The Mellen Press/Lewiston,
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and development in Africa*. Washington DC, Broking Institution.
- Appadorai, (1975). *The substance of politics*. Eleventh Edition. Delhi Bombay-Calcutta: Madras University Press.
- Babarinsa, D. (2018). Offa is not far from our trouble. *The Guardian*, Thursday, June 7, 2018.

- Bakare, T. & Ndeche, C. (2018). SARS: To end or to reform. *LIFE/GUARDIAN*, Sunday, July 1st.
- Bratton, M. & Walle, N. V. (1997). *Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton, M. (1999). *Second elections in Africa*. In Diamond, L. & Plattner, M. F. (eds.) *Democratization in Africa*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Buerkle, R. (2006). *Political party financing in Nigeria*. Interview Report. International Federation of Election Systems (IEFS), July.
- Chinwo, E. (2016). Re-run polls: APC unleashes full weight of federal might on Rivers. *THIS DAY*, Friday 9, December.
- Davies, A. E. (2003). Reflections on the imperative of transparency and accountability for good governance. *Ilorin Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, Nos 1 & 2.
- Ebiri, K. (2016). APC beats drums of war in Rivers re-run polls. *The Guardian*, Friday December 9.
- Ebiri, K. (2016). PDP leads in Rivers polls. *The Guardian*, Monday March 21.
- Ebiri, K. (2016). Rivers State: A Return to The State of Nature. *The Guardian*, Sunday, March 13.
- Ebiri, K. (2016). *Violence, killings, irregularities wreck Rivers rerun poll*. *The Guardian*, Sunday December 11.
- Ebiri, K. (2016). Why APC lost in Rivers. *The Guardian*, Tuesday March 22.
- Ebiri, K; Godwin, A. & Tsokar, K. (2016). Violence, apathy mar Rivers re-run. *The Guardian*, Sunday March 20.
- Ekpu, E. (2016). Pyrrhic victory. *The Guardian*, Friday, March 25.
- Handel, D. (2016). Show of sham in Rivers. *The Guardian*, Friday, March 25.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*. Norman University of Oklahoma Press.
- Hyden, G. (1992). Governance and the study of politics. In Hyden and Bratton, M. (eds.) *Governance and politics in Africa*. Boulder, colo: Lynne Rienner.
- Ibeanu, O. (2007). *Elections and the paroxysmal future of democracy in Nigeria*. In Jega, A. & Ibeanu, O. (eds). *Elections and the future of democracy in Nigeria*. A Publication of The Nigeria Political Science Association.
- Ibeanu, O. (2015). *The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the politics of policy reform in Nigeria*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (2017). *Report of The Administrative Inquiry into the 10th December 2016 River State Rerun Elections*.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1997). Was democracy just a moment? *Atlantic, Monthly*, December, 555.
- Karl, T. L. (1986). Imposing Consent: Electrolism and democratization in Elsalvador. In Drake, P. W. & Silva, E.(eds). *Elections and Democratization in Latin America. 1980-1995*. La Jolla, California: University of California-San Diego, Centre for International Studies.
- Mbembe, A. (1990). Democratization and social movement in Africa. *Africa Demos* 1. November.

- Monger, C. (1999). *Eight problems with African politics*. In Diamond, L. & Plattner, M. F. (eds.) *Democratization in Africa*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Nwankwo, A. (1987). *The military option to democracy: Class, power and violence in Nigerian politics. Issues in Nigerian Development Series N0.7*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Limited.
- Ojo, E. O. (2003). Governance and legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. *Research for Development. The Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research. Vol.18, Nos 1&2. December*.
- Ojo, E. O. (2006). Vote buying in Nigeria. In *Money, Politics and Corruption in Nigeria*. International Federation of Election Systems (IEFS) Publication.
- The Guardian* Editorial (2016). Rivers State: matters arising. *The Guardian*, Wednesday, April 13.
- Ugwuanyi, U. (2017). Rivers rerun: Police panel recovers N111m bribe from INEC officials. *The Will*. [http: the will Nigeria.com/news/rivers-rerun. Panel/-recovers-n-](http://the-will-nigeria.com/news/rivers-rerun-panel-recovers-n-) retrieved 2/8/2017 6:47am.
- Zakaria, F. (1997). The rise of liberal democracy. *Foreign Affairs* 76 November-December: 22-43.