

Examining The Reasons Behind Electoral Violence In Emerging Democratic Systems In Africa:
Nigerian Democracy In Focus

Dr. Isiaka Hassan Aliyu¹, Abdulrahman Yusuf², Abubakar Mohammed³

¹Department Of Crime Management Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa
Email ID : Isiaka93@gmail.com
²Department Of Crime Management Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa
³Department Of Humanities and Social Sciences Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa

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KEYWORDS <i>Democratization, elections, and electoral violence.</i>	ABSTRACT Violence has characterized the voting process in several of Africa's democracies. Fortunately, recent election violence has taken on an unprecedented scale and changed in shape and character, which has detrimental effects on the stability and consolidation of democracy. This essay examines electoral violence in Africa, focusing on its sources, effects, ramifications, and potential remedies, particularly in Nigeria. The study makes the case that the neo-patrimonial nature of African states, the character of power struggles, the inadequate institutionalization of democratic architectures, such as political parties and electoral management bodies (EMBs), and the intriguing political economy of electoral violence are all strongly related to the rise in electoral violence on the continent. The lack or scarcity of Democrats with a democratic mindset to play the political game by the rules complicates this. Even worse, the courts and civil society two more channels for democratic recourse are intricately linked to the state's growing contradictions. The outcome of the democratization process is the deinstitutionalization of the populace. Thus, there are real risks of deconsolidation associated with electoral violence, which is a key cause of instability in democracies. To tame the beast, these inconsistencies must be addressed. Democratic ideals and principles might be further undermined if these inconsistencies are not resolved.
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1. INTRODUCTION

One major barrier to the spread of democratic governance throughout the African continent is electoral violence. The threat of violence during election processes remains, despite the fact that many African countries have made progress toward constructing democratic institutions. This threatens the legitimacy and stability of newly formed democracies. Nigeria offers a fascinating case study for comprehending the complications surrounding election violence within the framework of developing democratic regimes since it is the most populous country in Africa and a major participant in the region. The goal of this research is to investigate the complex interaction of historical, socioeconomic, and political variables that contribute to the continuance of election violence in Nigeria. With a focus on Nigeria, a nation with a diverse population in terms of race, religion, and geography, this study aims to shed light on the larger difficulties facing the consolidation of democracy in Africa.

Nigeria's 1999 political revolution from military to democratic administration was a major turning point in the country's history. However, different levels of violence, from small-scale skirmishes to large-scale disturbances, have tainted future electoral cycles, casting doubt on the country's democratic objectives. To create workable mitigation strategies, it is imperative to understand the root causes of this violence. Influence and promote a climate of nonviolent political participation. Ethnic conflicts, socioeconomic divides, and colonialism's historical legacy have all contributed to Nigeria's unstable electoral environment. Tensions between ethnic and regional groupings are exacerbated by the lasting effects of British colonial control, which are typified by a polarizing system of indirect rule and arbitrary borders. Deeply ingrained socioeconomic disparities also encourage rivalry for political power, which frequently results in the use of violence as a tactic of control. These disparities are made worse by pervasive poverty and restricted access to resources. Furthermore,.



identity-based politics have been sustained by the political elites' exploitation of religion and ethnicity for electoral advantage, which has widened rifts and promoted a hostile environment. Election-related concerns can escalate into violence when there are insufficient institutions and dispute resolution processes in place. This undermines the validity of election results and erodes public trust in the democratic process

The paper makes the case that the neo-patrimonial nature of African states, the nature of power struggles, the military and authoritarian shadows cast over the democratization process, the inadequate institutionalization of democratic architectures, including political parties and electoral management bodies (EMBs), and the economic underpinnings of the process may all be linked to the rise in electoral violence in Africa, including its shifting form and character. The deinstitutionalization of those involved in the democratization process is exacerbated by the lack or scarcity of Democrats who truly possess a democratic mindset and are capable of playing politics in accordance with specified norms and regulations. There is a real danger of deconsolidation associated with electoral violence, which is one of the main causes of democratic instability. Regretfully, the state's inconsistencies have a significant impact on both official answers to the issue and channels for democratic redress, particularly through the court. To control the beast that has evolved into electoral violence, these inconsistencies must be resolved. In conclusion, the report makes some reasonable recommendations for electoral change in this area.

Democratization, elections, and electoral violence

There exists a complex relationship between electoral violence, electoral processes, and the process of democratization. However, considering the prevalent notion that democracy and peace are inherently interconnected, with elections serving as the mechanism that binds them together, this complexity should not be entirely unexpected. Elections play a crucial role in conferring political legitimacy, fostering competition, and facilitating a peaceful transition of power, thus allowing for the attribution of accountability to individuals in positions of power. Consequently, it is often argued that elections have symbolic significance by granting the populace a voice and enhancing the interaction between the governing authorities and the governed (Mohammed, 2004). Hence, it is logical to presume that a society characterized by democratic principles would also exhibit characteristics of peace and effective governance. This rationale helps elucidate why the current international approach to peace building incorporates electoral processes, as it firmly links the advancement of democracy with the promotion of peace (Omotola, 2010).

However, depending on its form and character, democracy can have security implications that either promote or deter violence. According to Suleiman (2004), democratization may have a substantial influence on the distributive and redistributive mechanisms of the state, which are facilitated by elections. Because of this, the democracy process encounters significant challenges at every stage, such as those presented by transitional contexts, the topic of the transition, and the problem of consolidation after the shift. According to Mohammed (2004), disagreements about who should be in control of the strategies and procedures start to surface early on in a society's transformation. Political parties may clash over the terminology, which can be hard to agree upon. The viability of the previous judgment is being called into question by further arguments in the post-transition period. Among the unresolved issues are who bears the burden of the conflict and who plans the transition with specific goals and interests.

This brought up some significant points that both favor and undermine nonviolence. The solutions to these concerns will determine the course of democratization. Elections are essential to the process of democratization and provide answers to these concerns, either explicitly or implicitly. It follows that the structure and nature of elections in relation to political rivalry, involvement, and legitimacy play a crucial role in defining the parameters, subjects, techniques, and outcome of the democratization process. Angerbrandt (2018) correctly points out that the process of transition opens up a range of transitory political opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs and creates threatening uncertainties for some groups. As a people-driven initiative, democracy will always have substance, purpose, and relevance as long as it allows the people, irrespective of their identity or ideology, enough credit to shape and mold governance issues in their own concerns. Given its emphasis on public participation, the election process offers the most thorough and efficient way to do this. As a result, the election process must be very transparent, responsible, open, competitive, and participatory. Its integrity may be evaluated by examining how well it adheres to the electoral laws. According to Mohammed (2002) and Kovacs (2018), any attempt to suppress these beliefs throughout the voting process may lead to election-related violence.

Conceptually, electoral violence refers to "any forms of organized acts or threats physical, psychological, and structural aimed at determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process before, during, or after an election with a view to intimidating, harming, or blackmailing a political stakeholder" (Kovacs, 2018). This is significant because it shows that electoral violence has institutional, psychological, and physical components. The physical aspects include the killing of political rivals, shooting, looting, burning, abduction, and hostage-taking, as well as violently interrupting political events and conducting armed incursions into polling places when ballot boxes and papers are taken at gunpoint. The psychological component deals with both official and informal acts that instill fear in the populace, sometimes as a result of physical violence. These include threats made by security personnel or via text and phone conversations to opposition forces. The structural aspect of electoral violence appears to be much more prominent, stemming from structural imbalances such as the government's coercion of citizens to register to vote or not, unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates, abuse



of the power of the office of the incumbent, manipulation of election results, and the politicization of electoral officials and security (Nwolise, 2007; Mochtak, 2017).

It is also clear that electoral violence occurs outside of Election Day, just like elections do. It may occur before, during, or following the elections. Acts or threats directed at electoral stakeholders during voter registration or electioneering campaigns are examples of pre-election violence. Theft of vote boxes or papers, attacks on opposition operatives or parties, and intimidation or harassment by security personnel are examples of Election Day violence. After an election, electoral violence can manifest as violent protests against alleged or actual electoral manipulation, followed by the state using its force apparatus to quell the demonstration and escalating the violence. Electoral violence, arguably the deadliest kind of election fraud, has been characterized as "clandestine efforts to shape election results" (Gabriel & Kewir, 2016). Both the governing party's opponents and the current power holder may use this in an effort to prevent losing and seizing political power. Election-related stakeholders, including voters, candidates, party officials, election workers, media, and monitors; electoral information, including voter registration data, vote totals, and ballots; campaign materials, like cars and public address systems; electoral facilities, like polling places and counting stations; and electoral events are the main targets of electoral violence, including political gatherings (Omotola, 2010).

Considering that electoral violence may be used by both the opposition and the ruling party, as well as the variety of potential targets listed above, it is without a doubt one of the main causes of instability in democracies. In fact, it may present a serious danger to the chances of the establishment of democracy by "eliminating, neutralizing, or converting disloyal players" (Laakso & Kariuki 2023). and going one step further toward completing and deepening democracy, as indicated by high "expectations of regime continuity," democracy can be said to be consolidated. (Laakso & Kariuki, 2023). These call for the establishment of three fundamental components of democratization: the behavioral, structural, and attitudinal underpinnings (Laakso & Kariuki, 2023).

The structural components place special emphasis on concerns of socioeconomic prosperity, which is defined as minimizing poverty, and institutional guidelines, which include the rule of law, a multiparty system, and regular, competitive, free, and fair elections. The behavioral underpinnings center on 'democrats' demonstrated ability to reverse anti-democratic obstacles. It is demanded that "no major political actors violate basic democratic rules anymore" (Yoroms, 2017) in order to prevent democracy from being jeopardized by electoral violence, election rejection, or authority infringement. However, Yoroms, (2017) defined the fundamental "normative, strategic, and cognitive" components needed to maintain democracy as being included in the attitudinal foundations. Among the normative components is democratic legitimacy, which is the sincere, inherent, and non-instrumental support for democracy held by both citizens and political authorities. In order for everyone to cooperate in the interests of the democratic project, the strategic elements require the ability to mediate and change the often antagonistic interaction between Democrats and anti-Democrats in a cooperative manner (Yoroms, 2017).

Taking the above into consideration, one could argue that the foundation of democracy in many African nations is seriously flawed, or, as one scholar has put it, "is still far off the mark" (Omotola, 2010). With very few exceptions, structural poverty is still a problem that affects the whole continent. Because of this, the public is more readily manipulated negatively, particularly during elections. Elections are currently held on a regular basis, but they are far from being completely fair, free, and competitive. Election procedures are seriously tainted, which helps to explain why opposition groups continue to openly oppose elections and/or reject their outcomes, posing a serious threat to governments' legitimacy. Support for democracy in the majority of Africa is instrumental rather than authentic, even among the political leaders and the populace. As democracy is portrayed as the solution to Africa's many issues, such as political, economic, and social upheavals, this trend in fact represents one of the flawed pillars of democratization on the continent (Omotola, 2010; Angerbrandt, 2018). The situation appears to be worse for the political elite, whose primary motivation for supporting the democratic process appears to be the chance it presents for them to further amass money and solidify their grasp on power (Omotola, 2010). Even worse, powerful political figures rarely follow the letter or spirit of the constitution; instead, they utilize extra constitutional means to further their own agendas, such as extending their power struggles and abusing their position of authority to thwart opposition movements. 3. This propensity tends to create a kind of political nightmare in Africa by impeding the government and opposition from coming to a compromise. Election violence in Africa stems from the distortion of these fundamental tenets of democracy, as the studies that follow will show.

The Political History of Violence in Nigeria

Without placing the issue of electoral violence in Africa within the context of the continent's political history, it is impossible to comprehend the situation completely. The former African colony provides an excellent starting point. It was during its tenure that African nations were first exposed to electoral politics. With the adoption of the elective principle in 1922, this was especially the case in British territories. The democratic character of the elective principle, which was limited to residence and financial criteria, might serve as fuel for violence even if electoral politics were generally calm at this time. Elites dominated political discourses about democracy and good governance, with the general public playing a relatively small role (Ake 2000; Goldsmith 2015). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that election violence surfaced soon after the majority of African governments gained political independence in the 1960s. This was partially due to the fact that the nationalists' "extravagant" articulation of the promise of independence in what Birch, Daxecker, and Höglund (2020) referred to as the "anti-colonial ideologies of legitimating" failed to demonstrate any signs of consolidating or even taking off. The



new elite of power in Africa chose to inherit the colonial state into an independent state rather than transform it, including its limited democratic foundation, to satisfy popular nationalist ambitions for the new state (Mohammed, 2007; Ake 2000; Goldsmith 2015). The state's attempt to quell ensuing public unrest and demonstrations, which included turning to a one-party system, signifies a further restriction of the democratic sphere.

The state's increasing control over power and resources made identity forces, especially those related to race and religion, more alluring. These factors eventually took center stage in political dynamics. This tendency is best shown by the experience of Nigeria. Since the nation's general elections in 1964–1965, violence has played a significant role in political politics. With the election, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) stronghold might be challenged and potentially neutralized by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and its supporters. Since gaining independence in 1960, the NPC has controlled federal politics, and it viewed the 1964 election as another opportunity to strengthen its hold on power. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), led by Chief S.L. Akintola, proved to be a willing ally in the west, where the NPC also sought to broaden its influence. But for the Action Group (AG), reclaiming its lost paradise in 1964 would demonstrate that it remained very much on the ground in the area. Implicitly, each candidate in the race had significant ground to cover, which added to the turbulence in the political atmosphere. The extraordinary violence that followed, which included killing, looting, arson, want to damage of property, and a complete breakdown of public order, particularly in the western area, played a significant role in the first republic's downfall (Olowojolu, Rasak, Ake, Ogundele & Afolayan 2019).

Violence was also pervasive during Nigeria's second republic's (1979–1983) electoral process, particularly in the country's second election of 1983. Even after the federation's structure was changed from three (then four) regions of the first republic to nineteen states, the political system remained primarily influenced by ethno-religious factors, with each party retaining its stronghold in a particular regional or ethnic area. Clearly, the NPC's successor, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), ruled the federal government from 1979 to 1983. By all means necessary, it sought to use the 1983 elections to expand its influence into other areas. The attempt to do this highlighted the major election cheating in 1983, which led to an unprecedented wave of violence in the southwest, the region that was dominated by AG's successor, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). The ensuing bloodshed in the two UPN states of Oyo and Ondo, which declared war on the NPN, was so extreme that one author referred to it as "the house of war" (Egobueze, & Ojirika, 2017). Because of how fierce it was, Ondo State was quickly restored to UPN. As it happened, though, this was a delayed reaction, and the violence and ensuing inconsistencies were the main reasons why the military was able to seize control on December 31, 1983, even though it was not the only one.

There are several experiences across Africa that are similar to the one in Nigeria. Election-related violence has played a significant role in East African politics in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda since the region's independence. Particularly in Kenya, pluralist competitive politics have not been facilitated until lately, despite the country's attainment of independence on December 12, 1963, when the Kenya African National Union (KANU) formed the first post-independence administration. Instead, KANU started a process of constitutional engineering that resulted in a new constitution in 1969. This constitution eliminated all political checks and balances found in the independence constitution of 1963 and granted the presidency total authority over all constitutional matters. Many have viewed Kenya as both a *de facto* and a *de jure* single-party state since, despite the frequent elections, the results have been a one-party show. Among other things, attendant electoral violence has taken the form of political thuggery, devastation, property damage, beatings, incarceration, arson, looting, and attempted assassinations. Tanzania and Zimbabwe have seen the same pattern (Ezeibe, 2015).

Contemporary Patterns and Predisposing Elements in Election Violence

The democracies in Africa have seen numerous serious violations (Bello, 2015). The growing problem of electoral governance, which is partially represented in the issue of electoral violence, is one notable area of violation of the fundamental focus of this study. Political violence has recently taken on structural, psychological, and physical forms, all with the primary goal of swaying the results of the election to the advantage of those who commit the violence. It's also evident from the chronology that this violence happens throughout the entire political process before, during, and after the elections (Mohammed, 2007). The state, as represented by the ruling party, security personnel, election officials, and opposition forces, has often been the primary player. As previously said, their actions involve a variety of violent acts that have been previously recognized and targeted at different political targets.

Election violence in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe has taken the form of bombings, riots, attacks, political assassinations, looting, arson, and the forcible seizure of electoral equipment. For instance, since 1999, political assassinations in Nigeria have been a significant problem. Among the assassinations are a number of party leaders, candidates for highly prominent elective posts, and people in elected or appointed political roles (Staniland, 2014; Ezeibe, 2015). Notable figures here include Funsho Williams, a July 2006 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for Lagos State governor, and Dr. Ayo Daramola, an August 2006 PDP candidate for Ekiti State governor. Furthermore, there have been verified instances of bomb explosions taking place at the homes of potential candidates. For example, on November 24, 2006, explosives went off in the residences of Nduli Elumelu, a candidate for the House of Representatives, and Theodora Giwa-Amu, a candidate for the Senate, in Delta State. These all took place before the elections (Majekodunmi, 2015).

Numerous more instances of physical violence happened during the election itself, including instances in which electoral fraud was committed with weapons including cutlasses, axes, and guns that were publicly exhibited. Many innocent people



perished in the process. During the elections, there was a lot of physical violence nationwide, especially when the results were announced, although it was mostly in the southwest. Given that the region has a history of radical and opposing politics known as "Awoism" and personified by the late chief Obafemi Awolowo, this makes sense. On the other hand, the party was almost completely eclipsed in the 2003 presidential election due to a combination of the abuse of the power of incumbency and the incorrect tactics of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), which was at the time the main party in the area. This was especially true of its ill-defined alliance with the PDP. As a result, the Action Congress (AC) actively pushed for a return to the previous system, which was made possible by the 2007 elections. Nevertheless, this was not to be the case due to the misuse of the incumbent's authority to impose their will on the populace. The most volatile states, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, and Oyo, saw a general collapse of law and order along with killings, looting, and house burnings as a result of the spontaneous violent reaction (Staniland, 2014).

The elections in Zimbabwe and Kenya also included these physical aspects of violence. The most prominent ones are rape, assault, unlawful arrest and imprisonment, arson, destruction, looting, and property damage; they also include disruptions of public gatherings and political demonstrations. Psychologically, nothing seems to be getting better. The most conspicuous example of this trend of violence during elections in Nigeria was President Obasanjo's infamous statement that the 2007 election was "a do or die" situation for the PDP and him (Omotola 2010). More than anything else, this speech seemed to strengthen the PDP's determination to win at all costs, instill dread in the minds of the opposition and voters, and encourage caution on their parts throughout the elections. The subsequent prohibition of violence in politics contributed to the public's increased anxiety. Similar trends were observed at lower tiers of state administration. For instance, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu of Oyo State, who was widely recognized as the dominant figure in Ibadan politics until his untimely death shortly after the 2007 elections, frequently claimed that only those who supported him could win elections. The political "godfather" of Kwara State, Dr. Olusola Saraki, simply stated that there was no opening in the government house and demanded that his son, Dr. Bukola Saraki, be reelected for a second term. The majority of would-be governors were terrified by these subtly implied threats, which led them to give up or postpone their candidacies (Birch, 2020).

Systemic disequilibrium based on double standards was the structural manifestation of violence. For instance, not all parties had equal access to Nigeria's state-owned media, especially the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Furthermore, the governing party was using state anti-corruption authorities, especially the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), as a political tool to intimidate, harass, and dissuade the opposition from entering politics. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the AC presidential candidate then, was a prominent example of this. He was unfairly disqualified from running in the election when the EFCC swiftly accused him of corruption without providing him with a fair trial. Other aspects of structural violence include the general incompetent management of the elections, which was typified by the massive disenfranchisement of the populace, the late arrival and shortage of electoral materials and officials, and the falsification and announcement of false results. In its latest incarnations, this culture of violence appears to be the result of what I refer to as a military-authoritarian overhang that looms over the democratic process. Before 1999, Nigeria, for instance, had been steadily ruled by the military for sixteen years. "Military politicians" developed and solidified their military industrial complexes during this phase, enabling them to control some of the most powerful sectors of the country's economy. They appear to have an edge over their civilian counterparts in the current power battle because of their enormous riches (Birch, 2020). The subsequent domination of retired officials at all levels meant that they entered the democratic workplace with a military attitude and mindset, lacking a commensurate reorientation of principles and enough time to acclimate to public life.

Therefore, it's possible that the culture of violence carried over from the outgoing military and authoritarian regimes, whose principal players also happen to still have significant power in the system, is the reason for the high frequency of election violence in Africa's emerging democracies. The structure and nature of the state, as well as the type of power struggles, are closely tied to the aforementioned (Höglund, 2009). The African state is essentially a law-and-order state that relies on the use of force to carry out its decrees. Furthermore, the state in Africa is totalitarian, ruling over society in all spheres. Therefore, gaining political power means gaining everything else. The steady consolidation and return of neo-presidentialism, where the president essentially acts as the state, does not address this problem. It only serves to perpetuate a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of one individual. Political stakes are often raised by the growing concentration of power among presidents at the federal level and political leaders at various levels of government. Since political power has evolved into the primary key to all other types of power, the outcome is unhealthy rivalry and struggle for power. Consequently, violence was used. The misuse of the position of incumbency to maintain power at all costs and, in the event that other options are exhausted, to choose a surrogate who will continue to follow the benefactor's "good" judgment serves as the best example of this. Under Obasanjo's third term plan, which sought to prolong his reign beyond the two four-year terms stipulated in the constitution, this was the state of affairs in Nigeria. He installed Umaru Yar'Adua when it failed, which is what led to the violence in the 2007 elections.

We may also examine election violence in Africa through the prism of the fragility of a democracy's economic base. Economic development is necessary for democracy, especially in terms of income and poverty rates. Democracy may be in jeopardy when the rate of poverty exceeds a certain threshold, which is \$2 per day for the poverty line and \$1 for extreme poverty. Regrettably, poverty persists throughout the continent, with Nigeria appearing to have the most significant obstacle



in this regard, notwithstanding its growing oil earnings. The fact that Nigeria was among the world's 21 poorest nations in 2002 is abhorrent. Remarkably, 70% of people were reported to be living below the poverty level in 2003. Official figures from 2008 purport a 60% decline; however, this is debatable considering the circumstances at the time, which included growing unemployment and inflation. According to Olorode & Igbolo (2015), "if Nigeria succeeds in just preventing the worsening of poverty, a tall task given current trends, it would still have about 170 million poor people in 2015." It is clear how serious the situation is. According to estimates, Nigeria's GDP would need to expand at a pace of seven to eight percent per year by the year 2015 in order to cut the country's poverty rate in half. Nigeria's GDP grew 6.9% in 2004–2005, although the country still has a considerably higher poverty rate than Egypt or South Africa. According to World Bank data, 70.8% of Nigerians lived on less than \$1 per day in 2003, compared to 3.1% in Egypt in 1999 and 10.7% in South Africa in 2000. According to World Bank data from 2007, 34.1% of South Africans, 43.9% of Egyptians, and 92.4% of Nigerians lived on less than \$2 a day. When faced with any form of negative mobilization, including electoral violence, people in these kinds of circumstances are usually more susceptible to it.

The explanation of election violence in Africa is partly aided by the inadequate institutionalization of some fundamental democratic political structures. EMBs (electoral management bodies), the courts, and political parties are some of the most prominent examples of democratic institutional architecture. Political parties should ideally be founded on a particular political philosophy that will act as an organizing and mobilizing force. If there's not one, alternative mobilization techniques become attractive, especially those based on identification forces like religion and race. These forces are susceptible to corruption and violence because they are easily manipulated and transformed (Okolie, Enyiaz, & Nnamani, 2021). Electoral violence in Africa is mostly caused by the obvious ideological emptiness of most parties in the continent's new democracies, as well as the ensuing decadence of political parties, which is seen in the apparent lack of internal party democracy and the strong dependence on negative mobilization to win elections. Nigeria serves as a useful case study in this regard, since the parties there were forced to use unethical tactics in order to mobilize support and win elections at all costs.

It appears that the EMB situation is worse. This is due to the fact that impartiality, independence, effectiveness, professionalism, and transparency of the EMB are necessary for efficient electoral governance in order to prevent mistrust and suspicion among political players. The financing, motivation, and makeup of the EMBs may all be used to determine these concerns. In Nigeria, the EMB, also known as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), is a political entity that is appointed by the president and lacks an independent source of finance. Members must meet the same requirements for membership as members of the House of Representatives, according to election legislation. Being a political party is one of these requirements. Given that independent candidacies are prohibited in Nigeria, INEC members are required to be affiliated with political parties. The independence and neutrality of INEC are fundamentally undermined for these and similar reasons. Like its equivalents in the majority of other African nations, including Zimbabwe and Kenya, INEC seems to be merely an arm of the presidency, which has excessive power over it (Yusuf 2019). Because of this, it is simple to influence EMBs in a way that benefits the ruling party at the expense of the opposition. For instance, at the president's request, INEC sought to unlawfully disqualify Abubakar Atiku from running in the 2007 election in Nigeria. Reversing the outcome required the involvement of a historic Supreme Court ruling just a few days prior to the election. INEC was able to reject opposition candidates in a number of states, including Kogi and Adamawa, have those elections declared void by the courts, and request a rerun of the polls (Yusuf 2019).

In much of Africa, issues like the political instrumentalization of EMBs by the ruling class have a major role in the rejection of election results and subsequent breakout of violence (Yusuf 2019). This issue was strongly raised in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Nigeria, where opposition parties vehemently denounced the 2007 election results and claimed that the ruling party had manipulated the EMB. Election-related violence in Africa is also caused by the inconsistencies of electoral fairness on the continent. The electoral laws of the majority of African governments specify the steps and requirements for pursuing electoral redress in court. For instance, in Nigeria, where the burden of evidence rests with the plaintiff, it is essential to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that the purported irregularity was "substantial" in order to support the annulment of the elections. For obvious reasons, these parameters are almost unattainable. First of all, those outside of government might not be able to afford it since electoral prosecution is not cheap. In addition, the announced victor of the contentious election has already taken office and is donning all official regalia while the legal dispute is ongoing. This already tips the scales in favor of the victorious candidate, who not only has access to public funds but also fully utilizes them to pursue a private lawsuit. The enormous expense and the difficulty of proof in these situations limit the litigants' options. Additionally, there is the issue of corruption that has surfaced inside the judiciary, as seen by the claims of bribery against certain judges. Regarding electoral justice, one prominent example was the chairman of the Osun State Election Petition Tribunal, who was allegedly exchanging texts and phone conversations with other panel members during the case (Yusuf 2019). Nigerians are still awaiting the conclusion of the legal probe into the case. It follows that election fairness tends to be less profitable politically in Africa than electoral fraud and violence. Given the difficulties in ensuring electoral justice in the face of these obstacles, this inclination offers some motivation to comply. For instance, how can we explain the minuscule number of victorious tribunal cases (1250) in all that resulted from Nigeria's 2007 general elections (Yusuf 2019)? For example, there were eight cases in the presidential election, and none of them resulted in success. For the gubernatorial election, there were 105 cases in all among the 36 federated states. In the last appeal court, only Comrade Adams Oshiomole's from the AC in Edo State succeeded. Sadly, the reason others were unable to succeed was not a lack of solid evidence but rather the inability to prove



that the fraud was substantial enough to alter the result. Monitoring teams from abroad and locally have documented the widespread violence and fraud that marred Nigeria's 2007 elections. President Yar'Adua, the primary victor of the outcome, accepted this truth (Adebayo and Omotola 2007, Okolie, Enyiazu, & Nnamani 2021).

Election-related violence and fraud are encouraged even in circumstances where the "winner" is forced by prolonged violence to consent to power-sharing talks with the opposition. The idea alone is dangerous for the future of electoral systems in Africa, never mind the acceptability of sharing power with a thief who got there by stealing mandates. It could give the false impression that the opposition parties are merely self-serving power brokers who would take any arrangement to transfer authority among the elite rather than genuinely working for the common good of the people. This trend serves as yet another justification for engaging in violence and election fraud.

Electoral Violence's Implications

Electoral violence has had some extremely detrimental effects on the democracies that have been established in Africa (Zetter 2011). First, there are security ramifications for the impacted nations specifically as well as the continent as a whole. The breakdown of public order, the enormous number of internally displaced people (IDPs), the refugee crisis, and the increased militarization of the state and society are a few significant security consequences. For example, public order collapsed in several volatile states in the southwest of Nigeria following electoral violence in the 2007 elections. Massive military and mobile police deployments in an effort to reestablish order resulted in the victims being threatened, harassed, intimidated, extorted, tortured, and raped. But because of the Boko Haram war, there were several internally displaced persons (IDP) camps spread out over Nigeria, mostly in the northeast (Zetter 2011).

Several IDP camps, notably Dalori, Teachers Village, and Bakassi camps, are located in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State. There are several camps in Monguno town, including the Monguno Stadium IDP Camp. IDPs are housed in a number of camps in Gwoza town, one of which is the Gwoza Stadium Camp. The capital city of Adamawa State is home to a number of camps, such as St. Theresa's Camp and Malkohi Camp. Yobe State's Damaturu is home to several IDP camps, including Pompomari. In addition, as a result of intercommunal violence and other problems, there are IDP camps like Abagena Camp in other states, like Benue State. Similar camps, Barkin Ladi and Riyom, are found in Plateau State as a result of disputes between neighboring villages (Mooney, 2005). But there are a lot more strewn all over the nation, frequently in reaction to particular incidents of violence, conflict, or natural disasters. A multitude of variables, such as security conditions, governmental actions, and humanitarian initiatives, may cause changes in the quantity and locations of IDP camps over time. Reports from pertinent government agencies, humanitarian groups, or international organizations such as the United Nations are the greatest sources of current and reliable information about internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Nigeria (Margesson, Bruno, & Sharp, 2009).

Apart from the security challenges posed by managing a large IDP population, several other concerns that might have implications for security have also seemingly surfaced. For example, the congestion in most of these internally displaced people's camps has resulted in the emergence of many concerns, including post-traumatic stress disorder, infectious diseases like TB, and sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS (Mooney, 2005). These represent serious health-related security issues. Across the continent, there is a pervasive problem of legitimacy that is also explained by electoral violence. The public as well as opposition forces in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe are seriously contesting the new governments' legitimacy. Several well-known forms of protest include nonviolent demonstrations and legal actions in electoral tribunals, as well as violent outbursts that end in fatalities, arson, theft, property destruction, curfew impositions, and the militarization of the state and society. These are powerful tools for the government to focus on consolidating its illegal or contested capture of power and handling the ensuing conflicts rather than on governance (Mooney, 2005). More than a year after the elections, there are still legal actions and/or violent protests in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe that call into question the legitimacy of the administration. Furthermore, effective political competition and participation are hampered by election violence. As in the Hobbesian conception of nature, only those possessing sufficient coercive cover rose to prominence after might became right. Therefore, rather than serving as the main actors in democracy, the process of democratization is progressively enabling the de-institutionalization of the populace to reduce them to the status of customers, spectators, and/or consumers. The resulting political indifference culture poses a serious danger to the advancement of democracy.

Lastly, there are significant implications for foreign policy from election violence in Africa. Every civilized country should ideally strive to uphold the principles and ideals of the post-Cold War system, where the topic of being a decent global citizen is central to the discourse. To be recognized worldwide, free and fair elections must be conducted in accordance with good international citizenship. Most African states have found it difficult to do this, which has hurt their connections with the outside world and, most significantly, created an image problem. Following the recent elections in Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, these nations have drawn criticism from the international community. Economic diplomacy is affected by this since it implies that Africa is unable to have legitimate elections. The ensuing violence discourages would-be investors and delays the delivery of other services.

2. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



By exploring the causes of electoral violence in emerging democracies in Africa, especially in Nigeria, this research has shown the myriad complex factors that underlie these events. There are several different factors contributing to Nigeria's election violence, including socioeconomic disparity, identity politics, and historical legacies. The expansion of democracy throughout Nigeria and the greater African continent is severely hampered by these problems. But it's clear that preventing election violence requires a multifaceted approach that considers the institutional, structural, and individual factors that fuel conflict. Based on the insights this research has offered, several significant conclusions may be drawn, including the significance of treating both the symptoms and the underlying causes of electoral violence. First and foremost, efforts to lessen election violence must recognize the complex interplay of political, economic, and historical causes. Long-term change is unlikely to occur if we only handle the external manifestations of violence without tackling the underlying problems and injustices. Second, strengthening democratic institutions and governance structures is necessary to promote peaceful political competition. Robust electoral administration mechanisms, an impartial judiciary, and effective dispute resolution procedures are necessary to establish and preserve the credibility of election processes and settle conflicts in a just and transparent manner. Thirdly, addressing socioeconomic inequalities and promoting inclusive governance are necessary to lessen the incentive for violence. Election violence is often the result of resentment that could be alleviated by policies that fight poverty, promote socioeconomic development, and increase access to healthcare and education. Therefore, promoting dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse ethnic and religious groups is essential to developing a culture of peaceful coexistence and bolstering societal cohesiveness. Religious leaders, community-based initiatives, and civil society organizations all play a major role in promoting cross-divisive tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation.

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