

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

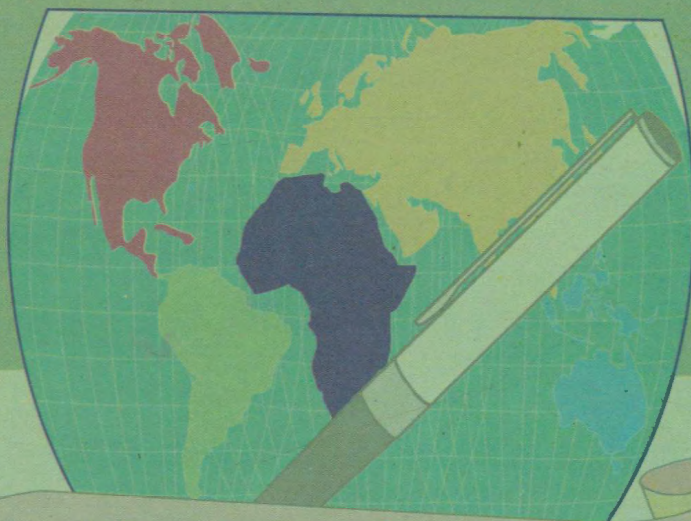
OF ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI, NIGERIA.

Volume 6,

No. 1, March, 2016.

ISSN: 2141-5226



IJADS



THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN CURBING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian state since independence has been bedeviled by electoral violence. The use of security forces and advocacy in the media by government and its agencies, and other measures have so far failed in stemming electoral violence in the country. This study therefore attempts to situate the role of traditional rulers in curbing electoral violence in the country. Using the structural functionalism theoretical framework and relying on personal observation as a primary source of data as well as secondary sources of data, the study found out that the major causes of electoral violence in the country are a consequence of the failure of contemporary security measures, media advocacy and also lack of mentoring of its citizens by relevant institutions and government's present methods. The study recommends that giving traditional rulers and their institutions this role of mentoring their subjects on the dangers of electoral violence, and also establishing an 'indirect homeland security system' will assist in curbing electoral violence in the country. It also recommends that traditional rulers should withdraw and refuse honours to people who indulge in electoral violence as well as call to order perpetrators and sponsors of electoral violence.

Keywords: Traditional Rulers and Institutions, Elections, Electoral Violence, Nigeria.

Introduction

Elections in the Nigerian state from 1951 till date have been replete with electoral violence. Rather than elections being embraced as one of the important processes that strengthen democratic institutions and facilitate peaceful transition of power, the Nigerian political class sees election as a violent means of acquiring power. Previous elections conducted after independence till date, except the June 12 elections of 1993, were marked by widespread violence and intimidation (Machika, 2009). Efforts by successive governments in Nigeria to stem electoral violence have so far proved abortive. Government, over the years, has employed reactive rather than proactive tactics in its attempt to stem electoral violence. These measures by government, which include the use of media advocacy,

presence of security personnel during the election processes, the arrest and prosecution of small electoral violence perpetrators among others, have, so far, proved insufficient in stemming the incidences of electoral violence in the country.

The Nigerian land area before the advent of colonialism was dotted by largely peaceful and well-coordinated nationalities. These ethnic nationalities also, during the period of colonialism, witnessed relative peaceful coexistence, the activities of nationalists notwithstanding. The relative peace experienced by these ethnic nationalities before and during colonial time was achieved as a result of the dominant roles of traditional rulers and their institutions. The processes of constitutional development in the country saw the roles of traditional institutions in maintaining peace and stability in their various nationalities waning, giving way to new modes of maintaining same.

Taking the historicity of electoral violence in Nigeria into consideration, it is obvious that the present governmental approach used in curbing electoral violence has, so far, proven inadequate. These approaches, as earlier mentioned, include the joint deployment of security forces, media campaigns, mobilizing religious and other opinion leaders, appeal to students and youths directly and through their parents, closure of schools and, sometimes, imposition of curfew. The need, therefore, to employ traditional values and institutions to complement these aforementioned efforts to curb electoral violence is now very imperative.

Clarification of Concepts

Traditional Rulers and Institutions refer to a central authority control selected by the people in the community, through the cultural processes and traditions, and accepted by the people to control cultural and traditional affairs not covered by governmental laws and regulations. That is, an authority that pilots the people in a community along the lines of customs and traditions in the community. (*Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979*).

A traditional ruler may be defined as, “the traditional head of an ethnic group or clan who is the holder of the highest primary executive authority in an indigenous polity or who has been appointed to the position in accordance with the customs and traditions of the area concerned by instrument or order of the state government, and whose title is recognized

as a traditional ruler by the Government of the State” (*Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict, 1979*).

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a population chooses an individual to hold public office (*Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009*). Robert and Edward (2014) define election as ‘a method for the selection of persons to fill certain offices through choices made by an electorate or by those citizens who are qualified to vote under the rules and procedures of the electoral system’.

The International Foundation for Electoral System, IFES, defines Electoral Violence as:

any act of 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 disrupt any aspect of the electoral process (registration, campaign, voting, counting, collating, etc.) (Machika, 2009:1).

According to Machika (2009), Electoral Violence can be seen as any random or organized act that seeks to undermine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threats, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault and blackmail, destruction of property or assassination. He further posited that the victims of electoral violence can be people, places, things or data. The acts associated with electoral violence include physical harm (homicide, sexual violence, torture, and assault), threats (physical or verbal), intimidation, destruction of property and forced displacement. The general objective of electoral violence, according to him, is to influence the electoral process and its outcome by an individual or group of individuals over another with the aim of winning political competition or power through violence.

Theoretical Framework

The structural functionalism theoretical framework best explains the role of traditional institutions in curbing electoral violence. The theory is associated with Emile Durkheim and more recently with Talcott Parsons (Fisher, 2010:75). Susser (1992) states that functionalists tend to view social and political units in more holistic and organic terms. Social practices are said to have a functional role in sustaining the system as a whole. Functionalists equate structure to anatomy and functions to physiology of organisms.

The structural functional paradigm views society as a complex system of many separate but integrated parts (Obi, 2008:25). The theory is based around a number of key concepts. First, society is viewed as a system; a collection of interdependent parts, with a tendency towards equilibrium. Secondly, there are functional requirements that must be met in a society for its survival (such as reproduction of the population). Thirdly, phenomena are seen to exist because they serve a function (Holmwood, 2005:87).

Functionalists believe that one can compare society to a living organism, in that both are made up of interdependent working parts (organs and systems) that must function together in order for the greater body to perform optimally. According to Parsons (1961:41), "the social system is made up of the actions of individuals". His starting point was the interaction between two individuals (Parsons, 1961). Those individuals were faced with a variety of choices about how they might act. However, those choices were influenced and constrained by a number of physical and social factors (Craib, 1992:40). Parsons (1961) determined that each individual has expectations of the other's action and reaction to their own behaviour, and that these expectations are derived from the accepted norms and values of the society which they inhabit. He then developed the idea of roles into collectivities that complemented each other in fulfilling functions of society. Some of the roles are bound up in institutions and social structures such as economic, educational, legal, etc. (Parsons 1961:41).

Parsons (1982) also argued that the primary concern of Durkheim was the integration of social system that holds society together. Parsons argued that the construct of 'social solidarity' was central to Durkheim's work as it was to his own solidarity derived from norms bolstered by shared values (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993:200). Those constructs were viewed as 'needs' of social structure that help explain cultural phenomena such as kinship rules and religious rituals (Turner, 1986).

The structural functionalism theoretical framework is relevant to this study from the perspective that traditional rulers have socially defined roles and responsibilities that they must render to their communities. From the point of structures and institutions, traditional rulers serve as a means to organize social parts. It is common knowledge that traditional values in the Nigerian context influence and constrain the action of its subjects. The Nigerian traditional setting, to a very large extent, accentuates laws, rules and regulations among its members. One of the responsibilities of traditional

rulers is to ensure that peace is maintained in their domain. Electoral violence is inimical to the peaceful existence of any society. Traditional institutions, therefore, have the important role of ensuring that electoral violence and indeed other violence in the society are minimized.

Electoral Violence: Some Trends and Consequences

The violent outcome of the electoral processes in Nigeria took a frightening dimension with the 1964 general election. The election was marred by widespread rigging and malpractice that culminated in violence and extensive riots which paved the way for the 1966 military coup.

In 1979, though rigging was competitive between the five political parties, that is, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), electoral violence was minimal. The 1979 election was midwifed by the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo (Igbuzor, 2009).

The 1983 election, the second organized by a civilian government (the first being the 1964 election), also witnessed massive vote rigging and attendant electoral violence. The general public's outcry that followed the 'landslide victory' of Alhaji Shehu Shagari-led National Party of Nigeria (NPN), resulted in the December, 31st 1983 military coup. The magnitude of the violence in Ondo State for example, made it impossible for the declared winner of the Ondo State governorship election, Chief Akin Omoboriowo, to assume office. He governed the state from another state - Lagos (Igbuzor, 2009).

The general election of 2003 (the third organized by a civilian regime in the country), midwifed by the Olusegun Obasanjo-led government also witnessed widespread electoral violence. This was a consequence of the 'do-or-die' stance of President Olusegun Obasanjo towards winning the election. According to the *Human Rights Watch* report on the 2003 general elections, series of large scale violence were recorded during the April 12th and 19th elections in several key areas including the south and the south east. According to the report, the highest level of violence during the 2003 elections was recorded in the south and south east, where the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governors and their supporters greatly succeeded in resisting opposition bids for office (*Human Rights Watch*, 2003)

The 2004 Local Government Elections also witnessed extensive electoral violence. By the end of March 2004, *Human Rights Watch* noted at least 22 states in which killings and other types of violent clashes were recorded by election observers, journalists and other sources. In late March and early April 2004, there were reports of further incidents including killings, some of which have been linked with the aftermath of the elections (*Human Rights Watch*, 2004). The *Daily Champion* of 30th March 2004 reported the violence in Edo State two days after the local government election. The *Associated Press*, April 12th 2004 edition reported how Nigerian youths battled security forces over disputed election results in the south west.

On December 8th 2006, seven persons were killed and several houses burnt in Aliade Town, forty kilometers (40km) away from Makurdi, capital of Benue State during the People's Democratic Party (PDP) primaries to pick candidates for the national election of 2007 (*Reuters Foundation*, 2006). It is an open secret that the 2007 election was marred by massive vote fraud and rigging. The beneficiary of that election, late Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua confirmed that the process that brought him to power was widely flawed. Igbuzor (2009) categorized trends of electoral violence in Nigeria as follows:

- i. General elections of 1959 and 1964 (Wild Wild West): Illegal voting, bribery and falsification of results
- ii. 1979: Competitive rigging (a situation where the better rigger wins)
- iii. 1983 Election: Competitive rigging
- iv. 1999: Competitive rigging
- v. 2003: Primitive accumulation of votes
- vi. 2007: Direct capture of the people's mandate

In 2008, 400 persons were killed and 7,000 others displaced in Jos, Plateau State over disputed election results. Christian and Muslim protesters took to the streets, burning homes and places of worship (*Headlines Africa*, 2008).

Nkwocha (2008:8) reported that Jonah Jang, the Governor of Plateau State imposed a 24-hour curfew on Jos over the massive riots involving Christians and Muslims over the results of a local election. Two days of rioting left 400 injured and 381 killed. According to him, the Nigerian Red Cross reported that over ten thousand people fled their homes due to the riots, which were occasioned by rumours that the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Barr. T. G. Buba defeated the candidate of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP). People from the largely Hausa Muslim community, he reported, began protesting as a result of the rumours and

attacked Christian homes and churches, and the Christians on their part retaliated (Nkwocha, 2008).

According to Adesote and Abimbola (2014), the 2011 General Election witnessed two major stages of electoral violence, the pre-election period and the post-election period. According to them, there were several cases of pre-election violence which led to the brutal murder of some people. They cited the pre-election violence in Akwa Ibom State in March, 22, 2011, which led to the setting up of a presidential investigation panel to investigate the remote and immediate causes of the violence and proffer solution to nip future occurrences in the bud. Adesote and Abimbola (2014) also stated that the announcement of the April 2011 General Election by INEC at the national level, in which President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was declared winner, led to post-electoral violence especially in some parts of northern Nigeria, such as Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri, Kaduna, among others. According to them, the 2011 post-election violence led to the killing of about ten (10) National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members in Bauchi State (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

Bamgbose (2012:213) summarized the incidence of the 2011 electoral violence as follows:

- i. Ondo State: 3 people shot dead in Obanla area with 4 people reportedly injured in Iro Street in a clash between supporters of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the ruling Labour Party (LP).
- ii. Ado-Ekiti: 2 supporters of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) identified as Ayo Kehinde Faluyi and Michael Ipindola were killed by assassins during a brawl between the supporters of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the then ruling Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) (now the All Progressives Congress, APC).
- iii. Osun State: 6 members of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (now APC) were arrested and arraigned at the Magistrate Court at Oshogbo over alleged arson and political violence.
- iv. Akwa Ibom State: clashes between supporters of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) (now APC) resulted in many deaths with several persons wounded. The Presidential Campaign Office of Goodluck Jonathan and Namadi Sambo situated along Abak Road were set ablaze. 127 Peugeot 307 salon cars and 157 Keke NAPEP [tricycles] belonging to the state government were burnt. 51 suspects were arrested in connection with the political violence in Uyo.

- v. Edo State: Protest came over the way the People's Democratic Party (PDP) primaries were conducted. Matthew Urhohide who lost to Ehigie Uzamere alleged that he won. In Edo Central. Theo Oko and Onikolease Erhabor both claimed victory as they alleged that the announced winner, Herberta Okonofua rigged the process.
- vi. Cross River State: At Ugep, there was electoral violence and some people were injured and cars destroyed, while guns were freely used. The violence led to the arrest of one of the aspirants to the House of Representatives, Mr. Patrick Okomiso and the incumbent member, Chief Bassey Ewa.
- vii. Delta State: The rescheduled Delta-North senatorial district primary was marred by sporadic gunshots at the cenotaph venue, Asaba. The state chairman of the party, Chief Peter Onyeluka Nwaoboshi escaped being lynched by some angry delegates during the senatorial re-run.
- viii. Ebonyi State: Suspected thugs loyal to a political party unleashed terror on St. Stephen's Catholic Church, Iziogo, Izzi Local Government Area.
- ix. Benue State: The convoy of the then Benue State Deputy Governor, Stephen Lawani, ran into an ambush by armed political thugs on their way back from a rally in Gbajimba, Guma Local Government Area. Political thugs in Benue State also attacked and wounded General Lawrence Onoja, the then Benue South Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN, now APC) senatorial candidate.
- x. Niger State: In Suleja, hand-held explosives were thrown into the venue of the Niger East senatorial flag-off by unidentified persons. Also in Niger State, angry youths protesting the results of the 2011 General Election, stormed the Nigerian Christian Corpers Secretariat in Minna and locked 50 youth corpers serving in the State in the building and set it ablaze.

On the rescheduled April 2013 Esan North-East Local Government Area Election in Edo State, the exercise was cancelled by the Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) over alleged violence and thuggery in many places. EDSIEC officials were chased away and the electoral officer took refuge at the Uromi Police Station. The activities of thugs and some law enforcement agencies made it impossible for EDSIEC officials to perform their duties. (Otabor, 2013: 1-2)

Ebegbulem and Enoghilase (2013) reported that the in October 2013 bye-election in Esan North-East area of Edo State, two persons were allegedly caught with already thump-printed ballot boxes while 22

others were arrested for alleged disturbances and taken to Uromi Police Station where they were detained. According to them, Prince Joe Okojie, an APC leader, who spoke to the newsmen, where he was detained at the Uromi Police Station, complained thus:

I came to the police station to lay a complaint. I later left to my polling unit to bring a camera which I intended to give to somebody at the station. As I was coming back, the Mopol Commander who is based in Lagos but came back home to work for the PDP, ambushed me and some other APC leaders and brought all of us to the police station. They disrupted the election in my ward, ward 5 and ward 7, when they found out that they were losing. We knew this would happen because they flooded this town with Mobile policemen from Abuja and Lagos and they are intimidating, harassing and arresting APC leaders. But we will resist this intimidation. Their PDP leader, the minister is around. They came with thousands of mobile policemen to kill our people but they have failed. (Ebegbulem & Enogholase, 2013: 1- 2).

Ebegbulem and Enogholase (2013: 4) further reported that, at Atani Primary School, the camera of *Tell Magazine's* Director of Special Duties, Mrs. Adekunbi Ero, was allegedly snatched from her as she attempted to take photographs of the chaotic scene caused by political thugs. A reporter with *The News Magazine*, Jethro Ebileke, was also allegedly rough-handled.

Fafowora (2013), in his report on the November 2013 Anambra State Governorship Election, stated that the election ended in utter confusion and chaos. According to Fafowora (2013), voting did not take place in many of the voting centres. Voting materials arrived very late in many of the centres. In many places, voters' registers were either not available or displayed. Where they were available, many of the voters could not find their names and consequently, could not vote. The security agencies, particularly the (Federal) police, were accused of complicity in the massive electoral fraud in the state election. Many voters were allegedly denied access by the police to the voting centres. Some who were thought to be in support of the opposition parties were manhandled and not allowed to vote (Fafowora, 2013).

Prior to the 2014 Governorship election in Ekiti State, series of violent clashes between rival political parties became the order of the day. On several occasions, thugs allegedly sent by a rival party clashed with those

they felt were obstacles to the chances of their party at the polls. Few unlucky members lost their lives in the ensuing melee, while some who were fortunate, escaped with injuries (Okoro, 2014:3)

Ibekwe (2014) posited that seeking elective positions in Ekiti State is not for the faint-hearted. Historically, elections in the state have been marred by violence, intimidations and long-drawn legal tussles. According to him, police attack on the governor of the state, Kayode Fayemi, and other members of the All Progressives Congress, APC, during a rally in Ado-Ekiti, on Sunday June 11 2014, might be a new blow; it was no doubt in tune with what, unfortunately, had become the norm in the state. Witnesses said hell broke loose after men of the Mobile Police unit shot teargas canisters and live ammunition into the crowd. A supporter of the governor, Taiwo Akinola, died after he was shot in the head. The APC claimed that the attack on the governor was unprovoked and was orchestrated by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP. In fact, Dr. Fayemi told journalists that the attack could be an attempt to assassinate him. The decibel of accusations and counter-accusations of violence, threats and intimidations had become almost deafening after official campaigns commenced. There had never been a lull in clashes among the various opposing political interests in the state (Ibekwe, 2014)

In November 2013, Funsho Ogundare, a supporter of Opeyemi Bamidele, the Labour Party, LP, governorship candidate, was shot and killed after clashes between Mr. Bamidele's supporters and people believed to be APC members at Emure Ekiti. A member of the Ekiti State House of Assembly from Emure Constituency, Kehinde Boluwade, with six other APC members were charged with murder over the killing. This led Governor Fayemi to suspend his campaigns, alleging that the incessant attacks on his supporters were sponsored by the opposition (Ibekwe, 2014).

Conversely, Ayo Fayose, a former governor and PDP candidate also complained of intimidations and threats against his supporters mainly by the APC. While reacting to the June 11, 2014 attack on Dr. Fayemi's rally and the allegation that the PDP orchestrated the clash, Mr. Fayose told reporters that one of his supporters was attacked and killed by machete-wielding members of the APC. He accused Dr. Fayemi of preventing police officers from getting to the scene of the incident by blocking them with his official cars (Ibekwe, 2014:1-2). According to Ibekwe (2014), nothing was more symbolic of the overriding theme of

violence that had underscored the election like the bulletproof vest worn by Mr. Fayose to one of his campaign rallies.

Okoro (2014) justified the Federal Government's deployment of about 12,000 troops including soldiers, men of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), State Security Services (SSS) and police officers on the pockets of violent clashes before the Ekiti elections. A week before the election, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mohammed Abubakar, deployed three helicopters for surveillance in the three senatorial districts in the state with one Assistant Inspector-General of Police and four Commissioners of Police for effective coordination of security operations. Abubakar confessed that the number of troops, armoured tanks and helicopters deployed in Ekiti was the highest ever to be deployed in a state, saying it was part of the resolve of the police to do anything humanly possible to provide enough security during the elections (Okoro, 2014:3)

Okoro (2014) likened Ekiti to a war zone with the troops taking positions. Almost every 100 metres from the entry point of the state, police officers and soldiers mounted various check-points, with blood-hound dogs sniffing for any likely breach of peace by supporters of the various political parties. Some visitors coming into the state through Efon Alaaye-Ekiti on the Osun-Ekiti border, encountered at least eleven check-points before getting to Ado-Ekiti, the state capital (Okoro, 2014:3).

The Nigerian Military barred the opposition party, All Progressives Congress (APC) state governors from entering Ekiti State two days before the election. What seemed to have bothered political observers about the military invasion in Ekiti, according to Okoro (2014), was the incident that transpired 48 hours before the elections. Rivers State Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, and his Edo State counterpart, Adams Oshiomhole, were prevented entry into Ekiti State to attend the last APC mega rally by military personnel purportedly acting on the orders of the Presidency. Some leaders of the party, including the Imo State governor, Rochas Okorochoa, and the former governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, also had their fair share of frustration as their planes were prevented from taking off at the Akure airport after the rally, leaving them with the only option of travelling by road. Governor Adams Oshiomhole, who intended flying to Ekiti by a helicopter, was prevented from taking off at the Benin airport, while the plane flying the Kano State governor, Rabiu Kwankwaso to the Akure airport was prevented from landing (Okoro, 2014:4).

Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State was the most frustrated of them. He had managed to fly to Akure in a chartered plane, but could not reach Ado-Ekiti as soldiers laid siege for him in Iju, Ondo State, forcing him to turn back; condemning him to a four-hour trip to Lagos by road. His aircraft was reportedly grounded in Akure. Governor Oshiomhole, it was learnt, could however not get to his destination as the Federal Government aborted his trip midway (Okoro, 2014: 4–5).

As would be expected, the action of the military on its members drew the ire of the APC. The party lamented that the Federal Government was using its security apparatus to harass its governors and had thus turned Ekiti State into a war zone where constitutionally guaranteed rights have been suspended.

The National Chairman of the APC, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun, who addressed a press conference in Lagos on the eve of the election, said the Federal Government had overreached itself and engaged in series of arbitrariness and unconstitutional acts that threaten the very fabric of the nation's democracy. Odigie-Oyegun particularly lamented the action of the military on its governors and supporters, saying that:

The party was concerned about the actions of the PDP-led Federal Government 'to capture Ekiti State at all cost'. It is unfortunate that under the guise of providing security, Ekiti State has been turned into a war zone. It has been over-run by armed security personnel with the intention of intimidating the opposition and the voters as well. Our electoral laws are clear that every polling unit should have one unarmed policeman and the military should have no role in the election. But in Ekiti, armed police and military personnel have been deployed in their numbers and the question we are asking is whose purpose are they going to serve? The PDP is too desperate to capture Ekiti by every means and in view of this, we have deemed it fit to alert Nigerians of their antic (Okoro, 2014: 5–6).

However, President Goodluck Jonathan's Senior Special Assistant on Public Affairs, Dr. Doyin Okupe, absolved his principal of blame over the incident, saying that at no time did the president order that the governors be stopped from participating in the mega rally (Okoro, 2014:6).

At least, 58 Nigerians died in pre-election violence ahead of the general polls that was scheduled for March 28 and April 11, 2015, according to a report released by the Nigerian Human Rights body. The report on pre-election violence compiled by the National Human Rights Commission

indicate that in 50 days, 61 incidents of pre-election violence occurred in 22 states of Nigeria with 58 persons killed. The incidences of violence, the Commission reported, were captured from all the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria (Ibeh, 2015:1).

Akasike (2015:12) reported that two(2) persons were shot dead in the Ogba/Egbema/ Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State in a clash between supporters of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and those of the All Progressives Congress (APC). The incident, which took place in Omoku, was said to be a reprisal after an initial violent clash that took place in Okwuzi. The Editor, *Punch Online* (2015:1), also reported that two (2) persons were killed at Imiegba, near Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State as supporters of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the All Progressives; Congress (APC) clashed. According to the report, the incident occurred on Monday, 23rd March, 2015 during a door-to-door campaign by the SDP. The APC members were alleged to have barricaded the road leading to Imiegba with a view to preventing Honourable Razak Momoh of the Federal House of Representatives from accessing the town.

Ranti (2015) reported that the All Progressives Congress (APC) petitioned the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) over the alleged attacks on its members and supporters in Ekiti State by Governor Ayo Fayose and his loyalists. The party accused Fayose of using thugs to cause political violence in the state. It added that the thugs physically attacked and intimidated opposition personalities in the state. The APC also alleged that Fayose's activities were undermining the peace pact recently signed by all presidential candidates in the March 28, 2015 general elections. They alleged that on January 21, 2015, Fayose's thugs and members of the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), dressed in army and police uniform ransacked and vandalized the APC Secretariat in Agiloson Street, Ado-Ekiti, where the security guards on duty at the APC office were physically assaulted. They also alleged that on January 24th, 2015, Adeleke Samson, a Student Union leader, who attended the APC presidential rally in Ado-Ekiti with his colleagues, was violently attacked by Fayose's thugs.

Ogundele (2015) further reported that the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ekiti State called on the Independent National Electoral Commission to charge the executive governor of the state, Mr. Ayodele Fayose, for election-related violence. The party, according to Ogundele, based the call on the reported shooting of an APC member, Jide Owolabi, in Ikire-Ekiti

on the alleged order of the deputy governor during the 2015 Presidential and National Assembly elections. According to the APC, "What happened in Ikire-Ekiti was a pre-meditated incident to cow the opposition to submission. We had earlier raised alarm to the plan by top officials of Governor Ayodele Fayose's administration to employ violence and intimidation to cow our members to enable them manipulate the elections".

Adenubi (2015:46) also reported that pandemonium broke out around the national stadium axis of Surulere, Lagos, when suspected thugs, loyal to the All Progressive Congress (APC), clashed with members of the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), attacking motorists plying the road. According to an eyewitness, the report added, trouble ensued when members of the OPC, loyal to Ganiyu Adams, clashed with supporters of the APC who were on a solidarity march.

Causes of Electoral Violence

Machika (2009) attributed the causes of electoral violence to include the following:

- i. Financial inducement
- ii. The plum of office
- iii. Attraction of official lucre
- iv. Illiteracy, ignorance and poverty
- v. Monetization of elective offices and god-fatherism
- vi. Sit-tight syndrome
- vii. Breach of trust by election management bodies
- viii. Religious and ethnic sentiments

Machika (2009) summarized these causes into one - *Lack of mentoring*. According to him, society has left the training of its youth entirely to their immediate parents who are too busy trying to scarp a living for survival as opposed to the past where young men were supported by more experienced members of the society who train, guide and advise them to follow the path of honour.

The Influence of Traditional Rulers in the Nigerian Society

The various nationalities that make up the Nigerian state before and during colonialism, as earlier stated, experienced relative peace and tranquility to some extent. These could be attributed to the role and influence of traditional rulers and traditional institutions. The relative peace (aside nationalists' activities) in the colonial societies of Nigeria was, largely, a consequence of the Indirect Rule System. The Indirect Rule System

allowed for the colonial governance of society through traditional rulers and institutions. Constitutional development in the Nigerian state after independence did not, however, give much role to traditional rulers. Apart from the creation of the Council of Chiefs (who were to act in advisory capacity) which was in place in the 1963 and 1979 constitutions, no role was given to traditional rulers in the country.

It is a truism that, to a great extent, traditional rulers in Nigeria still have control and influence over their domains today. The connection between these traditional institutions and the people are still intact to some extent. The passage of time and contemporary governmental influences have not significantly waned or diminished the influence of traditional rulers over their subjects in their present respective domains. They still remain highly respected and very influential. This pervading influence of traditional rulers should be positively harnessed by giving them roles aimed at mediating and curbing electoral violence in their respective areas.

Blench et al (2006) captured succinctly, the super-imposing roles and influences of traditional rulers in conflict prevention and mediation in the northern part of Nigeria. According to them:

- i. Traditional rulers in Kwara Emirate in Kwara State were responsible for the settlement of the Later Farmers/ Pastoralist Conflict.
- ii. The Borgu Emirate Council and Kantagora Emirate Council intervened and settled the Grazing Rights Conflict in Kainji National Park.
- iii. The Fish Resources Conflict between Silame and Augie communities in Kebbi State in 1996 was resolved by the Argungu Emirate Council, among others.

It is instructive to note that government failed in resolving all the aforementioned conflicts. The influence of traditional rulers from their successes at conflict resolution and mediation, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized.

Ibrahim (2009) situates the pervading influence of traditional rulers when he posited that during the colonial period, it was impossible to steal from the native authority treasury as there was accountability and transparency under the emirate system. This resonates with Ekeh's (1975) position in his seminal work, 'Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement'. According to him, a community may not sanction a thief who steals from the government, but will sanction one who steals from the community.

Traditional Rulers and Curbing of Electoral Violence

Traditional authorities employ various methods aimed at curbing electoral violence in Nigeria, and some of these methods are highlighted below:

Mentoring

Traditional rulers should be allotted space in curbing electoral violence by involving them through their various traditional institutions in the mentoring of their subjects on the calamitous consequence of electoral violence. As a result of their widespread influences in their respective domains, traditional rulers can mentor their subjects on ethics and behaviour during registration of voters, electoral campaigns and general conduct and behaviour on election and post-election days. It is a known fact that political aspirants traditionally seek the support and blessings of traditional rulers before embarking on electoral campaigns. Traditional rulers can also through this process mentor, advise and influence these aspirants from engaging in any form of electoral violence.

Traditional Invocations

The fear of negative traditional invocation by traditional rulers and institutions will also go a long way in preventing subjects from involving themselves in electoral violence as most people in these parts still believe in the efficacy and harmful effects of these negative traditional invocations. The example in the Benin Kingdom where the rate of kidnapping dropped drastically after the Oba of Benin and his chiefs pronounced negative invocations on kidnappers and evil-doers in the kingdom, attest to the fact that many people still place high premium on the efficacy of traditional invocations.

Penalizing those Engaged in Electoral Violence

Traditional rulers should penalize electoral violence perpetrators by withdrawing their chieftaincy titles and also deny sponsors and perpetrators of electoral violence such honours. Instead, such honours and chieftaincy titles should be given to politicians who play politics according to the rules and encourage peaceful elections. Traditional rulers, being close to their people, should call to order, perpetrators and sponsors of electoral violence in their domains. This call will greatly discourage the political leaders and their foot-soldiers who are disposed to electoral violence as the people in the locality will beam their searchlight on them and even refrain from supporting them if they do not restrain from perpetuating electoral violence.

Indirect Homeland Security System

The widespread influence of traditional rulers can also be translated into assisting security agencies in maintaining peace, especially the curbing of electoral violence, through what we may refer to as '*Indirect Homeland Security System*'. This is a system where the traditional rulers are indirectly involved in the administration of security matters in their respective domains. This can be achieved by security agencies directing covert security matters through the traditional rulers. Most people, no doubt, still trust their traditional rulers and therefore will be willing to give unfettered information to them rather than to the police or other security agencies. This classified information from traditional rulers and institutions to security agencies, will, no doubt, strengthen the relationship between these traditional institutions and security agencies. This collaboration will go a long way in stemming electoral violence and other kinds of violence in the respective traditional domains.

With the *Indirect Homeland Security System* in place, traditional rulers and institutions will have unfettered access to, and can therefore call on the police force and other security agencies that are better empowered to check electoral violence and prosecute its perpetrators and sponsors whenever the need arises.

Conclusions

The magnitude of electoral violence in Nigeria, no doubt, is a threat to sustainable democratic norms and cultures in the country. The efforts of government through the use of joint deployment of security forces, media campaigns, mobilizing religious and other opinion leaders, appeal to students and the youth through their parents, closure of schools and sometimes imposition of curfew, etc, to stem electoral violence in the country have so far proved inadequate. It is a known fact that traditional rulers exert a lot of influence on the citizens in their domains. Political actors in the country and even so-called god-fathers all belong to different nationalities where traditional institutions and traditional rulers are highly respected. The influence of these traditional rulers over their subjects are also not controverted.

Recommendations

Government therefore has the responsibility to take advantage of the influence of traditional rulers over their subjects by engaging these royal fathers to positively mentor their subjects through the various traditional institutions towards curbing electoral violence in their respective domains.

Secondly, government should take advantage of the people's fear of the efficacy of negative traditional invocations by traditional institutions to positively engage traditional rulers in stemming electoral violence.

The introduction of an *Indirect Homeland Security System* will also go a long way towards stemming electoral violence in the domains of traditional rulers since they will complement security agencies, though covertly, in stemming electoral violence. Replicating this nationwide will, no doubt, curb electoral violence in the country. The withdrawal and refusal by traditional rulers to give honours to people who indulge in electoral violence, will to a large extent, encourage peaceful elections. The calling to order of perpetrators and sponsors of electoral violence by traditional rulers in their domains will, moreover, greatly discourage electoral violence.

Lastly, the collaboration of the police and other security agencies with traditional rulers and institutions in the *Indirect Homeland Security System* and the call by traditional rulers to prosecute the perpetrators of electoral violence and their sponsors in their respective domains will significantly ensure peaceful polls in Nigeria.

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