

AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

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*On behalf of the Editorial Board, thank you for the interest in Ayika.*

**AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN  
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**EDITORIAL POLICY**

AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA is a journal that provides an avenue to scholars, researchers, policy analysts, think tank groups, as well as the civil society community to ventilate the various ramifications of the relations between environment and politics and development in Africa. The causal relationship between the environment and politics and vice versa has grown such that the scientific and political communities have fundamentally and unprecedentedly come to agreement as to the cause(s) of environmental problems. Hence, there is a growing recognition of government as the consumer of scientific findings on the environment such as that this journal portends. This point, in many respect, led to the inauguration of this journal. It is as a consequence of addressing environmental governance issues from the global level right to the local and municipal levels across the world and with special interest on Africa's landscape that AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA was established.

Coupled with an ever-growing number of environmental movements and the broadening scope of environmental protection and environmental security advocacy and activism, the journal garners relevance. That is, a meaningful venture therefore to critically periscope the environment-politics nexus that this journal represents is because it appreciates the environment's complex realities in our modern world. The necessity of this journal too stems from many cases of resource-rich nations in Africa that have largely failed to translate their endowments into mass wealth and development, and thereby give rise to what scholars have tagged "resource curse" and/or affliction, to entrench sustainable environment in the continent.

Hitherto in the African continent, there has been recognised absence of much intellectual, academic and advocacy platforms upon which to discuss issues of environment-politics linkages in the continent in tandem with the rest of the world. While many existing academic mediums treat issues on the relationship between environment and politics as part of larger themes on

geography, agricultural science and the sciences generally, regrettably those in the humanities and social sciences have not fared better on this. It is for the reason of providing a platform for intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences alongside those in all other spheres of academic research that the Editorial Team purposefully pursued to ground **AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA**.

### **Vision/Mission Statement**

The vision and mission statements of *AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA* revolves around “Ayika”- a Yoruba word that refers to the environment. The linkage that the environment has to Africa’s socio-political development is no more under contestation. In fact, such a linkage is now established such that every discourse – be it an academic discussion and every other form of dialogue – notes the relationship between the environment and development in general. Thus, existing and emerging environmental problems are ever more political and now require political solutions more than ever. Whereas, the nature of the African continent is such that environmental problems are increasing and rising steadily and by the day, and in many cases, the negations are as a result of existing poor public infrastructure, disjointed socio-structural arrangements, lack of good policies and abysmal governmental investments in the continent’s environment sector. Therefore, *AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA* sets ultimately as its vision/mission statement the pursuit to bridge the gap of Africa’s underdevelopment emanating from her “Ayika”. This is given that new environmental problems such as climate change continues to impact on the daily lives of the African man and woman, yet mitigation and adaptation policies and strategies are chiefly nascent, ineffectual and in most cases poor. This journal, therefore, will aid to illuminate the views of scholars that argue that new environmental realities deemed developmental problems - as is the actual case in Africa- flow from political culture and politics that places very

weak emphasis on thorough and concrete conceptualisation of the environment-politics nexus for the continent's development.

### **Scope of the Journal**

“Ayika” means environment in Yoruba language of Nigeria. Hence, *AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA* is established to treat issues of environment in ways that will provide sound policy and socio-economic and political perspectives from scholars within and outside the African continent. Papers to feature in this journal may speak to the global dimension of environmental issues, but must have profound bearing on the African connection in terms of abating tremendously the environmental inducing underdevelopment variables in the continent. By implication, the journal will provide, and be, an avenue to proffer practical policy and political insights to Africa's most pressing and strategic environmental issues.

### **Aim of the Journal**

*AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA* is an environment politics journal in Africa that so much focuses on the African continent. It covers theoretical, policy, programmatic and other overarching dimensions and dynamics of environmental politics, governance and diplomacy in Africa. As a result of this, original review articles and every other kind of intellectual manuscript from academic fields cum disciplines such as philosophy, geography, international relations, economics, political science, sociology, psychology and related scholarly areas will be published in the journal.

### **House Style**

The journal is based on universal standards of presentation of papers for academic journal publication. That is, papers should be segmented and should begin with an Abstract. The Abstract should not exceed 300 words and should be in italics. The author(s) are at liberty to segment the body of



their papers according to a preference. Paper length will differ with every other publication based on the Editorial Team's designation. The Harvard and APA referencing styles are preferable amongst other referencing techniques. Author(s) will be provided with an email address where their paper(s) should be sent to every quarterly and the sending frame for papers should be in Word Format.

### **Issues**

This journal is published two times annually. Meaning that, each issue will be published once within six months of the year. The journal will be committed to global best practices in academic journal publication. There will be double blind review for every article submitted to this journal.

## **EDITORIAL NOTE**

### **Editorial Notes**

Election and quest for power by the political elite has become a major source of violence in the contemporary African history. In many parts of Africa, election and quest for powerful position is the main source of accumulation of private wealth. Those that are in the seat of power uses it as an opportunity to amass unlimited national wealth and loth the treasury. They largely share the masses' commonwealth thereby undermining the necessary resources needed for development and societal transformation into private pocket.

Furthermore, the quest to attain these degree of wealth naturally pushes many African power elites into the competition for political offices. They engage in elections at all cost and unleash private, group and personal resources towards the attainment of their political interest. This Issue of the Journal focuses on the nature of elections, electoral violence in power politics within the African continent and the way forward. The first article discussed electoral violence and democratic transition in Africa, focusing on the causes and consequences as well as the way forward. The truth is that it is no longer news that sit-tightism has become a culture for a number of African leaders. The article gave examples of African states across all regions where democratic transition has become problematic due to the desperado of the ruling elite. The article that followed discussed leadership contestation and regional insecurity: an assessment of political conflicts in West African states. This study unravelled how quest for sovereign national seats of power has made the West African region very volatile as well as unsafe and proffered a number of solutions.

The next study focused on the relationship between social media and electoral violence in Kogi State, Nigeria. It gave an insight into the terrible situation of electoral violence in Kogi State and how the social media complicates the situation. That study was followed by perverse electoral politics and securitized youths: implications for peace and security in

Nigeria. It should be noted that there is no gainsaying that the youths remain the beacon of hope for national and regional security within the African continent. The paper therefore outlined how the energy of the youths could be harnessed to ensure sustainable national peace and security in Nigeria. The last article discussed the role of individuals and community development in Isuokoma: focus on implications for political and environmental transformation. It is often argued that across the Nigerian State, the power elite are increasingly failing in providing the needed resources for national development. Consequently, individuals and groups across many communities within the country are taking up the challenge to build sustainable communal development, which have multiple implication for political and environmental transformation as found in that study.

Finally, the ideas presented in this study remains valuable collection for African continental governmental and non-governmental organisations, regional bodies and institutions, states and groups that are conscious of transforming the nature of elections and African political culture. I therefore encourage you to spare your time and go through the intellectual collections in this study. They are highly scholarly and would satisfy your appetite for learning and new policy formulation!

**Dr Kelechi Johnmary Ani**

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**ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN  
AFRICA: A CURSORY LOOK AT THE CAUSES AND  
CONSEQUENCES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract**

*Across Africa, democratic transitions in recent times are not without violence. In most African countries, smooth democratic transition is almost impossibility. African democratic states often face the challenge of public violent protests before, during and most particularly after elections. In most cases, these protests are against alleged electoral irregularities observed during the elections. Unfortunately, these actions are not without causes and consequences. This paper presented an overview of violent electoral protests across some African democratic countries. It went further not only to appraise the causes of electoral violence but also evaluates the consequent effects of these violent actions on democratic transitions of these African states. It concludes with advancing some suggested premise on the way forward.*

**Key words:** *African States, African Democracies, Elections, Electoral Violence, Democratic transition.*

**Introduction**

Across global democracies, the conventional institutional mechanisms at the core of their transition are elections. However, the issue of electoral violence vis-à-vis competitive politics remains a visible challenge facing smooth democratic transition across most of African democratic states. Without any

form of doubt, violence particularly of electoral nature, at the slightest provocation, has been associated with African democracies. Dangerously, it has become an insidious tool of influence by people using power, people holding power and people about to lose power (Bamgbose 2012). An estimated 20 per cent of elections held globally experience some form of violence of which the most frequent occurrences are found in South Asia and Africa (Burchard 2015). Most often, electoral violence are responses in electoral related uncertainties which typically present itself in three major stages through the complete process of election spanning before, during and after the period. Furthermore, electoral violence ostensibly could manifest in different forms through the process, from physical assaults, arson- including the damage of houses and properties by fire) to snatching of ballot boxes, wanton killings and general murder. Elections in Zambia, Chad, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and Zimbabwe all have a past history of elections characterized by violent protests. There is no doubt that high level of electoral associated violence in Africa and that even the adjudged freest and fairest election may not be said to be comprehensively violence free through the process. Depending on the magnitude, election related-violence poses inordinate threat to the peace, stability and security of African democracies during elections periods. It is of pertinent importance at this juncture to conceptually elucidate some of the key words used in this paper. This will enable readers to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the work.

### **The concept of election**

Democratic transitions generally undergo the political decision-making elective process which determines who power transits to, often from the incumbent. This process literary denote an election. This process has been in use across the global political environment either to completely or partially change government, elect governors and other people into various houses of representative across all levels of government. Anifowose (2003) definition portrays election as a process of elitist selection by the masses in any given

political system. Iyayi (2005) as cited in Bamgbose (2012), defined election as a ‘medium through which the different interest groups within the bourgeois nation state can stake and resolve their claims to power through peaceful means’. While the dynamics of political power transition strengthen democratic institutions, election provides the veritable corridor for the process that permits this transition. In other words, democracies and elections cannot exist outside and without each other.

Elections are basically divided into two: primary and general elections. According to information available at the United States Department of State website, the primary election is the nomination stage of the election while the general election is the stage where a candidate is chosen/elected from amongst the conglomerate of candidates selected at the primaries.

**Table 1:** Elections conducted in Africa between October 2012 and September 2013

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type of Election</b>	<b>Pre-election violence</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Zimbabwe	Oct/Nov 2012	Referendum	Intimidation/Harassment of civic organisations, arrest, interrogation and detention of about 358 human rights defenders. Isolated reports of violence in some parts of the country.	Peaceful elections. Small-scale violence reported in Mbare.
Togo	25 July 2013	Parliamentary	Tensed political environment. Series of protests held. Intimidation, harassment, arrest of protesters and	Free and fair elections.

			journalists. Postponed twice from Oct 2012.	
Sierra Leone	November 17, 2012	Presidential & Parliamentary	Reported cases of small-scale violent clashes between APC and SLLP supporters in Kono and Kenema.	Peaceful elections but alleged rigging of the election result triggered violence in Kenema and Bo.
Burkina Faso	December 2, 2012	Parliamentary and Municipal	Violent nation-wide civil protest and mutinies by the army reported	Reported violence in Ouagadougou, Banfora and other parts of the country.
Ghana	December 7, 2012	General	Reported cases of isolated small-scale violence in some parts of the country.	Peaceful elections but not without reported election irregularities.
Guinea	2012	General	Small-scale election related riots and clashes were reported to have occurred.	Military linked violence increased resulting to a Coup d'état and cancelation of the election. Runoff election repeatedly postponed.
Kenya	March 4 2013	General	Large-scale tribal/ethnic violence in various parts of the country reported but notably in Nairobi, Nyanza and Central Provinces.	Appeal court ruling prompted large-scale violence across the country particularly in Manyatta and Nyalanda districts.



Madagascar	May 8, 2013	General & Referendum	Protracted political crisis across the country. Postponements since 2011.	Peaceful elections and referendum.
Zimbabwe	March-June 2013	Presidential & Parliamentary	Substantial level of electoral irregularities reported. intimidation, torture and murder of opposition supporters	Wide spread violence
Cameroon	September 30, 2013	Parliamentary and Municipal	Peaceful elections after postponed twice since February 2011.	Peaceful elections

Author’s compilation (2017). Data sourced from reports of International election observation bodies on mission in the cited countries and elections.

**The concept of electoral violence**

Electoral violence exists phenomenally as a separate sub-type of political violence which has a broader perspective. Political violence on its own encompassed all forms of political violence associated with political transition of power from one democratically elected government to another within a democratic system. As a component of political violence, electoral violence as the name implies, is associated with numerous violent activities exhibited in different forms and at different stages usually against the opposition during electoral processes preceding democratic transition.

Electoral violence is a multidimensional concept which encompasses the physical, psychological and structural dimensions as illustratively outlined in table two. According to Omotola’s (2010) analytical explanations, the physical dimension of electoral violence ranges from arson, looting, shooting, violent interruption of campaign gatherings, armed attacks on polling and collation centers which include forceful seizure of electoral

materials, usually with dangerous weapons, hostage taking, kidnapping and most particularly, assassination of political opponents. Furthermore, all official and un-official actions capable of producing any form of public anxiety among the people as a consequences of bodily harm, amounts to psychological dimension of electoral violence. Finally, the use of coercion by government on the people to vote or register, the abuse of power of incumbency, uneven chances for the opposition parties and their aspirants, politicization of security and electoral officials and falsification of election results represent the structural of aspect of election violence (Nwolisa 2007).

**Table 2:** Some components of the Three Dimensions of Electoral Violence

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Components</b>
PHYSICAL	Physical assault on individuals during campaign, elections and when election results are released.
	Assassination of political opponents or people perceived as a threat to one’s political ambition.
	Burning down of public or opponents’ houses or cars.
	Shooting, shoot-outs.
	Killing of individuals.
	Partisan harassment by security agents, arrests, forceful dispersal of rallies, or shooting, wounding or killing of people.
	Kidnappings and hostage-taking.
	Bombing of infrastructure.
	Forceful disruption by thugs of political and campaign rallies.
	Destruction of ballot boxes and ballot papers by thugs or partisan security agents.
	Armed raids on voting and collation centres, and snatching of ballot boxes and papers from polling agents.
	Free-for-all fights.

PSYCHOLOGICAL	Threats against and harassment by security agents of opponents of the ruling regime or party, which create political apathy.
	Shoot-on-sight orders that breed fear in voters.
	Terror inflicted by political assassinations, which makes people scared to participate in politics or elections.
	Publication or broadcast of abusive, insulting, or intimidating material or advertorials.
	Threats to life through phone calls, text messages, etc.
STRUCTURAL	Coercion of citizens by government to register or vote.
	Exclusionary acts and policies.
	Unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates.
	Deliberate changes in dates, venues, or times of events to the disadvantage of others.
	Partisan delimitation of electoral constituencies and location of polling booths.
	Excessive fees for collecting party nomination forms.
	Unfree campaign.
	Reliance on money and brute force instead of moral integrity and competence.
	Restraints imposed on voters.
	Use of the incumbency factor to give undue advantage to some candidates.
	Announcement of false or fraudulent results.
	Lengthy delays in announcing election Results.
	Absence of (adequate) voting materials and election result forms.
	Delays in voting.

	Absence of electoral officers from pooling booths.
	Partisan behaviour of police and other security agents.
	Discriminatory acts and policies.

**Source:** Bamgbose, A. j. (2012) Electoral Violence and Nigeria’s 2011 General Elections. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*. Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 205-219.

In lieu of the above, defining electoral violence becomes difficult. Perhaps, some definitions appear to be of more relevance toward unravelling this challenge than the other depending on the author and the electoral phenomenon he is understudying. However, what is central to these studies is the general acceptability that electoral violence is a reaction with respect to the actions and inactions of political actors during election process. Höglund, (2009) definition assesses electoral violence as an ultimate level of electoral fraud. Therefore, electoral fraud is a covert determination to shape and influence elections outcomes. Electoral violence as defined by Sisk (2008) is “Acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the context of electoral competition”. Put the other way, it means that electoral violence is intentionally engaged tools of influence in electoral process either to cause delays, interruption or disruption of the election, or influence its results, to determine the winners or to secure endorsement or disapproval of plebiscite or both (Atuobi 2008). Electoral violence is therefore an instrument of coercive action used by actors to advance their interest or to achieve specific political goals (Höglund 2009).

From another perspective, Yoroms (2015) described electoral violence as a form of violence that takes place during election process mostly in fragile democracies as direct reactions or consequences of inability to meet the expectations of the electorates. In other words, electoral violence is not

primarily the tool sorely used for political concerns by political parties but also include independent violent reactions by the electorates on a mission against perceived failure to meet their expectations. These expectations may be in forms of elections outcomes or results (Ani, 2012). The inference is that when expectations of the electorates are not met, it usually has tendencies that create frustrations. These frustrations subsequently develop into anger thereby building tension. However, at a stage when anger becomes unbearable, it explodes and results to aggression and subsequently, violence. It therefore supports the long established views of many scholars of violence that violence is basically the resultant response to expectations not attained (ibid).

The foregoing has presented a clear illustration that electoral violence plays along a trajectory that yoked the actors in electoral violence, what informed the motives that influenced their pattern of activities and the reasons behind the choice of target point, together. The definitions provided an analytical taxonomy clarification which typifies the actors, their motives, activities and targets.

### **Trends in election violence in recent times**

Violent election has been held in some African countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi. In Nigerian for instance, at least about 100 persons lost their lives while many others sustained various degrees of injuries during the Federal and States election that took place in 2003 (Atuobi: 2008). Also in Nigeria's 2010-2011 elections, the election violence was two dimensional trend; the election-day and post-election day violence (Goldsmith 2015). In the recently held presidential elections in Kenya in 2007, a staggering estimated 600 innocent lives were lost to post-electoral violent clashes following contested electoral results (Atuobi: 2008). This situation improved in the subsequent elections of 2013. Notwithstanding that the 2013 general elections was adjudged relatively violent free, an International Crisis Group report on the Election, indicated

that the 2013 was preceded by tensed pre-election situation across the country. Away from this, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire portrayed a trend of double winners contest. For several months, the 2010 presidential election results were contested between two renowned presidential candidates who individually claimed to have won the election (Goldsmith 2015).

However, research findings by Adolfo (2012) *et al* across other African countries such as Cameroon, Democratic republic of Congo, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Uganda, illustrates that the intensity of election violence is relatively low in these countries when compared to other African countries previously discussed. The inference from their argument depicts that electoral violence presents itself differently in forms of widespread coercive intimidation [in forms of harassment, unlawful arrests and imprisonment, and swift murder of both voters and candidates]; it therefore tends to reduce electoral violence. Others are violent riots usually between supporters or the security details of the opposition parties, attack on local party offices and their cyphers.

The current political situation in Zimbabwe connotes a combination of trends of electoral and political violence. In previous years, since the inception of the present dictatorial administration of President Mugabe, Zimbabwean political terrene remain tensed amidst various forms of political intimidation and suppression against leaders and supporters of opposition parties. Of particular mention is the political rift between Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) led by the incumbent President Robert Mugabe and a popular rival party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai (Zulu 2015), among other key political opposition parties. For instance, the systematic exclusion of names of over a million MDC supporters from the voters roll in 2013 general elections was an alleged politically masterminded intimidation strategy of the ruling party to win and sustain their cling to power (Cendrowicz 2013). The allegation presented a clear picture which follows a trend that supports incomplete participation and

disenfranchisement and all manner of political clampdown against the main opposition parties in the country today (Ani, Chapanyi & Wose Kinge, 2018).

Third term syndrome appears to be another dangerous developing proclivity in some African democracies contemporarily. This trend has resulted in sever violent clashes that have occasioned malicious killings and wanton destruction of properties. In Burundi for instance, the recent unfortunate violence that claimed the lives of many following Nkurunziza's third term bid. The eligibility controversy preceding his confirmation to run by the constitutional court resulted in a fierce pre and post-election violence that left so many people dead (Guardian Newspapers, 21 July 2015).

### **Causes of Electoral Violence**

Electoral violence can be caused by an array of political variables. As outlined in table three below, varying degrees of political dynamics could lead to electoral violence. Depending on the severity of the influence of conditions enabling the use of violence on the dynamics that initiate electoral violence, the sources of violence during elections revolve around the political environment where the election is conducted, the type of election and the institutions used in conducting the election.

**Table 3:** Causes of Electoral Violence

	<b>Conditions enabling the Use of electoral violence</b>	<b>Factors triggering electoral violence</b>
Nature of Politics	Patrimonial politics Conflict cleavages Violence as a legitimate political tool Culture of impunity Access to arms	Violent actors participating in election Biased police
Nature of Election	Competitiveness Political mobilisation Stakes Exposure to attacks	Misuse of political rights Militant mobilisation “Close races”
Electoral Institutions	System creating clear winner and losers Few regulations about electoral conduct Administration with few checks and little power	Political usage of electoral administration Election fraud Unwanted or unexpected outcome of the election

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**Source:** Hóglund, K. (2009) Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Vol. 21, pp 412–427.

Drawing analytical inference from table three, it shows that when the dynamics of existing pre-election political environment tends to encourages, supports and/or permit grounds for the use of violence, obviously, avoiding electoral violence becomes difficult. The political situation during the 2011 general election in Nigeria allowed the political culture of impunity to thrive. For instance, Braton’s (2008) research findings shows that vote buying is one of the variables that rejuvenated the sprout of post electoral violence in that election.



The electoral conditions preceding the 2010 Kenyan post-election violence was a typical situation of stiff competition which subjectively exposed both rivals to attacks. The situation of contested election results precipitated the shoot of a parallel government by the opposition. Thus this stimulated exhibitions of violent attributes by both competitors. These were actuated in two retrospectives; (a), the unlawful use of government forces by government against (b), opposition militia. Along this line, the argument is that the actions of both political actors were actions of flagrant misuse of the political rights and power. Bamgbose (2012) explained that the unnecessary political ambition of the incumbent insinuated a political environment that resonate superfluous post-election violence in Kenya.

Furthermore, in the just concluded 2017 Kenyan general elections, the annulment of the 8 August election results on the ground of illegality and irregularities by the Kenya Supreme Court occasioned series of serious electoral violence across the country particularly in the capital city of Nairobi (BBC News 5 September 2017). The announcement of a new date 31 October 2017 for a re-run election doused the violence however; the situation remained tensed across the country. There were threats and counter threats from the opposition while the ruling party rejected the annulment of the election results (Aljazeera News 21 September 2017). In a re-run election with less than 40% of voter turnout, less than half the number recorded in annulled August's vote, President Uhuru Kenyatta was declared winner amidst controversies surrounding the suspension of the re-run in 25 constituencies believed to be the stronghold of the opposition in the name of security fears (BBC News 30 October 2017).

The underlying cause of post-election conflict in this instance revolves around the controversies leading to the annulment of the 25 August elections and the declaration of President Uhuru Kenyatta winner in the re-run elections of 31 October 2017. It implies that despite the perceived potential implications of the consequences of going on with the elections under a controversy shrouded circumstances was either not taken into consideration

or they were completely neglected by Kenyan electoral commission (IEBC) and the government. Arguably, the implications of the outcomes of the re-run election are wide spread post-election violence in the capital Nairobi and pockets of other parts of Kenya resulting in loss of lives of some Kenyan citizens (ibid).

### **Stages of Election Violence and their Consequences**

Across electoral violence ridden societies in Africa as stated earlier, election violence assumes relatively similar forms which frequently manifest at three stages: before, during and after election-day violence. It means that the consequences of electoral violence are imbedded in the outcomes of elections. This is illustrated in table four below. Research has shown that an estimated 40% of elections or 20% of all elections conducted across the continent witnessed severe incidents of electoral violence, while protracted civil clash was visible in a few other African countries such as Burundi 2015, Angola 1992, Congo Brazzaville 1993, Zimbabwe 2008, Cote d'Ivoire 2010, and Nigeria 2011, (Burchard 2015). It remains a fact that electoral violent situations present themselves within the ambers of these stages of electoral violence already identified.

### **The Pre-election violence**

Pre-election violence is generally of less intensity however it unfortunately occurs more frequently than other forms of electoral violence. This level of electoral violence presents itself in different manipulative forms which are primarily intended to alter the outcomes of elections and thus could easily be conceptualized as an aspect of election fraud (Daxecker: 2014). Findings according to a study conducted on 2007 Kenyan election by Dercon & Gutierrez-Romero (2012) for instance, demonstrates that pre-electoral violence was manifest in the interruption of party campaigns, violent threats against party candidate and their followers, circulation of hate promotions flyers, rousing of violent chauvinism against members of opposition through SMS, and killing or straight attacks on both party aspirants and their

supporters. The report further indicated that post-election periods between 1 December 2007 and 31 March 2008 saw to the death of approximately 41 people who predominantly were killed during election campaigns rallies. Similar pre-electoral challenging conditions are faced by other African democracies during the same period.

To this end, Bratton (2008) argues that campaign irregularities and violence experienced in the 2007 Nigeria general elections were consequences of vote buying, campaign inducement and political intimidation which he sums up as a characteristic dimensions of African election campaigns. His findings confirm that vote buying which was perceived by rival political parties as an oppressor strategy engaged by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to suppress or wean the influence of opposition and distort voting pattern, gave sprout to pre-election violence. The reason stems from the fact that vote buying has positive influence on partisan loyalty. It would mean therefore that the severity of pre-election violence revolves principally around harassment, intimidation and targeted assassination (Ani & Ejiaga, 2015).

### **The Election-Day violence**

Election-day violence is regularly preceded by pre-election violence. It is usually the continuation of spill-over effects or in reaction to pre-election unresolved issues which were observed as possessing capabilities of potential influence on the outcomes of the election. Often, election-day violence assumes fairly similar form of manifestation across African democratic transitions including attack on election workers, polling stations and voters. For instance, dozens of deaths were recorded in the aftermath of election-day violence between supporters of the party in power and membership of the oppositions in the 2010/2011 Nigeria general elections (Burchard 2015, Goldsmith 2015).

**Table 4:** Examples of different forms and stages of electoral violence

	<b>Violence perpetrated by opposition actors (Political parties, rebels guerillas)</b>	<b>Violence perpetrated by government actors (Political parties, police, military, militia)</b>
<b>Pre-election stage:</b> Disruption of voter registration and displacement. Attack on political candidates, election workers during campaigning.	Right-wing bombing campaign to disrupt the first Democracy in South Africa in 1994	Ethnic cleansing of opposition by the ruling party in Kenyan Africa National Union (KANU) in Kenya in 1992, 1997, and 2007.
<b>Election day/s</b> Attack on election workers, polling stations, and voters.		State-sponsored violence against supporters of the opposition party for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe in 2002. Attacks against the opposition by supporters of the ruling party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria in 2003 and 2004.
<b>Post-election stage</b> Conflict or disaffection over election outcomes-riots or large-scale violence. Revenge attacks for incidents prior to the election.	Fighting between supporters of the two presidential candidates ahead of the announcement of the election results in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997. Attacks by the opposition party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in response to rigged elections in Kenya in 2007 and 2008.	Government violence against opposition protest against the election result in Ethiopia in 2005 Government violence against Ouattara’s opposition militia <i>Forces Nouvelles</i> militia in Cote D’Ivoire 2010 post-elections violence.

Adapted from; Höglund, K. (2009) Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Vol. 21, pp 412–427.

### **The Post-election violence**

At this stage, electoral violence present as violent reactions preceding the outcomes of elections. It assumes a more extreme dimension which comes with severe consequences. In Kenyan 2007 elections, Markussen & Mbuvi (2011) observed that the post electoral violence erupted few hours after the election results were announced. A report by the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect in 2012 affirms that the outright rejection of the 2007 election results by the leadership of the two main opposition parties on the allegations that the election was rigged, triggered widespread and systemic violence which left more than 1000 people dead and an estimated 500 000 Kenyan civilians displaced. Similarly, more than 800 people were reported to have lost their lives following a protracted post-election violent clash in the 2011 Nigerian general elections (Burchard 2015).

In Ethiopian general elections of 2010, a similar scenario presented itself moments after the election result was announced. Among Ethiopians, the general impression regarding the outcome of the election was that it was a foregone concluded election. The pre-election strategies engaged in this regard included intimidation, harassment and threats on human rights defenders, crackdown on Non-Governmental Organizations and individual voters through Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO) law effective pre-election day, from January 2010. As anticipated, violence protests followed the announcement of the election results (Tronvoll 2010).

Clearly, the general inference subsequent to the sprout of post-election violence denotes the inability of the outcomes of the election to meet with the expectations of the rival opposition parties in particular or the electorates in general. However, the events that gave sprout to post-election violence in

Cote D'Ivoire 2010 elections were slightly different. In this case, the outcome of the election failed to meet with the expectations of the incumbent president, President Laurent Gbagbo when his former prime minister was declared winner of the election (Nweke & Ani, 2011). The run-off election results announcement by the Côte d'Ivoire Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) indicated that the Gbagbo secured 45.9% of the votes casted as against Quattara secured 54.1% (Cook 2011) Basing their pronouncement on this premise, the IEC declared Quattara the winner of the election.

However, following a court challenge by Gbagbo which eventually resulted in the nullification of ICE's initial results of the elections, presented a fresh result which saw Gbagbo securing 51.1% of the vote as against Quattara's 48.6% (ibid). Subsequently, the court declared the incumbent, President winner and returned him to office as president. Consequently, Gbagbo rejected international calls to step down and refused to relinquish power to Quattara, who has been internationally acclaimed as the winner. A situation of double victory claims ensued creating serious political tension across the country that ironically relapsed into violent conflict. Conflict between government forces which Gbagbo was using to defend himself against Ouattara's *Forces Nouvelles* militia, left hundreds of thousands of people either dead or displaced (Cook 2011). A BBC report on 28 October 2015 on the post-court declaration violent situation in Côte d'Ivoire, presented a figure of the number of people killed in the violence at approximately 3000 and more than 500, 000 displaced.

Deductions from our discussions demonstrate that electoral violence has remained an abysmal re-occurring hydra-headed monster challenging smooth African democratic transitions. Overall, the simple inference is that the various forms and dimensions of electoral violence impacted varying degree and magnitude of negative consequences on the physical, structural and emotional lives of citizens of crisis ridden African democracies. From

intimidation, threat, arrest, assassination to destruction of properties and arson, in pre-election violence; to distortion of voting process, and snatching of ballot boxes on the day of election violence, adaptation of election outcomes, and election irregularities in the post-election violence, election violence has ironically resulted in the death of thousands and hundreds of thousand displaced Africans. These remarks are not phenomenally remarkable in support of the subsistence of African democratic institutions. Although, some African states like Togo, Ghana and Madagascar had had reasonable history of peaceful democratic transitions, the onus lies with other African countries either to learn from them or at least copy. In some countries such as Burkina Faso, electoral violence gave sprout to the Coup d'état that subjugated the country till elections were held in 2012. Unfortunately, these will pest African states because there has not been serious evidential move by African leaders to silence this quagmire. It is even more unfortunate considering that most African leaders such as Nkurunziza of Burundi would hide behind this monster to subsist in power.

The nature of politics played in Africa poses a structural framework which supports conditions enabling the use of violence. Thus, confronting this phenomenon would entail a comprehensive approach that will restructure the nature of politics in Africa. To achieve this fit, African political institutions require strengthening. Advancing new specific strategic policies to address the loopholes that support the use of violence would go a long way in reducing the incidence of electoral violence in Africa.

Political actors generally need proper political orientation regarding careless utterances during electioneering. For instance former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo said during a campaign rally that “this election is a do or die affair” (Collier & Vicente 2014). Such unguarded statements from a renowned political leader could be misconstrued by the opposition as a direct threat of intimidation and an open invitational clamor for war. To this end, political actors need political reorientation that will change their perspective about politics as must win or heads will roll, than a political game it really

is. Hence, approaching politics in the spirit of sportsmanship would ameliorate the obnoxiousness attached to contemporary game of politics in Africa.

Finally, African leaders should ensure strong and completely independent political institutions devoid of all forms of political influence from political factors that could produce biased umpires. Many African political institutions remain puppets of the ruling parties thereby exposing them to undue influence that create loose avenues to challenge the credibility of electoral outcomes conducted by them. In this regards unfortunately, accepting electoral outcomes becomes a difficult pill both for the opposition and the electorates to swallow. In some case too, such as in Cote D'Ivoire, electoral outcome was seriously contested between the two most prominent contestants in the 2010 elections. More evidence of this is readily visible in copious electoral related law suits across Africa challenging the outcomes of elections conducted within them in recent times. These paradoxes make it critically problematic and daunting to fight this escalating evil phenomenon to a standstill but Africa must wake up to fight it nevertheless and the time is now.

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## **LEADERSHIP CONTESTATION AND REGIONAL INSECURITY: ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS ON WEST AFRICAN STATES**

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### ***Abstract***

*Leadership and leaders are crucial in society and state, just as leader is essential its appointment and emergence is of great importance and interest to the citizens and effective functioning of state. Fractured states and insecurity from perennial disputes over emergence of political leaders in Africa are becoming alarmingly worrisome, because of its continuous negative impacts on the fragile African states and already volatile Africa's international political environment.*

*The primary objective of the study is to investigate nexus between contestation for leadership in a democratic system and insecurity in West African states. Theoretical framework for the analysis is combination of State Fragility Theory and Elite Theory. The study adopted qualitative research methods in which secondary data is employed for analysis. The study identifies poor democratic culture of inability to effectively disengage from traditional political system by emerging African political leaders/politicians as the basis of contestation problems. The study concludes that African politicians perceives politics as a 'must win race', absence of tolerance to political opponents/opposing views, imperial presidency/desire to remain in power for eternity, prebendal politics, myopic political elites/politicians, legacy of colonial administration of not rendering service to humanity, obsession for pecks of office, power and glory as well as love for title as some of the causes of contestation problems in African politics and political life. The study recommends reorientation of African political elites/politicians on the ethics of modern democracy, acceptance of*

*political leadership as service to humanity not a place to create imperial presidency, and development and adoption of tolerance as an integral part of democratic political culture.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Electoral Violence, Insecurity, Leadership Contestation, Prebendal Politics*

**Introduction:** African continent because of its scary reputation of being the world's leading theatre of conflicts, war, poverty and instability has been described as scourge by many European and American scholars due to certain notable attributes identified with the continent (Meredith, 2005). One of these features is perennial political conflicts that always degenerates to wars, insurgency and ethnic cleansing all of which create situation of insecurity that drives state to the level of fragility or failed state. Notable among the identified features is the preponderance of abject poverty in the continent despite the fact that the continent is blessed with the highest amount of mineral resources needed globally and, best brain which are allowed to drain away to other continent when the potentials embedded in the abundant human resources are not adequately tapped. Prominent of these features is also sit-tight/authoritarian leadership that make use of adulterated politics to attained and retain the leadership position in order to authoritatively allocate values in the state. Adulterated politics with corrupt political culture has caused intense and extreme leadership contestation in many African states like Chad ( Hisne Habre and Goukoni Wadeye), Liberia(Doe/ Taylor/Johnson), Cote d'Ivoire (Gbagbo/Guei/ Quattara) and Sierra Leone( Tedjan Kabba & Fouday Sankoh). In the recent times, there has been increase in political conflicts and electoral violence arising from contestation for leadership position in different African states.

It was these outlined processes and procedures to leadership position that are desecrated upon and perverted by African political elites as contenders for leadership as displayed by Samuel Doe who openly promotes violent ethnic politics. Perversion of electoral rules applicable to Bedie/Gbagbo with their introduction of the concept of 'full-blood' Ivorian into Cote d'Ivoire political

lexicon and cause division in the armed forces as well as uprising in the northern part of Cote d'Ivoire (). Continuous political conflict emanating from leadership contestation generates a lot of insecurity into both national and international political environment of West African states in Liberia and Mali.

In states like Niger and Chad, the greatest stumbling block to prosperity and security is leadership contestation between the political elites that made virtually all ethnic nationalities stockpile cache of arms and ammunition which enhance rate proliferation of small and light arms in West Africa (Ani & Ejiaga, 2015). Parts of those arms constitute the bulk of arms with the marauding Fulani cattle rustlers and banditry ravaging northern part of Nigeria. Infarct, the Liberian leadership contestation between the political elites like Doe/Thomas/Johnson/ Taylor is one major intrastate political conflict to have multiple and spiral insecurity effects on West African states of Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Thus, insecurity has become fundamental challenge undermining political and socio-economic development of most African states, Abubakar and Yahaya (2018:44), Nwagwu (2018:21).

There exists causal relationship between leadership contestation, political conflicts and insecurity in the continent of Africa. Preponderance of political conflicts emanating from leadership contests has greatly eroded legitimacy of many African leaders to effectively govern their states, (Hegre, 2014:161). Inability to govern well breeds poor governance; attempt to cover leader's inadequacies leads to leaning heavily on ethno-religious threshold in contesting for leadership position. Riding on the threshold of ethno-religious politics makes Africa to be a flashpoint for ethnic based leadership contestation and religious induced extremist insurgency that are wrecking havocs and weaken state institutions. Continuous political conflicts emanating from leadership contestation portrayed Africa as a renowned global established theatre of war where nearly all countries in the continent are facing or had been confronted by one bloody political conflict based on squabbles between the elites in their quest for political leadership, Akinyemi

(2001), Nwolise (2011), Ogunsanwo (2013) Abubakar and Yahaya (2018:45), Nwagwu (2018:21).

Leadership and leaders are fundamental in society and state, just as leader is essential its emergence is of great importance and concerns to the well-being and effective functioning of the state. Essentiality of leaders and leadership position makes it utmost attractive and competitive in modern African states. Legitimate attainment of leadership position confers political power and authority to allocate values in society on the leaders. But, attaining leadership position (to become leader) requires detailed/outlined processes and procedures. It is these outlined processes and procedures of attaining leadership position that are desecrated and perverted by African elites as contenders to leadership position (as was shown by Samuel Doe who openly promotes ethnic politics and also Bedie/Gbagbo introduction of ‘full blood’ Ivorian concept into the constitution which spark division in the armed forces and uprising in the northern part of Coted’Ivoire). Perversion and parody of principles of attaining leadership position contrary to the laid down rules and regulations breeds rancour, acrimony and political conflicts that negatively impacted on the peace, orderliness and security/protection of life of citizens which are primary duty of state. This makes African politics and political practice in post-colonial states to be full of intrigue that defies known logic of politics and democratic principles (Sharma, et al 2013).

Democracy as a global and popularly acceptable method of choosing and changing leadership prescribed the best means of avoiding political conflicts that are associated with other means of leadership selection, Nwolise (2011), Diamond, et al (1995). This is because it is based on popular participation, party politics and citizens’ mobilization to determine candidate of their choice whom they want to vote for. The irony of African politics is that, there are contradictions between democracy and African politics. Democracy, which is globally acclaimed and adjudged as the best means of choosing and changing leaders in modern states, it is this same democracy that serves as basis of generating political conflicts when choosing or changing leaders in



Africa. While Africa politics believe in face value of democratic ideal such as presenting candidate for elective posts and formation of political parties, African elites rejects content value of democracy such as tolerance and spirit of sportsmanship. Once candidate nurture/signifies leadership ambition for political office it is assumed there should be no other contenders against this hopeful political ambition. Contenders for such position are seen as foe or political enemy that must be battled to submission or defeat. This leads to introduction of corrupt democratic political cultures of ethno-religion politics, thuggery and militia who are empowered with weapons which are later used for trans-border crimes.

Coming to leadership position through election confers political power and authority on individual. But, attainment of political power and leadership position in modern African states is not completely divorce from traditional political system in which occupier through ascribed traditional political system have access to unrestraint power and political glamour. There exists contradiction between African politics, African political leaders/leadership and global politics. African states and politics are having contradictory philosophy to that of political leaders/leadership, while African states were created as modern political entity, and its political structure and processes are moving towards new global political trends. African political leaders/leadership are still exhibiting traditional political behavioural patterns of life/imperial presidency where incumbent leaders see leadership as permanent position to be occupied for eternity and unchallenged, Nkrumah (1974), Meredith (2005), Akindele and Oche (2001:116). Good governance, representative government and equitable participation have made democracy a desirable system of governance globally, Sharma, et al (2013:64), Atte (2001:116).

### **Concept clarification**

**Leadership contestation** is the intense struggle for political leadership position by the elites of a given state with the sole aim of attaining political power in order to exercise political authority that goes along with the political

responsibility of managing, administering and authoritatively allocate values and resources in a state or polity. It is extreme tussle for position of authority that deals with exercising control over resources and people of a given territory as political leader. Contestation for leadership in Africa can be seen in two ways; the struggle for political power through use of arms, which may be military (Coup d'état), revolution (Museveni in Uganda, Paul Kigame in Rwanda and Gadhafi in Libya), or rebel attacks (Sankoh in Sierra Leone, Yormie Johnson/Charles Taylor in Liberia) and politics/ electoral contests which may be inform of ethno-religious politics or class/elite politics. The two breeds a lot of political conflicts and insecurity in the continent of Africa. Contestation for leadership in Africa can either be intra-class contestation (Gowon/Ojukwu-military elite, Awolowo/Akintola-political elite) or inter-class contestation (Babangida and Abiola-military elite vs. business elite). The contest may be between incumbent and a fresh contender(s) from another political party, it may be between two ideologically dominant parties, it may be between ethnically assertive groups within a state, it may be between presumed conservative and assumed revolutionary groups Political conflicts in Sudan, Niger, and Rwanda were intra-class between rivals of two political parties. Cases of elite politics/leadership contestation that degenerated into political conflicts and insecurity are Tshombe/Kasavubu/Lumumba and Mobutu/Kabila in Congo, between Charles Taylor/Yormie Johnson and Alh. Koroma in Liberia, fractionalized war lords in Somalia and between Goukoni Waddeye and Hisne Habre in Chad.

**Insecurity** is the presence of fear from occurrence of known incidents that may cause both physical and psychological damage to an individual, group, society and state. Insecurity is diametrically opposite of security and Obasanjo (2000) opines that insecurity can be analysed from two broad levels: internal and external. Internal insecurity could be insecurity of people (anxiety/panic) and insecurity of the state (threat from ethnic militias, insurgents, terrorist and espionage which can weaken states' institutions,

remove or reduce sovereignty of a state). While external insecurity comes from external threat such attacks by organised criminals, international terrorist groups, externally trained militias to disrupt internal peace of a state. Insecurity creates bad image for Africa as a continent that is full of political crises which in turn makes Africa as one of the most unsafe place to do business or investment. In the era of globalization while other continents and regions are welcoming foreign direct investment, Africans are scaring away the same foreign direct investment from their territories.

**Electoral/Political Conflicts:** These are different intra-state violent demonstration centred on filthy democratic practices or electoral processes manipulation that undermining constitutional emergence of political leaders in a state. For instance, Lauren Gbagbo and Yahya Jammeh refusal to step down after losing in a democratic contest, unconstitutional ascendancy of presidency by Faure Eyadema after the death of his father, using military coup to remove democratically elected government in states like Sierra Leone and Mali, many of these political conflicts though internal political conflicts generates insecurity into the regional political environment, Nwolise (2011), Obasanjo (2000).

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Fragility theory** contends that a *functioning and legitimate* state is a prerequisite for re-establishing peace, security, economic development, social order and democracy. A fragile state is one that is *unable to effectively respond to the challenge of governance and security within its geographical territories* (Emphasis is mine). This explains Collmer (2009) position that fragility is a product of ‘fundamental failure of a state to perform functions necessary to meet citizen’s basic aspiration and needs. Fragility occurred due to absence of legitimacy that evolves from popular sovereignty to freely elect their leaders that are accountable and are responsive to the people. Rotberg(2003) cited in Ndukwe et al (2018:34) notes that ‘fragile state increases criminal violence (through electoral violence and political conflicts that leads to ethnic clashes/cleansing and insurgency) which further weakens

the state's authority and potential for effective governance. Fragile states are usually associated with tensed, deeply conflicted and dangerous warring factions whom most times lead to breakdown of law and order. The relevance of the theory lies in its deduction of legitimacy as the basis of peace and security in state (Obasanjo, 2000). Thus the main reason why peace, stability and security continue to elude many African states is traceable to illegitimate means adopted by African leaders in the process of contestation for leadership position. The major reason why many modern African states are fragile and may remain fragile is lack of legitimacy by leaders in the process of attaining leadership position because of poor leadership contestation mechanism embraced which prevent emergence of a nationally acceptable leader(s) that will meet the yearning, needs and, aspiration of the people. Emergence of nationally acceptable leader will propel the state towards national integration and nation-building rather than embarking on divisive elements that put the state in jeopardy, unrest, violent conflicts and insecurity. Prominent scholars of this theory are Collmer, Kaplan and Rothberg.

**Elite theory** popularised by Gaetano Mosca in 1939, is a theoretical and methodological framework for researching connection between political and economic power in society. Elite theory investigates power and control with the aim of analysing elites and non-elites (general public) differentiation. It is concerned with inequalities based on power or lack of thereof. To elite theory power is based on other resources such as economic assets and organizational strength which may give rise to control over other resources. Thus, public policies (including voting patterns) are values and preferences of governing elites. Elites are groups of people, who hold institutionalised power to control societal resources (due to their possession of time, energy, wealth, status and prestige which enable them to motivate people) and have a serious influence on decision-making process (actively or potentially). Political elites inordinate ambition makes them to use their possession of wealth, position, knowledge and spiritual to cause division between different

ethnic nationalities that are supposed to be integrated into a well-established modern African state. Elite's ethnic cleavage as platform for advancing leadership contest leads to fractionalization of states along ethno-religious line in Cote d'Ivoire by Gbagbo. This had pushed many states toward violent democratic contest between ethnic nationalities and ethnic cleansing in a proposed election in Liberia and Sierra Leone all of which impacted negatively on regional security of West African sub-region. Because elites possess economic, political, spiritual and institutional power with which elite can use as resources to control both brain and might of people to carried elite desire objective such as violent political conflicts. Sometimes political elites like Charles Taylor, Yormie Johnson, Fouday Sankoh can turn democratic violence into low intensity warfare recruiting and distributing arms to young able-bodied supporters. Much of his arms are not returned even after demobilization and they constitute large bulk of what criminal elements are using to carry out crimes across the borders. Moreover, low intensity warfare open the region for marketing and sales of ammunition by war merchants and military industrial complex making it easy to access weapons in the region.

Possession of wealth, status, prestige, knowledge, spiritual/religion and institutional power enable elite to motivate and influence gullible citizens into adversarial ethnic nationalism and cause division among people. This was manifested by Samuel Doe as serving president openly encouraged his supporters to tame opposition with cutlass. Invariably, through institutionalise power there is proliferation of light and small arms which constitute insecurity to the regional environment. Using institutional power, Gbagbo and Guei manipulates National Assembly to amend constitution to technically eliminate strong opponent (Quottara), as serving president, Jammeh compelled the Electoral Commission to declare him as winner after losing election. All these affect leadership legitimacies which is the basis of peace and security. Once state is fractured, its institutions weakened, bad governance set in, then political conflicts is inevitable. Combinations of these variables prevent a state from effectively combating its internal

political crisis which can ripple across the porous borders where there is proliferation of light and small arms constitute insecurity to the regional environment. There are different types of elites. These include political elites, business elites, military elites, academic elites; trade/labour union elites and traditional elites. Mosca (1939) cited in Okpanachi and Bello (2014) opines that because “there is concentration of political power in the hands of elites as group they perform all political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages what that power brings”. Other proponents of the theory are Wright Mills (1956), Vilfredo Pareto (1968).

**Selected Leadership Contestation in Africa:** Poor leadership vision blurs African elites from differentiating between leading an ethnic nationality and leading multi-ethnic state. It is this myopic politics that makes African elites to embark on prebendal politics in the quest for leadership position, (Joseph, 1991). But the contradiction that exist between African leaders and democracy makes democratic system to be prone to electoral violence and political conflicts which its current attendant repercussion within and outside the shores of affected African states inform of insecurity and insurgency. Imperial presidency and authoritarian democrats drives states to towards political conflicts, insecurity and insurgency, Nwolise (2011:28). Democracy and party politics being a game of number exacerbate and polarised African states into ethno-religious assertive polity that accentuate political conflicts and insecurity.

Liberia, a peaceful West African state until 1980 presents a good case study in leadership contestation. Perceived dominance of political scene by American-Liberian resulted in military coup of 1980 led by Samuel Doe. Emergence of Samuel Doe as Liberian leaders marks the beginning of leadership contestation in Liberia. Doe ruled for five years as a military head of state before nurturing the ambition of transforming himself to democratically elected president. This ambition brought Doe against many of his former associates whom he accused of plotting to overthrow his

government. Doe's tough stance on his political opponents who stands on his way of realising his political ambition resulted in 'authoritarian leadership', Aworawo (2011:18). It also divided the polity along ethnic lines as Doe persecute both individual as enemy and their ethnic group as collaborators that must politically nullify. This made many of his peers from different backgrounds who were prevented and persecuted for nurturing presidential ambition to resort to low intensity war that later degenerated into Liberian civil war. Ruthlessness with which Doe deals with his political opponents coupled with ethnicity introduced into Liberian body politics accentuate violent demonstration when Doe claimed victory at the poll which was not free and fair. Violent political demonstration leads to emergence of many factional leaders such as Charles Taylor, Yormie Johnson, and Alh. Koromah, Meredith, (2005).

Cote d'Ivoire is a good example of stable polity in West Africa until the demise of Felix Boigny which created leadership vacuum which could not be quickly filled as the state has never experienced changing of power from one leader to another. Attempt to individually and unilaterally take undue advantage of situation created political uncertainty which was not effectively handled with common purpose. Intense political bickering and imposition of political leaders by the emerging elites was the beginning of leadership contestation in the country. The death of Boigny led to emergence of Konarie Bedie as president of Cote d'Ivoire, Bedie refusal to democratically relinquish leadership post due to leadership contestation between Bedie and other political elites prompt military coup that brought Gen. Guei to power. Attempt by Guei himself to assumed imperial presidency through kangaroo election led to political impasse between Guei and Gbagbo, this political impasse later produced Lauren Gbagbo as president. On getting to power, Gbagbo decision to turn politics upside down due to leadership contestation between Ivorian elites leads to political conflicts which introduced ethnic and regional sentiment to political lexicon of Ivory Coast and insecurity in West Africa that warrant regional body intervention in internal matters of Cote

**African States and the Effect of Leadership contestation on the state.**

SN	State/country	Effects on the state
1	Congo DR	Protracted civil war since 1962, wretchedness
2	Sudan	Protracted civil war, loss of sovereignty that leads to division of country into two, ethnic cleansing, polarised the state along ethno-religious lines.
3	Somalia	Failed state, fractionalization of people to clans, terrorist hide out and base, protracted war.
4	Angola	Protracted civil war, inability to efficiently utilise her mineral resources, poor infrastructural development
5	Liberia	Paralysed state institutions, protracted civil war, arm proliferation and organized crimes, paved ways for external machinery and militias to destabilise the state.
6	Chad	Fractionalised the military institutions along elites interest; paved ways for expansionary foreign policy from Libya, caused rift between Libya and France. Partial loss of territory to Libya
7	Sierra Leone	Experienced failed state syndrome, worst civil war in West Africa, raised child soldiers, organized crimes, destruction of agricultural land
8	Cote d'Ivoire	Fractionalised the citizens and state along ethnic and regional line, balkanised national integration, destroyed relative peace, unity and harmony experienced in the state and West Africa.
9	Mali	Failed state syndrome, insurgent attacks, enthronement of dreaded international extremist religious terrorist in West Africa, ethnic cleansing.
10	Rwanda	Failed state syndrome, ethnic cleansing, promote ethnic distrust



### **Causes of Leadership Contestation**

**Winner-Takes-all syndrome:** Leadership contestation in Africa is fierce and usually degenerated into political conflict as a result of what Akinyemi (2001:9) describes as restrictive party democracy that practice politics of first-past-the-post where winner-takes-all. This makes leadership contestation to become a matter of ‘must-win’ or what Sonny Okosun, in one of his classic albums refers to ‘now or never, we rather win now or lose it forever’. Attempt to *win leadership position and keep it forever* makes contest to become violent in nature. This pitch supporting ethnic groups of a candidate against another, for instance the peck of power made many ethnic tribes of Samuel Doe to support his immoderate political ambition because his success is ethnic success. Inciting ethnic politics generates bitter party politics competition that later produced protracted civil war in West African sub-region.

**Ends to be Served:** One of the major causes of unethical leadership contestation and its attendant political conflicts is the ‘ends to be served’, Imobighe (2001:41). African elites believe attainment of leadership position is an avenue to accumulate exclusive privileges for themselves by diverting public resources to enrich and protect their privileges, friends and ethnic associates. Leadership post is seen as avenue to secure unrestraint access to security of life and wealth. **Thus, attainment** of leadership position becomes a matter of life and death when Faure Eyadema of Togo sideline all known constitutional provisions to promote family dynasty and ethnic hegemony.

**Artificial Adulteration of politics:** Contradiction between professing democratic system and refusal to abide by democratic ethics through manipulation of democratic ethics to a contender advantage serves as basis of political conflicts. The conflict is emboldened by African elites philosophy of seen those who joined the race to contest as enemies and not political opponents that offers alternative views in the corridor of party

politics and power game. Throughout their time, both Goukoni Wadeye and Hisne Habre did not see themselves as competitors competing for political office rather each see the other as archy-enemy in Chad. It is the determination to squeeze out opposing views that usually degenerates into confrontational and violent intra-state political conflicts that ends up creating insecurity in the polity. This is what Oche (2001:78), Nwolise (2011:30) refers to as ‘artificial adulteration’ of politics with violence and poor democratic culture in the process of leadership contestation.

**Inordinate Political Ambition:** Desire to attain leadership position and retaining political power by all means has been the basis of continuous fighting for leadership position in modern African states that is causing political instability. Suppression and oppression of perceived political opponents individually or collectively as groups degenerates to authoritarian leadership and imperial presidency. The suppression of perceived political opponents individually could take the form of identifying and targeting individual (candidate/ aspirant) as political foe just as it was between Doe, Taylor and Johnson in Liberia. This makes targeting leading, notable or staunch party members who can exercise great influence on other members as followers (the case of Quattara in Cote d’Ivoire) as object of elimination. Collectively in terms of party politics in Africa which tilted towards ethnic/religious supports which enable incumbent to perceive a given set of people (ethnic or religious) as collectively political adversaries that needed to be political crushed in order for contender to realise their political ambition. Suppression and oppression of perceived adversaries leads to marginalisation and persecution which are sometimes leads to low intensity war fare between a given ethnic groups supporting the incumbent and other ethnic groups opposing the political ambition of the incumbent (the case of Gbagbo and the Northerners in Cote d’Ivoire), (Imobighe, 2001).

**Lack of policy proposal by Contenders:** Democracy as system and process is a game of number in which contestants have opportunity of persuading or

persecuting people into accepting contending candidate. In a civilized and well established societies where democracy have firm root, candidates persuade people with manifesto and programme they have for citizens if elected into power. Candidates can also pick holes in programme and policy proposal of opposing candidates as a means of campaigning/canvassing floating voters. In African politics and among African elites issue based programme/manifestoes does not exist rather divisive issues are raised and die hard party loyalists use such flanks to cause fracas in the polity. Attempt to canvass/campaign is not always based on issue of policy proposal that are important to the voters, rather aspirants or candidates resort to persecution rather than persuasion (as Jammeh did to Barrow's supporters in The Gambia) in order to coerce the challenger or other contending candidates to submission or frustration. Lack of tolerance of opposing views, when critical issues are raised and there is need to take a position (proposed or opposed) is making African party politics volatile and conflict prone.

**Constitutional Manipulation:** Politics in most African states is filled with primordial factors that inhibit effective functioning of democracy as a system or process of leadership selection. One of such factors used to obstruct challenging candidates that is influential is citizenship/indigeneship, this play out in Cote d'Ivoire where legislature rubberstamped *Ivorienship clause* in the constitution to prevent Alhassan Qouattara from contesting as a candidate against Lauren Gbagbo. This *Ivorienship* for leadership and promulgation of law that aspirant that is not residing in the country in the last past four years is not qualified to contest for presidential post, when it is obvious that the challenger has been serving as World Bank official and his just returning back to Cote d'Ivoire and could not have reside in the country for four years consecutively. Constitutional manipulation to prevent opponent from running for leadership position serves as the genesis of political conflicts that almost disintegrate a country like Cote d'Ivoire and caused serious security challenges in West African states. One of such security threat was the Touareg ethnic militias that transformed and

metamorphosed to a dreaded extremist international terrorist that almost overran Malian state. The major problem of political elites and politicians is their innate nature and desire to self-esteem and actualization to attain enviable position which they consider 'a must' once they conceived the idea as an aspirant (incumbent inclusive).

**Existence of Assertive Ethnic Groups:** Multi-ethnic nature of African states generates adversarial political culture of ethnically motivated political conflicts due to politics of ethnic rivalry. Outbreak of violent political conflicts in one country can also ignite political conflicts in many other states with similar ethnic groups who share common boundaries (Mali, Algeria and Chad with Touareg Arabs), Suifon (2012: vii). Preventing the contagious effects of political conflicts on the immediate international political environment took centre stage of foreign policy of West African leading to the formation of Economic Community of West African States Monitoring group (ECOMOG), Albert,(2012:6). Oche (2001) observes that ethnic hegemony is a major factor in extreme leadership contest. Each ethnic group see defeat of a candidate from their area as defeat of the entire ethnic group, thus ethnic politics.

**Faulty Class Formation:** Formation of political class in the post-colonial African states was not based on ideology that can translate to politicians satisfying the interest of people, rather, it is based on comprador and conspiracy tendencies of building political dynasty where selected few members will benefit to the detriment of large number of people, this breed democratic political conflicts and discord between those who want continuity and those who want change of the status quo. Unhealthy Democratic Party politicking in Africa usually produced fatal bitter rivalry between two ideologically divergent political leaders as was seen between Tsombe and Lumbumba in the newly independent Congo Republic which put the newly independent country into bitter civil war and the country never recovers till the present time. Trouble usually brewed in African democracy and party

politics due to desire by the politicians to build imperial presidency by discouraging formation of other parties which might serve as opposition and competitor to the first or earlier party. This gave birth to one party system in a state like Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania and The Gambia. But, where there exist assertive major ethnic groups like Nigeria in which there is keen competition among the leading politicians and the idea of one party state is impossible. The politicians resort to self-help and other foul means to frustrate perceived opponents in a state like Nigeria which usually leads to democratic political conflicts in form electoral violence such as '*Operation Wet e*' that gave the Western Region of Nigeria global reputation and name as '*Wild, Wild, West*'. Democratic and electoral competitions has always been seen by African politicians as 'must win' phenomenon which former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo simply put as '*Do or Die affairs*'. The politics of 'do or die' or democratic political violence was resuscitated by the late Samuel Doe, former president of Liberia, who in an attempt to seek electoral office and win in the face of democratic opposition decided to use self-help. One of the mechanisms used to raise his populism is ethnic chauvinism, intimidation of perceived opposition and outright elimination of political opponents. This act caused Liberia five years' civil wars and West Africa sub-region is yet to recover from the ripple effects of the Liberian civil war which affect political stability and peace in both Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire.

### **Effects/Impacts and Consequences of leadership contestation on African states**

**Weak State Institutions:** Extreme leadership contestation weakens civil and military institutions of many African states in the recent time. Leadership contestation also create heavy political conflicts that permits incursion of Gaddafi's expansionary foreign policy that leads to flexing of muscle between Libya and France in Chad, this provide avenue for the recruitment of private militias and body guard by Libyan leader from the Touareg Arabs domiciled in Mali, Algeria and Chad. It is these trained Touareg Arabs that

now constitute global extremist religious terrorist group that almost overran state of Mali with their terrorist attacks. Weak state institutions create rooms for neo-colonialism in many African states through heavy reliance on former colonialists or other predatory states for security and defence pacts.

**The Biggest Arms Market:** Perennial conflicts emanating from leadership contestations has turned African states into conflict ridden continent which provide Great Avenue for the military industrial complex to turn Africa to their biggest depot and market for sales of ammunition. This increases in the rate of volatility and fragility of many modern African states and even turned some states to like Mali, Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone to acquired failed state status. This has culminated in proliferation of small and light arms in the continent, where every little disagreement between elites or political parties that can be resolved amicably by diplomacy are resorted to the use of arms where weapons are easily and freely distributed. Inordinate ambition of African elites made the continent to be vulnerable to arm poachers and dealers. Rather than making Africa productive continent where valuable consumable items are produced to add value to lives of people, it has turned Africa continent to a place where lives of productive people who can add value to productive economic base are consumed in cold blood and sent to grave in their prime. Contestation has polarized the people in some states along ethno-religious line which greatly affect level of harmony and unity in the state. Polarisation of many African states nationals along both ethnic and religious line/ sentiment widens the gap of nation-building and national integration which are lacking in modern African states, this seriously eroding unity needed to put the security of many states on the right tracks. Easy accessibility to arms added a new dimension to Africa's insecurity problem through increase in arm proliferation as a result of desire to equip militias fighting for African elites.

**Loss of Lives:** Political conflicts that emanates from leadership contestation has claimed more lives than epidemic, because it is easier to individually and

collectively control epidemic than to control political conflicts. Killing and maiming people in multitude, thus, human lives were lost in thousand, young and old, males and females, civilian and military personnel, and most of these victims of situation are innocent and ignorant of what they are dying for. Massive death made Africa to have the highest mass graves in the world, Obasanjo (2000). Fierce leadership contestation has also increase the rate of cruelty and continuous violation of human rights and international laws of war. Insecurity from arm proliferation has in no small way destroyed West African economic integration plan due to cross border banditry which necessitate individual state taken pragmatic foreign policy to safeguard their state security.

**Increase Fragility and Failed State Status:** Pathology of conflicts from leadership contestation in Africa has become endemic to the extent that it is causing fatal disruptive consequences in some states to a situation of failed state status in Somalia, Rwanda, and Congo. It has made many African states to be more fragile to the level of solvent state for instance Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mali, (Atte,2001). Managing crisis of excessive leadership contestation that degenerates into potential regional conflicts and insecurity in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire in this era of 'explosive war fare' is arduous tasks for both the global, continental and regional organizations as witnessed in Mali, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia. Recruitment of ethnic militias in conflict ridden place created heavy political decadence that permeate emergence of dreaded terrorist groups from among the newly recruit young and gullible citizen for terrorist activities either in the country or any other place of the organization choice. Thus it makes Africa a breeding ground for terrorist recruit, training and testing of newly acquired terrorist acts (as exhibited by Fouday Sankoh and Charles Taylor and lately in Mali, Meredith (2005).

**Unattractive to Business and Foreign Investment:** Leadership contestation in Africa generates a lot of political conflicts that heat up both

domestic and international political environment. It is the negative/consequential effects of leadership contestation from divisive and polarised polity where presumed opponents are persecuted that leads to violent demonstration. Thus, attempt by incumbent power to curb perceived political enemies resulted in clamp down from where low intensity warfare, militancy and insurgency emanates. Increase in the rate of intra-state political conflicts with its attendant political instability which prevent long term economic and development planning that makes Africa to be so labelled as ‘the most difficult and unpredictable place to transact business’ thus prevent and affect amount or level of foreign direct investment that can be attracted into the continent of Africa as no investor will want to put their investment in an unpredictable and solvent political and economic environment, Ekweremandu(2018).

**Exposure to Organized Crime:** Low intensity warfare experienced from leadership contestation in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali and Cote d’Ivoire has left sour taste of insecurity not only in host states but in the whole West Africa sub-region. Its full development to civil wars in these countries gave birth to other sinister tactics that exposed many modern states in Africa continent to international organized crimes (such as gun running, human trafficking, sea pirate, gang rape, arson, ethnic cleansing) and above all wide circulation of arms and ammunition that made socio-political environment to be completely unsafe for both domestic and international business. Political conflicts from leadership contestation exposed children to hazardous life of war zone such as child soldierhood, who were brutally indoctrinated with little or no military training or knowledge about international law on war. Some of these child soldiers are reckless, merciless and dreaded with guns. The menace of these criminal acts constitutes problems which many African states are battling with after the civil war is over, most especially arms, narcotic and human trafficking. It accentuate the process of small and light arms proliferation in Africa continent, this caused African political environment to be highly saturated with all sorts of weapons



and fire arms, some of these arms because of its easy accessibility falls into the wrong hands of non-state actors like terrorist groups and this emboldens their nefarious activities that make human lives more insecure and expose people to technically unmitigated attacks from people who possess these fire arms (even the armed robbers, kidnappers and ethnic militias). Easy accessibility to arms aided in promotion of fratricidal wars in the continent. Leadership contestation in Africa has created fertile ground for the emergence of ethnic militia and dreaded extremist religious terrorism whose doctrine, belief and ideology are counterproductive to the overall well-being of a secular state, Obasanjo (2000), Meredith (2005).

**Bad International Image:** Perennial political conflicts from leadership contestation that create atmosphere of insecurity has earned African continent bad international image and reputation as the most unsafe place to do business because of scourge of war, thus while other continent are showcasing new achievements in the areas of scientific breakthrough, economic improvement, Africa keep on feeding the world with revulsive images of savagery to the world,(Obasanjo,2000; Ekweremandu,2018). Thus, leadership contestation degenerating to the level of political conflicts and insecurity is a disincentive to foreign direct investment and portfolio investment. Political conflicts have also made Africa to be the best home for instituting organized crimes where human trafficking reign supreme, drug courier is prominent, gun running is rampant, in fact sub-Saharan Africa ranked among the highest among areas that is highly saturated with small and light arms used to foment asymmetric war. Perennial political conflicts made political leaders to spend billions of dollars on security either to fight insurgency emanating from political conflicts or to suppress their perceived political adversaries. Political conflicts have turned Africa continent to an impoverished continent as many states substituted development with security. Fighting create disrupted economy, refugees, displaced people, destroys farmland, produced abandoned children, close schools and generates large amount of unemployed youths which provides fertile ground

for poverty and its sinister partner-militancy and insurgency from extremist religious terrorist group.

**Destructive of Productive Economic Base:** Loss of state resources (both human and material in Congo DR, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger and Sudan) during the political conflicts that emanates from leadership contestation as war and insecurity leads to killings of human beings which are the best and highest quality resources from the continent of Africa. Destruction of productive economic base of state which is agriculture and educational institution, killing of women and children which are socio-cultural institution leading to destruction of family values embedded in African culture. Political conflicts from leadership contestation have turned back wheels of national progress and economic development of African continent by many centuries. Little infrastructure provided are destroyed in the cause of raging political conflicts and funds meant for socio-economic development are diverted to prosecution and procurement of weapons and military hardware leaving developmental issues to suffer. The higher the level of underdevelopment the higher the level of poverty, the higher the level of poverty the higher the risk of nation serving as base for recruitment and training of terrorist suicide squad.

**Divisive Ethnic Nationalism:** In Africa, Democratic Party politics, electoral process and leadership contestation has pitched African elites in fierce political fight which intermittently propped up intrastate conflicts. Preponderance of intrastate conflicts in a divisive ethnic-nationalism political environment has prevent sustainable state integration and nation-building that can facilitate emergence of cohesive African elites that can serve as standard bearers for gauging performance of political leadership. Absence of cohesive Africa elites to check-mate emerging political leaders leads to authoritarian leadership and nepotistic politics which accentuate complacency breed mismanagement and poverty in the state. Continuous increase in poverty profile creates rooms for emergence and festering of

insurgency and extremist religious terrorists and terrorism. Leadership not only divide most African elites to an irreconcilable parts, it also engender ethnic politics that generates political conflicts that makes insecurity part and parcel of African states political features.

### **Nexus between Leadership Contestation and Insecurity in West Africa.**

There is a great linkage between leadership contestation and insecurity in West Africa in particular and Africa continent in general. It is the leadership contestation between Patrice Lumumba and Moise Tshombe as well as the leadership contestation between Mobutu and Desire Kabila in Congo DR that has upturned the country from secured and peaceful state to volatile and ever combustive state that is currently causing waves of insecurity in the central Africa region. Leadership contestation between Augustus Neto/Dos Santos and Jonah Savimbi in Angola exposed that part of Africa to human insecurity where landmines and assorted arms were daily multiplying until the death of principal actor in person of Savimbi that when many Angolans had paid supreme price.

Gafaar Nimeri and John Garang leadership contestation has put Sudan in security dilemma before Omar el-Basir promotion of Arab sentiment to support his political agenda. Human insecurity was raised to the highest level when Sudanese Arabs decided to eliminate virtually all the Negroid Africans in the Sudanese state. The Janjaweed as Arab ethnic militias carried out ethnic cleansing to create room for presumed Islamic state where Sharia will reign supreme. *Arabization* of Sudan present opportunity for the extremist religious insurgent to have firm base in Sudan from where they are able to operate in other part of Africa most especially West African states to create insecurity. Despite the separation of Southern Sudanese from their kin in the Northern Sudan, leadership contestation between the two principle characters had created an atmosphere of insecurity in the present Southern Sudan (Ani & Esheya, 2014). Leadership contestation had greatly affected security situation in Somalia. Inability of Somalis elites to accept one of their kinds as substantive political leader despite the fact all of them in Somalia

are of the same ethnic groups created protracted political conflicts that collapsed the state's institutions, leads to failed state status and made Somalia leading place in sea pirate, drug courier, and proliferation of small and light arms.

Leadership contestation is the basis of insecurity situation in Chad, elite political contest between Goukoni Waddeye and Hisne Habre was the genesis of political conflict that was capitalised on by Col. Gadhafi's expansionary foreign policy to sponsored one of the contenders by providing arms and logics to prosecute the war (Ani & Ejiaga, 2015). Crisis in Chad had great impact on security situation in Africa as many of the trained itinerant militias are today extremist religious terrorists causing havocs in many West African states. Liberia used to be relatively a peaceful and serene environment until emergence of Samuel Doe and his authoritarian leadership that believes in annihilation of perceived political opponents which breeds ethnic militias and low intensity war that degenerated into civil war. It was leadership contestation between Samuel Doe and Thomas Quiwomkpa informs of coup attempt on Does' government that 'brings out the beast in Doe' by resorting to ethnic politics and political witch-hunting of perceived contender for leadership position. Thus, people like Sirleaf Helen and Charles Taylor became prime target of Samuel Doe. Persecution of presumed opponents (enemies) resulted into arm struggles between Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor and this provide golden opportunity for Gaddafi expansionary foreign policy through provision of logistics and military hard wares to Samuel Doe's opponents.

Sierra Leone is direct recipient of regional insecurity from Liberia; the country serves as conduit pipe through which arms were sent to Liberia. Foday Sankoh and his merchants of death took advantage of such opportunity to destabilise Sierra Leone. Political conflicts in Sierra Leone not only threatened to collapse the national state of Sierra Leone but was gradually undermining the regional security that prompt regional intervention in the political conflict. Arm struggles between these political

elites generates insecurity witnessed in West Africa until it became unbearable before Economic Community Of West African States created ECOMOG to curtailed the excesses of this insecurity in the region. Cote d'Ivoire is a good example of stable polity in West Africa until the demise of Felix Boigny which created leadership vacuum which could not be quickly filled as the state has never witnessed changing of leadership before power. Attempt to individually and unilaterally take undue advantage of situation created leadership contestation among Ivorian elites. Ivorian political crisis created serious regional insecurity in West Africa as many small and light weapons were deposited into the country for easy accessibility of factional groups which were used by insurgents to cause mayhem.

### **Recommendation and Conclusion**

Political conflicts and democratic violence is a two-way action that requires both the initiator and collaborators. The initiators are Africa elites that provide indoctrinations, finance and logistics to carry out violence while the collaborators are the ordinary citizens who gullibly fall in to the scheme of African elites and thereby become willing tools to carry out violence in the cause of leadership contestation. Both of them need reorientation about politics and democratic processes. While it is important to educate about the elite' negative consequences of political conflicts and democratic violence, there is need to reduce amount of glamour and pecks attached to political offices in Africa. The collaborators need a viable economic system that permit realisation of individual set objectives. The basis of being willing collaborators is abject poverty, therefore, reduction in poverty level will reduce divisive ethnic politics that breeds democratic violence, elites must also be made to discuss policy based issues and not to wipe up ethnic sentiments. The collaborators must be made to differentiate between tribal solidarity and tribalism. African political elites must evolve a new paradigm, philosophy and approach to leaders and leadership contestation. The philosophy and contesting for leadership position as wrestling match where a contestant must be defeated by all possible means must be discarded; rather

aspiration to leadership position should be seen as competitive game which can be won by any of the contestants. Emerging African elites should see leadership position as test of one's ability to serve humanity and not an avenue to show how brutal one is, or create imperial presidency through corrupt political culture of ethno-religious cards. African elites must also imbibe good democratic virtues such as tolerance of oppositions, make room for intelligible policy debates and allowed the will of electorate to prevail without incitement or intimidation. Imbibe a new philosophy of seen leadership as opportunity to good record for posterity to judge.

Conclusively, for leadership contestation as the basis of intra-state political conflicts that generates regional insecurity in West Africa to subside. Instituting good governance and excellent democratic values by the active regional organization (like ECOWAS) with strong economic, legal and military power to compel obedience on the part of state political leader that violate agreed protocol on democratic ethics (such as rejection of Faure Eyedema as Togolese President unless he is democratically elected) will help in combating state fracture and insecurity in West Africa. To realise perfect atmosphere of peace and security in the continent of Africa great emphasis should be place on legitimacy of leaders in attaining leadership position. This legitimacy must be devoid of corrupt or filthy political culture of ethnic, intimidation, incumbency and religion. This is because the basis of peace in a state is legitimacy, where leader secured willingly the right to lead from majority based on his proposed manifesto, Charisma and experience, ability to govern and command respect from segment of the state will be high. Thus, tendency to disrespect or refusal to recognise right to rule will minimise. Therefore, to prevent political conflicts and insecurity in west Africa sub-region securing legitimacy by emerging political leaders is a must and sanctity that must be upheld by the regional and continental organizations,

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND  
ELECTORAL VIOLENCE  
IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The role of social media in modern day politics since Barack Obama explored it to navigate his way into the White House in 2008 cannot be overemphasised. With Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Youtube and Instagram now on the palms and laps of both politicians and electorates on most parts of the globe, traditional and mainstream media no more dictate the outcome of polls as it was in the past. Just as everyone is now content creator, so too those with access to the internet are potential message receivers. The impact of the social media on electoral politics has since moved beyond the United States to even the remotest part of the world with its negativities being adjudged to be on a very high side. With the introduction of the General System for Mobile communications (GSM) in Nigeria, many Nigerians joined the world in engaging the various social media tools for socio-political and economic benefits. This paper attempts unravel how social media have been used to perpetrate and exacerbate electoral violence in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study, through the use of desktop analysis employs resource mobilisation and gate-keeping media theories as a guiding compass. It was discovered at the end that electoral violence has heightened in Kogi State with the use of the various social media tools exemplified earlier. The said violence is being instigated and aggravated through: electoral irregularities, fake news, hate speech, phishing

attacks, cyber-bullying and their likes. It is on this note recommended that concerned stakeholders in the electoral process such as the Electoral Management Body, Government and Civil Society should step-up efforts which discourage the use of social media as a tool for perpetrating electoral violence in Kogi State and Nigeria at large.

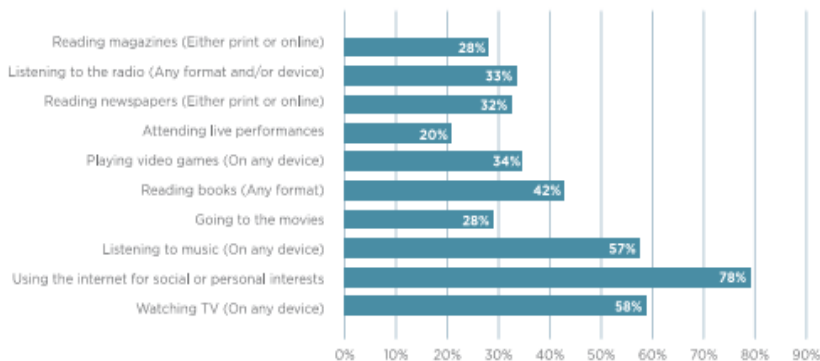
**KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Political Violence, Fake-News, Hate Speech

## **1.0 Introduction**

Unlike decades ago when traditional or mainstream media were the only platforms for political communication, social media are fast becoming an irresistible and indomitable mode of transmitting information between and among politicians, electorates and other stakeholders in the electoral process. While making its strategic plan 2017-2020 known to the public, Nigeria's foremost electoral management body the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (2017:31) revealed how Facebook alone has over 16 million active users as against a paltry 4 million households (out of 37 million Television set owners) who according to the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission accessed digital television (The Cable, 2015). Also, information accessed by the BBC from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) says while by July 2019, there were 122.7 million active internet users in the country, only about 24 million of the subscribers were active on social media.

The fact that the internet and social media are now more employed to dissect and disseminate information than the traditional medium was corroborated by a study carried out by the Business-Day Research and Intelligence Unit in 2018 (see Figure 1). While it was observed there that those who utilise other means of assessing information such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines range from 20 - 58%, those who patronise the new media are over 70% of the population.

**Figure 1: The Use of Internet for Social and Personal Activities**



Business-Day Research and Intelligence Unit (2018)

The insight above speaks much about the possible impact of the new media in the world of politics. Just like the (INEC) which was earlier cited, Ayeni (2019) observed that social media has become a prominent and a powerful forum for voter enlightenment, political activism and fastest means of information dissemination. Any individual in today’s Nigeria without a social media account is seen especially by younger and enlightened population of the public as being obsolete. Since the social media have no doubt become part and parcel of the average Nigerian citizen as even those who cannot access them are assisted by the subscribers, it can be used effectively to advance such political causes such as the targeting of voters, passing bulk and discreet messages as well as moulding opinions.

Although, elections and electioneering are traditionally known to be crises ridden in Nigeria, the Crisis Group (2018) decried the widespread violence which has undermined recent elections in the country. The authors particularly noted that the 2003 election cycle witnessed unprecedented violence in the political affairs of some states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Kogi state is has been identified as one of the high risk areas in the

country. Elesho (2019) reported that there were more than 70 reported cases of election violence during the November 16th Governorship/Kogi West Senatorial District election in the State. Most of the cases were said to be of critical dimension.

Previous election cycles were not violence-free either as the chairman of the State Independent National Electoral Commission, Philip Olorunnipa, was reportedly murdered on March 7 2004 same way the PDP candidate for the chairmanship of Bassa local government, Luke Shigaba was killed few days before (Human Rights Watch, 2004). According to the Human Rights Watch (2004), several people in Kogi State were killed and others injured during the 2003 elections. It was reported for instance that in Idah local government, a prominent ANPP member called Salifu was shot dead while trying to carry away a ballot box. In Okene local government, fighting between PDP and ANPP supporters started early in the morning of April 12, and supporters of both parties used arms to hijack election materials, both in the days preceding the elections and on the election day itself. A human rights activist was told that at least two people were shot dead on April 12. Fighting between PDP and ANPP supporters was also reported on April 19 in Ogori-Magongo local government, as well as other locations in the state (HRW, 2004). The author also reported that polls had to be halted at several polling stations on the day of election because of violence and intimidation of various kinds.

It is interesting to point out at this juncture that prior to the 2003 election, polls conducted for the purpose of determining who clinches political power were relatively peaceful when compared to those of post 2003 and beyond. Having been created in 1991 by the military regime of Late General Sani Abacha, Kogi State was only opportune to witness two major election cycles (in 1991 and 1999) before the 2003 general elections. Unlike the 2003 and post-2003 polls in which the social media were and are being agog with widespread information that depicts the high rate of electoral violence in the State, the 1993 and 1999 electoral cycles symbolise years of electoral

sportsmanship and political tranquillity. What actually makes the difference was the introduction in 2001 of the General System for Mobile communications (GSM) in Nigeria under the administrative watch of President Olusegun Obasanjo. The feat puts cell phones on the palms of so many Nigerians that the dissemination of information became more liberalised through text messages and later social media tools like: 2go, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The need therefore to interrogate the relationship between social media usage and political violence in the electoral politics of Kogi State becomes imperative. Situated in the North central part of Nigeria, Kogi State is purposively selected for this study following worries by the Electoral Management Body – INEC and election observers about the high level of violence which have always characterised its polls (see Punch, 2019). The paper is hereunder structured in the following order: while the clarification of concepts and the context of the work follow this introduction, the theoretical framework which serves as the compass directing our analysis is then extricated. This is followed by the epicentre of the write-up subtitled Social Media – Electoral Violence Nexus in Kogi State. As usual, the conclusion and recommendations followed suit to end the paper.

## **2.0 Conceptualising Social Media and Electoral Violence**

Defining social media may not be as easy as the concept sounds. Obar & Wildman (2015) made this clear when they observed that the variety of evolving stand-alone and built-in social media services makes its definition a daunting task. This notwithstanding, Aichner & Jacob (2015) lists 13 types of social media within which researchers could observe and extricate some common features which could help them frame-up some minimally acceptable definitions. The social media types are: blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products/services review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social

networks, video sharing, and virtual worlds. It is in this light that the Merriam-Webster defines social media in 2019 as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, pictures and videos as well as other contents.

Social Media according to Okoro & Nwafor (2013) are those Internet-based tools and services which allow users to engage with each other, generate content, distribute, and search for information online. In other words, the social media are interactive web-based media platforms that offer citizens opportunity and place to connect, share opinions, experiences, views, contacts, knowledge, expertise, as well as other things like job and career tips. Following controversies with the idea that social media can be defined simply by their ability to bring people together – suggesting that fundamentally different technologies such as the telegraph and telephone are also social media (*Schejter & Tirosh, 2015*), Obar & Wildman (2015) who carried out a review of the prominent literature in the area identified four common features unique to contemporary social media services. For them, Social media are Web 2.0 Internet-based applications, they feature User-Generated Contents (UGC), the users create service-specific profiles for the site or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization, and they facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

### **Differences between Social Media and Traditional Media**

Users usually access social media services via web-based technologies on desktops and laptops, or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets). As users engage with these electronic services, they create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities, and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, participate and modify user-generated content or self-curated content posted online. Networks formed through social media

change the way groups of people interact and communicate or stand on issues. Social media differ from paper-based media (e.g., magazines and newspapers) and traditional electronic media such as TV broadcasting, Radio broadcasting in many ways, including quality Agichtein, Castillo, Donato, Gionis, Mishne (2008), reach, frequency, interactivity, usability, immediacy, and performance. Social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (many sources to many receivers) Pavlik & MacIntoch, John and Shawn (2015). This is in contrast to traditional media which operates under a mono-logic transmission model (one source to many receivers), such as a newspaper which is delivered to many subscribers, or a radio station which broadcasts the same programs to an entire city. Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and its associated Facebook Messenger), Youtube, WeChat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and WhatsApp.

To throw more light on the variances between Social Media and Traditional Media of Mass Communication, Apuke (2016) highlight some of the properties that help describe the differences between them as follows:

1. **Expediency:** social media are more easily accessible at a very low cost compared to the traditional media in which the production are typically government and/or corporate (privately owned) which requires consumers to sometimes pay for what they watch, but social media could even be accessed from a mobile device.
2. **Usability:** Traditional media requires special skills and training while social media production requires modest reinterpretation of existing skills which implies that anyone with access can operate the means of social media production.
3. **Feedback:** Feedback in Traditional media is delayed while social media's feedback is instant.
4. **Permanence:** Traditional media such as magazine article when printed and distributed cannot be altered; changes cannot be made to the same



article but social media can be altered almost at every moment via comments or editing.

5. **Interactivity:** in social media users have an opportunity to or interact easily; creating their own material, customizing viewing to their own wishes, with much greater choice compared with the passive consumption and ‘take it or leave it’ features of the traditional media.
6. **Dispersal.** Social media unlike traditional media have become less centralized and more adapted to individual choices, with a huge growth of media products of all kinds, which have become a part of everyday life.
7. **The production of media content** has changed since the advent of social media unlike the traditional media that is reserved to media professionals for the media content and broadcasting, social media gives ample chances to individuals to make their own videos and post on the Internet.

Despite being a recent phenomenon of modern human society, the use of the various social media tools/platforms exemplified above has come with a mix of gains and pains. On the positive side is the fact that the new media have helped to improve the individual's sense of connectedness with real or online communities and have been an effective communication platform for corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, political parties, and governments. In politics, social media have been championed as allowing anyone with an Internet connection to become a content creator (Wellman, 2012) and empowering their users (Mansell, 2016). The younger generations are becoming more involved in politics due to the increase of political news posted on social media. The new media were influential in the widespread attention given to the Arab Spring (see Kirkpatrick, 2011; Anderson & Technica, 2011). As Wellman equally noted, people used Facebook to organize meetings and protests during the Tunisian revolution in 2011. The internet has really created channels of communication which play a key role in circulating news, and social media

have the power to change not just the message, but the dynamics of political corruption, values, as well as the dynamics of conflict in politics.

Pessina (2014) identified four ways in which social media play significant role in modern day conflict and violence. First, it allows information to be framed in mainstream platforms which limits communication; second, it enables news stories to quickly go viral and later can lead to misinterpretations that can cause conflict; third, strategies and the adaption of social media has caused a change in focus amongst leaders from administrative dynamics to new media technology; and lastly technological advancements in communication have increased the power of persuasion leading to corruption, scandals, and violence on social media platforms.

Before embarking on what electoral violence entails, Birch & Muchlinski (2018) noted how elections are in theory democratic means of resolving disputes and making collective decisions, yet too often force is employed to distort the electoral process. Violence in elections or electoral violence is thus any coercive force, directed towards electoral actors and/or objects that occur in the context of competition at the polls. This can occur before, during or after elections and it can target any of the electoral stakeholders like the umpire, candidate, an activist, a poll worker, election observers, journalists and voters. At the social media level, some of the methods of achieving electoral outcomes through coercion include but not limited to: fake news, hate speech, phishing, cyber bullying and outright manipulation of figures. Understanding each of these concepts would help our overall comprehension of the thrust of this discourse.

Fake news which is also known as junk news, pseudo-news, or hoax news (Bartolotta, 2016 & Wemple, 2016) is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda which consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media (print and broadcast) or online social media (Tufekci, 2018 and Leonhardt & Thompson, 2017). Fake news is written and published

usually with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/or gain financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership. The relevance of fake news has increased in post-truth politics. Easy access to online advertisement revenue, increased political polarization and the popularity of social media, primarily the Facebook News Feed have all been implicated in the spread of fake news, which competes with legitimate news stories. Hostile government actors have also been implicated in generating and propagating fake news, particularly during elections (Hunt, 2016). The term is also at times used to cast doubt upon legitimate news from perceived opposition in what is today known as the lying press. During and after his presidential campaign and election, Donald Trump according to Lind (2018) popularized the concept of "fake news" in this sense when he used it to refer to the negative press coverage of himself.

Hate speech as contained in the Encyclopedia Britannica (2016), is a statement intended to demean and brutalize another or the use of cruel and derogatory language on the basis of real or alleged membership in a social group. it is a speech which attacks a person or a group on the basis of protected attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. As Herz & Molnar (2012) rightly observed, there has been much debate over freedom of speech, hate speech and hate speech legislation. The laws of some countries describe hate speech as speech, gestures, conduct, writing, or displays that incite violence or prejudicial actions against a group or individuals on the basis of their membership in the group, or which disparage or intimidate a group or individuals on the basis of their membership in the group. The law may identify a group based on certain characteristics. In some countries, hate speech is not a legal term. While in some countries like the United States, hate speech is constitutionally protected, there have been attempts in recent times by states like Nigeria to enact laws which allow a victim of hate speech to seek redress.

Cyber-bullying or online-bullying is a form of harassment using electronic means. Just like the literal understanding of bullying which is nothing short of treating someone in a cruel, insulting, threatening, or aggressive manner or using languages or behaviours which messes-over someone harshly or unfairly, cyber-bullying is usually aimed at frightening, hurting or threatening the target victim. It has become increasingly common in recent times especially among the younger generation (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett, 2008). Cyber-bullying is when someone abuse or harass others on the internet, particularly on social media sites. Behaviours which qualify as cyber-bullying include posting rumours, threats, sexual remarks, a victims' personal information, or pejorative labels (i.e. hate speech). Bullying or harassment can be identified by repeated behaviour and intent to harm. Victims may experience lower self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation, and a variety of negative emotional responses, including being scared, frustrated, angry, and depressed (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) describes cyber-bullying as the process of using the Internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person (Chapin, 2014). Internet trolling is a common form of bullying over the Internet in an online community (such as in online gaming or social media) in order to elicit a reaction, disruption, or for someone's own personal amusement (Diaz, 2016). Cyber-stalking is another form of bullying or harassment that uses electronic communications to stalk a victim; this may pose a credible threat to the victim (Smith, 2008). Despite these varying conceptions of cyber-bullying, a more frequently used definition of it according to Moreno (2014) is that which sees it as an aggressive, intentional act or behaviour which is carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. Cyber-bullying is often similar to traditional bullying, with some notable distinctions. Victims of cyber-bullying may not know the identity of their bully, or why the bully is targeting them. The harassment can have wide-reaching effects on the victim, as the content used to harass the victim

can be spread and shared easily among many people and often remains accessible long after the initial incident (Pettalia, Levin & Dickinson, 2013).

It would not amount to an exaggeration or fake news to identify violence as one of the characteristic feature of elections in the polity called Nigeria. Electoral violence has been observed as one of the strategies employed by Nigerian political elite during elections. As Olowojolu, Rasak, Ake, Ogundele & Afolayan (2019) have rightly observed, desperate and power drunk politicians often sponsor unemployed youths and stark illiterates to carry out assaults on their perceived political opponents with a view to manipulating election results to their own advantage. This is not a recent phenomenon as since the Independence era, elections in the country have been characterized by not only the high scale of electoral malpractices, money politics and the use of ethno-religious divide which have recently saturated the literature. To a very large extent, electoral violence has stood over time as a major trend which has mesmerised the nation's democracy. Although some noble works have been carried out to situate a whole lots of factors such as the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, winner takes all syndrome and electoral frauds as the causes of the increasing rate of electoral violence in Nigeria (see Mercy Corps, 2019 and Obakhedo, 2011), the social media arena have unconsciously been neglected in this regard.

Today, the internet has created channels of communication which play key role in circulating news as well as disseminating information through the social media among its subscribers. This to a very large extent has changed the dynamics of both political corruption and political conflicts (Singer & Brookings, 2018). Through the use of social media in election processes, global conflict, and extreme politics around the world has become less private and are now susceptible to the public perceptions.

While fake news, hate speech and cyber-bullying may constitute some of the most common types of violence perpetrated on the social media, it is imperative to however note that not all of their components are aimed at achieving electoral objectives even though they are circulated to influence certain individuals and groups. Take for example, the news stories reading ‘Woman delivers bible and baby in Osun’ on legit.ng (December 10, 2015); ‘Two babies born with a bible and a qur’an’ on Youtube (September 12, 2016) and ‘Baby born holding a Quran ... in Lagos’ (May 10, 2012) do not all have any electoral impact. But for violent offences which are aimed at achieving electoral objectives, the work of Nwolise (2007) in which the dimensions of electoral violence were categorised into three (physical, psychological and structural) with their componential examples well outline would be apt for this discourse (see Figure 2 below).

**Figure 2: Dimensions and Components of Electoral Violence**

Dimensions	Components
Physical Violence	Physical assaults on individuals during campaign, elections and when election results are released
	Assassination of political opponents or people perceived as a threat to one’s political ambition
	Burning down of public or opponent’s property and cars among others
	Shooting, shootouts
	Killing of individuals
	Partisan harassment by security agents, arrests, forceful dispersal of rallies or shooting, wounding or killing of people
	Kidnapping and hostage taking
	Bombing of infrastructure
	Forceful disruption by thugs at political and campaign rallies
	Destruction of ballot boxes and ballot papers from polling agents
	Free for all fight
	Threats against and harassment by security agents of opponents of the ruling regime or party, which create political apathy

Psychological Violence	Shoot on sight orders that breed fear in voters
	Terror inflicted by Political assassinations which makes people scared to participate in politics or elections
	Publication or broadcast of abusive or insulting, or intimidating material or advertorial
	Threat to life through phone calls, text messages, etc.
Structural Violence	Coercion of citizens by government to register or vote or be denied certain national facilities
	Exclusionary acts and policies
	Unequal opportunities for political parties and candidates
	Deliberate changes in dates, venue or times of events to the advantages of others
	Partisan delimitation of electoral constituencies and location of polling stations/booths
	Excessive fees for the collection of party nomination forms
	Absence of free campaign
	Reliance on money and brute force instead of moral integrity and competence
	Restrains imposed on voters
	Use of the incumbency factor to give undue advantage to some candidates
	Announcement of false or fraudulent results
	Lengthy delays in announcing election results
	Absence of adequate voting materials and electoral result forms
	Delay in voting
	Absence of electoral officers from polling booth at an appropriate time
Partisan behaviour of police and other security agents	
Discriminatory acts and policies	

**Source: Nwolise (2007)**

Physical violence such as forceful dispersal of rallies, assaults on individuals during campaign, election proper and when election results have been released, assassination of political opponents and partisan harassment by

security agents are now ordered by mere sending messages to those expected or designated to carry out such acts. While the publication or broadcast of abusive or intimidating material or advertorial including threat to life through phone calls/text messages are carried out to demoralise political opponents or adversaries, some social media platforms are deliberately created for the purpose of disseminating information that would suit a particular party or candidate.

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework for the Analysis**

Both the Resource Mobilisation and Gate Keeping Theories have been adopted to chart the analytical course of this discourse. Literarily, resource mobilization is the process of getting resources from resource provider(s), using different mechanisms, to implement the pre-determined goal(s) of an individual, a group or an organisation (Seltzer, 2014).It deals in acquiring the needed resources in a timely, cost-effective manner. Resource mobilisation advocates having the right type of resource, at the right time, at right price with making right use of acquired resources thus ensuring optimum utilization of the same.

As a theory, resource mobilisation emphasises the ability of members of a group or movement to both acquire resources and use the same resources to mobilize people towards accomplishing the group's or movement's interests. The theory according to Buechler (1995), contrasts with the traditional collective behaviour theory which sees social movements as deviant and irrational. It instead views them as rational social institutions, created and populated by social actors with a goal of taking political action. According to the resource mobilization theory, a core, group in a social movement organization works towards bringing money, supporters, attention of the media, alliances with those in power, and refining the organizational structure. The theory revolves around the central notion of how messages of social change are spread from person to person and group to group. The conditions needed for a social movement are the notion that grievances



shared by multiple individuals and organizations, ideologies about social causes and how to go about reducing those grievances (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

The resource mobilization (RM) theory was developed in the early 1970s to challenge social breakdown and relative deprivation theories that identify individual grievances as the primary stimulus for collective action. The theory comes in two strands which are the economic version as popularised by the likes of John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald; and the political spearheaded by Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam. called political process theory (Kendall, 2006). While the economic version explains collective action as a function of economic factors arguing that grievances are not sufficient to explain the creation or execution of socio-political actions, the political version holds the notion that political struggle among groups is the cause of actions taken by them. The economic strand particularly maintains that access to and control over resources determines the actions of social beings. Both the economic and political strands of the theory are important as far as this discourse is concerned. Taking clue from the Arab Spring which originated in Tunisia in December 2010, one would understand how the political struggle spread through Egypt, Syria, and Yemen through the utilisation of the social media to spread social action messages. Both the ownership and control of internet and social media gadgets as well as the socio-political differences between the state and the populace played a great deal in the outcome of the imbroglio. While the activists in those countries were communicating with each other through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to coordinate protests, keep tabs on each other and spread the social change messages, the governments on their own part gate-keep by working to censor the media as well as cut off their states from the rest of the world by severing the internet (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). This brings us to the gate-keeping media theory which incidentally is the second theory adopted for this discourse.

As a concept, gate-keeping is the process through which information is filtered for dissemination, whether for publication, broadcasting, the Internet, or some other mode of communication. The academic theory of gate-keeping is founded in multiple fields of study, including communication arts, journalism, and political science (Barzilai-Nahon 2009). The theory is said to have been brought to limelight by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1943. Gatekeeping occurs at all levels of the media structure—from a reporter deciding which sources are chosen to include in a story to editors deciding which stories are printed or covered, and includes media outlet owners and even advertisers. Park (1922:328) explains the processes involved in gate-keeping the contents of the media in the following words:

...out of all of the events that happen and are recorded every day by correspondents, reporters, and the news agencies, the editor chooses certain items for publication which he regards as more important or more interesting than others. The remainder he condemns to oblivion and the wastebasket. There is an enormous amount of news 'killed' every day.

DeFleur & DeFleur (2009) equally explain the following as the rationale behind gate-keeping as a theory and practice in journalism: First, while exercising their investigative role as a media outfit, they are confronted with very large number of stories brought to their attention on daily basis by reporters, wire services, and a variety of other sources. But due to a number of practical considerations, only a limited amount of time and space are available in any medium for its daily presentations of the news to its audience. The remaining space must be devoted to advertising and other content. Second is the fact that within the news outfits, there exists a new perspective, a subculture that includes a complex set of criteria for judging a particular news story – criteria based on economic needs of the medium, organisational policy, definitions of newsworthiness, conceptions of the

nature of relevant audience, and beliefs about fourth estate obligations of journalists. The news perspective and its complex criteria are used by editors, news directors, and other personnel who select a limited number of news stories for presentation to the public. They then encode them in ways such that the requirements of the medium and the tastes of the audience are met. This explains how personnel in the news organisation become gatekeepers, letting some stories pass through the system just as they keep others out. While the above may be largely possible in the operations of the traditional media outfits, this may be a herculean task on the social media where almost everyone with access to computer and internet is a content creator and information disseminator making censorship and gate-keeping difficult.

With this difficulty in censoring the contents emanating from the social media, its propensity to harbour or churn out information which can provoke violence is very high. This is the bridge adjoining the resource mobilisation and the gate-keeping theories which have been jointly adopted for the analytical purpose of this paper. Once the resources such as finances, gadgets, human capital, access to the internet and operational techniques are available, the desired information or news item can be disseminated.

#### **4.0 Social Media – Electoral Violence Nexus in Kogi State**

As stated earlier, Kogi State which is located within the North-central axis of Nigeria, has always been in the news for so many reasons owing to its strategic location and situation. It links the northern part of the country to the south just as it links the southern part to the north. It is one of the federating states most proximate to the Federal Capital – Abuja. Like Nigeria, politics and governance of Kogi state have been shredded with controversies owing to numerous factors amongst which are the politics of ethnic, religious and other groups' interests as well as the failure of the ruling elite to meticulously harness the abundant resources inherent in and accruing to the state to develop the enclave. It is not an exaggeration therefore to regard Kogi as one

of the most volatile states in Nigeria in terms of electoral politics (see Akinfeyinwa, 2019 and Punch, 2019).

Prominent among the social media networks that have been explored to circulate information which instigates electoral violence are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram. Various online socio political groups have been created on Facebook and WhatsApp by politicians and/or their supporters for the purpose of achieving political ends. Notable among these groups are: Kogi Political Platform; Emerging Leaders Forums; Kogi decides; Ebira Online Media; Kogi Central Eagle Eyes; Kogi Central Youths for Progress; Kogi Central and Kogi West Movement for Power Shift; Kogi East, West and Central Forum; Okun Youths Forum and Okun Political Platform. Others equally worthy of note are: Natasha Akpoti Support Team; Yahaya Bello Ambassadors; I Stand with Governor Yahaya Bello; Sen. Dino Melaye Support Group; Sen. Smart Adeyemi Solidarity Network; Yahaya Bello Campaign Group in Diaspora; and Audu/Faleke Political Group.

Through these online social media platforms politicians and their supporters groups engage in activities that have bred disaffections which result into electoral violence. Prominent among these activities are the: creation and broadcast of fake news and hate speeches; posting and circulation of offensive materials; and impersonation and cloning of Social Media Accounts.

#### **4.1. Creation and broadcast of fake news and hate speeches**

It is obvious today that the social media has provided the platform for fake news and hate speeches to circulate more easily and to a greater audience than ever before. Hence, restraints imposed on voters which discourage them from coming out to exercise their franchise (even when such orders do not emanate from constituted authorities) and announcements of false or fraudulent results which spreads easily through the social media have largely increased voter apathy among the electorate. Even, the absence of electoral

officers from polling booths at an appropriate time as well as lengthy delays in announcing election results which constitute structural violence with psychological implications on the people have heightened in this era of social media communication. With threat messages, fake news and hate speeches being easily accessed by electoral officials most of whom are ad hoc staffs and who do not know much about the terrain they are posted to work, the best bet is for them to rationally carry out acts and actions which do not put their lives and interests on the edge.

Such news reports as “Nigeria decides: voter, policeman shot dead in Kogi” as reported depicted by Punch (2019) and which within the tinkle of an eye is on the devices of social media subscribers, inhibited many people from performing their civic responsibilities. In fact, most people have stayed away owing to this type of clues. Hence it is common to hear about late arrival of electoral officials and materials at polling stations. This is to enable them to gauge how safe the environment is before coming out to carry out their duties. Fake election results which do not emanate from INEC have at various times been circulated by some of these online platforms and digested by the innocent public hook, line and sinker. While for instance, before the 2015 gubernatorial election in the state was concluded, some groups had posted online that the APC governorship candidate – Prince Abubakar Audu had won against the position of INEC that the election was inconclusive, violent skirmishes erupted in some parts of the states like Anyigba, Idah, Kabba and Okene among the supporters of the two leading contestants.

This information on how the use of social media has provoked electoral violence in Kogi state was corroborated by the Centre for Democracy and Development (2019) when in a press briefing it pointed out that Politicians engage in fake news to achieve political ends. According to the statement, most news on the disqualification of candidates of rival parties, early election results, images of thugs arrested for snatching of ballot papers were all

peddled on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are hoaxes mainly intended at delegitimising INEC and the entire electoral process (see Premium Times, 2019).

Adaoyichie (2017) who covered the proceedings of a Kogi Social Media Summit which was held in Lokoja reported how discusses which naturally would be offensive to the State government form the narratives on Facebook, WhatsApp and their likes as at the time the summit was being held. Some of them are ‘Kogi state government is owing its workers between ten and fourteen months salary despite the bailout and two tranches of the Paris Club Refund; Governor Yahaya Bello has not commissioned any road or water projects neither has his government done anything for Kogi people; and under Governor Bello, Kogi has become the worst state in Nigeria’

As the reporter rightly noted, this narratives have to a very large extent affected negatively the image of the state. It is not surprising therefore that some officials of the state government including the governor himself would be stoned or attacked at various locations in the state (see Ogundipe, 2016 and Ososanya, 2019). Again, the speed with which some Youths in Idah quickly mobilised and formed a road block against governor Bello as he was returning from Idah on a tour of road projects flag off in 2017 also show how such mobilisation and attacks would not have been possible if not through the aid of the apparatuses of the new and social media. Other incidences of similar nature are those experienced in Dekina and Ankpa Local Governments where the Police arrest the ruling party’s main opposition party’s campaign officials (see Punch, November 3, 2019 and Itodo in Daily Trust, October 6, 2019).

The Difficulty in monitoring, regulating and sanctioning social media operations is another issue inherent in the use of social media as a means of communication and this has obviously impacted negatively on the electoral politics of Kogi State. Individuals and groups who subscribe to the internet communicate freely on the social media with little or near absence of

monitoring or regulation. Since nobody has ever been prosecuted in the state for making inciting, igniting or indicting comments on the social media, the consequence now is for offensive activities such as: impersonation and cloning of Social Media Accounts; creation and broadcast of fake news and hate speeches; and Posting/circulation of offensive materials to become the norm on the various social media platforms.

#### **4.2 Posting and circulation of offensive materials**

The social media have made it possible for internet subscribers to design, post and circulate whole lots of offensive materials which are known to be psycho-healthily harmful to the targeted person(s). For instance, in the run-up to the 2019 governorship election in Kogi state, an offensive news footage which went viral on the social media allegedly quoted the incumbent Governor Yahaya Bello as saying that with just 6,000 Naira, an average Igala man would sell-out his daughter (see Itodo, 2019). Aside from generating controversy, this singular post on the social media have in no small measure heated the politics of Kogi state along ethnic and regional line as many Igalas expressing their views on the social media have vowed not to forgive the governor for insulting the entire Igala race. Another case of the circulation of offensive materials is a trending caricatured video on Facebook and WhatsApp depicting Senator Dino Melaye flogging Governor Yahaya Bello for failure to deliver the dividends of democracy to the people of Kogi State. This is a typical case of cyber-bullying which can further escalate the rift between the two political rivals.

As Iwok, Ese & Nnakaike (2019) reported, apart from the people killed during the election in Kogi by men alleged to be security officers, Salome Acheju Abuh, women leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Wada/Aro Campaign Council, was killed and set ablaze in her residence, two days after the election. It was alleged that those who carried out the dastardly act were political thugs of a party in the state. They stormed Abuh's residence at Ochadamu in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi and carried out the

barbaric act. Immediately after her murder, the social media became awash with pictures and videos of the incidence. Minutes later attacks and counter attacks between supporters of the two major parties in the state became rampant in places like Ochadamu, Ejule, Anyigba, Ugwolawo, Aloma and Itohe.

Also, while accusing thugs of the ruling APC of killing his nephew during the 2019 election, Dino Melaye, candidate of the PDP in the rerun Kogi West senatorial election, posted tweets in which he shared a video of the young man being laid to rest. He posted thereafter that Juwon – his nephew must avenge his death (see Iwok, Ese & Nnakaike, 2019).

### **4.3 Impersonation and cloning of Social Media Accounts**

One of the major ways in which those who perpetrate violence on or through the social media commit their vices is for them to impersonate and/or clone the social media accounts of other subscribers so as to operate under false cover. For instance, ahead of the November governorship election in Kogi State, the leader of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Youth Frontier, Comrade Austin Okai once asked the Inspector General of Police for protection over an alleged threat to his life by a top official of the Kogi government. According to the complainant, some social media accounts had been cloned using his name in order to implicate him. While pleading with the police chief to disregard any implicating social media message allegedly from him, Mr Okai appealed to the security agency to protect his right to life and free movement within Kogi and across Nigeria. While narrating how the social media had been agog with some nasty WhatsApp and Facebook comments from accounts attributed to him he disowned those moments alluding that accounts were cloned in his name with his pictures deceitfully and criminally attached (Yahaya, 2019).

With the sort of impersonation, cloning as well as operation of fake accounts exemplified above, a lot of violent activities take place on and through the socio media without security operatives knowing the actual brains behind



them. The implication is that, most of the violent electoral offences which were outlined by Nwolise (2007) have in this era of social media observably increased in Kogi state than they were in the past. For instance, physical assaults on individuals during campaign and elections; assassination of political opponents or people perceived as threats to political ambitions; burning down of public or opponent's properties and shooting/shootouts were most prevalent in the state during the 2015 and 2019 general elections (see The Cable, 2019; Azania, 2019) than they were during the polls which ushered in the aborted Third Nigerian Republic.

Today, elections and electioneering are characterised by partisan harassments and arrests by security agents, forceful dispersal of rallies through shooting, wounding or killing of people by thugs at political and campaign rallies (Ani, 2017). Terror is today inflicted on the people by the various political assassinations whose images are posted on the social media. This of course scares away people from participating in the politics of the state. The publication or broadcast of abusive or insulting, or intimidating materials, threat to life through phone calls, text messages and their likes are all prevalent and defy expected sanctions due to opportunities bestowed on the modern society by the social media. While at inception it was difficult for the thugs and their sponsors/principals to get communicated within the shortest possible time, the social media has in recent times made communication easier. It is not news among the populace in Kogi State for instance to reveal for instance that so many political thugs have been controlled through social media communications to kill or get killed.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Having assessed the use of social media for electoral purposes with particular focus on how it exacerbates electoral violence in Kogi State, this study which adopts resource mobilisation and gate-keeping media theories as a guiding compass discovered that electoral violence has heightened in Kogi State w-

ith the prevalence and use of such social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Such violent activities as official and criminal kidnappings of political opponents, political assassinations, physical harassments, disruption of political rallies, delays in the arrival of electoral men and materials and their likes are being perpetrated, instigated and aggravated through: impersonation, fake news, hate speech, phishing attacks, cyber-bullying and their likes which are all enabled by the social media.

It is on this note recommended that since social media has come stay in Nigeria's electioneering process, concerned stakeholders in the nation's electoral process such as the Electoral Management Body - INEC, Government and Civil Society should step-up efforts which discourage the use of social media as a tool for perpetrating electoral violence anywhere in both Kogi and other states of Nigeria. To establish whether or not the prevalence of social media has aggravated electoral violence in Kogi state, using some of the media contents which constitute the data from whence inferences were drawn, two major factors which make social media a usable tool to perpetrate electoral violence both in Kogi State and elsewhere were highlighted. They are that: Communication on the social media is easy, speedy and convenient and; it is not easy and convenient to regulate and sanction communicators on the social media. This in fact is in tandem with the assumptions of the Resource Mobilisation and Gate-keeping media theories advanced by the likes of Buechler and Kurt Lewin.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Following the challenges inherent in the use of social media as a tool for perpetrating electoral violence Kogi State, the recommendations below if adopted would go a long way in returning sanity to the electoral system:

1. The electoral management body in Nigeria in conjunction with the nation's parliament should make requisite rules which seek to discourage political leaders and future aspirants from using the social

media to spread false stories, hate speeches and caricature figures on their opponents.

2. It is important that regulatory procedures on what should be broadcasted and/or published on the social media should be put in place by the administrators of the various platforms. This of course would help in reducing the rate with which indiscriminate items are posted on the social media platforms. This ways, campaigns that use and encourage hate speeches or instil violence will not be posted or published.
3. It is equally important that measures be put in place by the communication regulatory bodies in Nigeria such as the Nigerian Communication Commission and Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria to track and sanction individuals and groups who exploit the faceless nature of the internet to post politically offensive and indecent items.
4. Government agencies such as the National Orientation Agency should strive to establish as well as train the public on modalities which will help the populace discern fake news, hate speech and such other items that are intended to incite or ignite violence in the polity.

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**Perverse Electoral Politics and Securitized Youths: Implications for  
Peace and Security in Nigeria**  
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**Abstract**

*Elections anywhere are moments of uncertainties because of multiplicity of actors who struggle for political relevance and control of the government. In Nigeria, electoral politics and elections are often laced with fractious violence, which often compromises the integrity of elections. The return to democracy in 1999 has multiplied rather than diminished the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria. While the contemporary violence has been seen as a rupture from the past, what is, however, regularly overlooked in the literature is the involvement of ‘securitized youths’ in the reproduction and acceleration of complex electoral violence(s) in post-1999 elections in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data and the theory of securitization, this paper explores how the perverse electoral politics in Nigeria produces ‘securitized youths’ and constrains peace and security in the country. The paper argues that the very trajectory of perverse electoral politics in Nigeria facilitates the development of securitized youths, which are being used and shielded by political elites as private bodyguards and political thugs. The paper shows that the securitization not only turns political thuggery into a ‘big business’, but also weakens the capacity of state to enforce its laws and*

*protect citizens and properties. The paper concludes by making some recommendations on how to reverse perverse electoral politics for peace and security in Nigeria.*

**Key Words:** *Perverse Electoral Politics, Securitized Youths, Violence, Peace, and Security.*

## **Introduction**

Nigeria is a post-military democracy. The country returned to democracy in 1999 after almost two decades of military rule. The current democratic dispensation is the longest since Nigeria's independence in 1960. Indeed, Nigeria's democratic experience/practice in the Fourth Republic has been unbroken for two decades with six successive multiparty elections and peaceful transfer of power from a defeated ruling political class/party to the opposition<sup>1</sup>. Despite this feat, the democratic process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been fledgling and is remarkably constrained by serious flaws (Oladeji, 2019: 6). Consequently, Omotola (2013) contends that Nigeria's democratic experience in the Fourth Republic is 'trapped in transition'. He argues that this is due basically to the failure of the democratic process to improve its democratic qualities in the procedure, content, and results (p. 171). A critical aspect of the flawed and trapped democratic process in Nigeria since 1999 has a lot to do with perverse elections.

An election is an integral part of democracy in that it gives citizens (usually adults) opportunity to participate in the political process by selecting those who govern the state. Indeed, there exists a synergy between election and democracy since it is almost impracticable to have democracy without free,

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<sup>1</sup>The People's Democratic Party (PDP) lost its political dominance and grip on power of 16 years, when its presidential candidate and the incumbent president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, lost and conceded defeat to the candidate of the main opposition party, the All Progressives Party (APC), General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd). Apparently, this was the first time an incumbent and ruling party would lose and concede defeat in an election in the history of Nigeria.

fair and credible elections through which adult citizens freely select those who will represent people's interests in government. Indeed, elections present legitimate and peaceful means by which political power is won and/or transferred in a state. However, by its very nature, electoral process is paradoxically conflictual due to multiplicity of actors and complexity of interests competing for political relevance and control of government. This may be what Adam Przeworski had in mind when he contended that "democracy is a form of institutionalization of continual conflicts and of uncertainty of subjecting all interests to uncertainty" (Przeworski, 1986: 583). That is, the electoral process promotes uncertainties and/or conflicts in its attempt to ensure competitiveness among divergent ideological political interests over the control of state power. It must be stated, however, that the sort of conflict generated by electoral politics is not, under normal condition, disruptive, but one that creates a healthy rivalry among political parties or contenders to present their political programmes to the electorates with a view to forming government.

But the Nigerian electoral experience, in the Fourth Republic, has often negated this 'peaceful conflict' by promoting fractious and fractionating violence along party, religion, and ethnic fault lines. In fact, as we will demonstrate later, the return to democracy in 1999 has multiplied rather than diminished incidences of electoral/political violence in Nigeria. Put in another way, the Nigerian electoral process, instead of being an alternative to violence and agent of peaceful power transfer, has continued to be primary conflict generator, no thanks to the do-or-die posture of most political elites in electoral contests. For example, because of unbridled quest for power, political assassination has dominated the political scene in Nigeria since 1999. Some cases of political assassination include: the gruesome murder of Chief Bola Ige, a serving Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, in his bedroom on December 23, 2001, the killing of Harry Marshall, who was a former National Vice-Chairman (South-South) of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), in Abuja in 2003 during the presidential

elections, Chief Aminasori Alfred Dikibo, a National Vice-Chairman (South-South) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was assassinated in Delta State in February 2004, while Chief Funso Williams, an influential politician and PDP gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos, was found dead, apparently strangled and stabbed, at his home in Ikoyi, Lagos. The sad irony of the matter is that the killers are mostly unknown and always get away with their heinous crime.

Thus, virtually all the post-military elections in the country have been marred by electoral violence of varying degrees, intensities and durations. Indeed, when an electoral process becomes conflictive or violent, its function as an umpire for social decision-making is perverse. Where this happens, the electoral process disrupts rather than safeguards societal peace and security. Taken together, 'peace and security' could mean a synergy, a kind of complementary state of affair, where in violence and conflict do not pervade a society or state. Following Johan Galtung's classificatory scheme, the term 'peace' could denote the absence of hostility or violent disturbances (negative peace) and the presence of conditions – political equality and socioeconomic justice – for the maintenance of this (positive peace) (Galtung, 1996). That is, for a harmonious and tranquil society to be achieved, Galtung believes that members of the society must have opportunity to achieve their potentials without hindrance. In other words, certain structural and cultural conditions must be fulfilled in order to create a peaceful society. Similarly, the term 'security' could be taken to mean "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions" (Akin, 2008 cited in Oladeji, 2016: 362). That is, security presupposes the existence of conditions within which people could go about their normal daily activities without fear or threat to their lives and properties (Oladeji, 2016).

However, and as we will demonstrate later in the case of Nigeria, when an electoral process is perverse, it does not only inhibit people's political and

civic rights to elect their representatives in government freely, but also it creates conditions for electoral/political violence. That is, perverse electoral politics not only compromises both the negative and positive peace of a society, but it also disrupts the security of such society. For example, it is a public knowledge in Nigeria that electoral politics and elections are often laced with fractious violence, which often compromises the integrity of elections. In fact, the return to democracy in 1999 has multiplied rather than diminished the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria. Consequently, the issue of electoral violence has continuously dominated academic discourse on democracy and national security in Nigeria since 1999. However, while the contemporary electoral violence has been seen as a rupture from the past, what is regularly overlooked in the literature has been the involvement of ‘securitized youths’ in the reproduction and acceleration of complex electoral violence(s) in post-1999 elections in Nigeria. That is, most of the literature on the connection between electoral violence, peace, and security have tended to ignore the implications of the agency of a group of the Nigerian youths (political thugs) recruited and secured against the law by politicians to perpetrate electoral/political violence for peace and security in Nigeria.

To fill the identified gap in the literature, this paper adopted the theory of securitization to explore how the perverse Nigerian electoral politics produces ‘securitized youths’ and further constrains peace and security in the country. Consequently, the paper sought answers to the following questions: What is the nature of perverse electoral politics in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019? What are the factors causing electoral violence in Nigeria? What is the level of youths’ involvement in electoral violence in Nigeria? In what ways are the violent youths being securitized by political elites/citizens? What are the implications of the securitization for peace and security in Nigeria?

**Perverse Electoral Politics in Nigeria**

As noted earlier in this paper, Nigeria is a post-authoritarian democracy still struggling to find its footing (Ani & Osioma, 2014). Consequently, democracy, especially electoral politics, since 1999 when Nigeria returned to a democratic order, has mostly been subject of pessimism and uncertainty. Election as an element of democracy ensures that leaders have credible and accepted mandates to govern. Elections give voice to the public by facilitating communication between the government and the governed (Höglund, 2006). Put in another way, democracy retains its meaning, essence, substance, and relevance only when people, despite ideological and/or identity affiliations, are accorded equal opportunity to shape and reshape the issues of governing their own affairs. Given the premium it places on popular participation, electoral politics offers the widest and best avenue for this opportunity. To do this successfully, electoral politics must exude integrity measured in terms of adherence to electoral laws, openness, transparency, accountability, competition, and participation. Thus, while election may not always guarantee democracy, it nonetheless advances the overall objectives of democratic society. For instance, transparent, free, fair and credible elections are capable of discouraging bad governance since it gives the citizens opportunity to hold leaders accountable.

However, when the electoral process is perceived as unfair, unresponsive or corrupt, its legitimating role is compromised and stakeholders may be motivated to go outside of the established norms to achieve their objectives (Fischer, 2002). In other words, a perverted electoral process may serve to engender electoral violence (Laakso, 2007). Indeed, unbridled lust for political power, which a Political Scientist, Femi Omotoso, refers to as 'politics of power and power of politics' (Omotoso, 2019) may not only pervert electoral process but also make it combustible particularly in a multinational divided state like Nigeria. For example, the political processes of post-independence Nigeria are habitually characterized by struggle for ethnic appropriation, consolidation and hegemonic control of the state

(Araoye, 2012: 12). Consequently, elections in the country are mostly contested and/or won based on primordial ethno-regional affiliations. The resultant effect of this is that electoral contests are reduced to ethno-regional ‘wars’. In fact, this could be blamed for the collapse of the initial republics – First, Second and Third Republic (see Omotoso, 2019) – and could account for the perverted nature of democratic and electoral processes in the Fourth Republic.

Another perverted issue in electoral politics in Nigeria, itself a corollary of ethno-regional politics, is the ostracising of certain citizens from political contests by labelling them non-indigenes in their places of residence. Indeed, this has been at the heart of much of the electoral cum democratic deficits in Nigeria, especially at the state and local government levels. Indigeneity thus becomes a powerful exclusionary political tool in the hands of the so-called ‘indigenous elites’ in their normless and seemingly endless struggles for power, recognition, and resources (Oladeji, 2012). This has pitched indigenes against non-indigenes and has often led to retaliatory ‘wars’ of attrition in virtually all states and local governments in Nigeria for control of political power to the extent of it being described as “a recurrent Nigerian tragedy” (Higazi, 2011). Thus, the ‘politics of difference’ underpins perverse electoral process and ‘festering political conflicts threatening to tear Nigeria into pieces’ (Oladeji, 2012: 75). While this is widespread in Nigeria, the situation in Jos seems unique. With the creation of Jos North Local Government in 1991, there have been constant violent conflicts between the so-called indigenes of Jos – Afizere, Anaguta and Berom – and the non-indigenes, especially the Jasawa (Hausa/Fulani) group over the political control of the local government. This has led to killings of many people and destructions of properties worth billions of Naira (Oladeji, 2012).

Furthermore, the perversion of electoral politics in Nigeria is being done through compromised and often partisan electoral management bodies (Jinadu, 2011; UNDP, 2011). Election management bodies (EMBs) are at the fulcrum of issues related to impartiality, independence, efficiency,



professionalism, and transparency (Lyons, 2005). Where any of these are questioned or compromised, either through a lack of capacity, authority or actual fraudulent activity, a context of suspicion and mistrust can arise that destabilizes confidence, precipitates violence and often characterizes elections in conflict-affected areas (UNDP, 2011). For example, despite a solid constitutional and legal framework, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been accused of failing to stand up for its independence, impartiality, and integrity (Jinadu, 2011). While in some cases electoral victories have been challenged and overturned in courts of competent jurisdiction, some political elites prefer not to take chances and resort to recruiting political thugs either to ensure political victory for them at all cost or to protect their votes from being overturned by INEC officials. Consequently, the real or perceived prevailing lack of independence and inefficiency, in the administration of election process coupled with allegations of biased conduct against INEC, is obviously making elections in Nigeria susceptible to deficiencies in credibility and the degeneration into violence.

More so, the judiciary has not only been unable to dispense cases of election rigging quickly, it has most often been seen as bias or corrupt and incapable of dispensing electoral justice! Apparently, a crude politician, as noted above, would think it wise to result to other means, especially violence, of resolving real and/or perceived electoral irregularities rather than wait endlessly for the judiciary to prove her/his case. Similarly, one key contributing factor to election order or disorder is the state itself, particularly its security apparatus. In fragile states like Nigeria, security agents have important roles to play in elections – protection voters, candidates, poll workers, media, observers, vote results, registration data, campaign materials, political rallies, polling stations, counting/collating centres, etc. But where security agents are biased or seen to be partisan or corrupt, there is a higher chance that they will be purveyors of electoral violence rather than protectors of electoral process. Cases of police being used to snatch and

stuff ballot boxes are overwhelming in Nigeria, especially during the 2003 and 2007 general elections (see Ajayi, 2006; Jinadu, 2011). Also, there are several cases of the military being used to intimidate political opponents in favour of incumbents, especially during the Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections in 2014 and 2018.

Related to above is the issue of political corruption. Political corruption involves the manipulation of the political process through rigging, vote-buying, ballot stuffing and collusion of electoral officials with politicians to sabotage the electoral process (Omotoso, 2019: 43). Indeed, over the last couple of electoral cycles in Nigeria, the electoral processes have been commercialised or commoditized to an ignoble extent that votes are now being openly sold and bought. For example, the current slogan during electioneering, especially on election day, is what has become popularly known among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria as ‘*dibo kio se’be*’ – vote and cook soup (Ayiti and Omilusi, 2019:50). This presupposes that a voter can actually sell her/his vote to make some money enough to feed her/his family, at least, for a day or week. This may not be unconnected with the issue of poverty ravaging the country to the extent of its being described as the ‘headquarters of poverty’ (*Vanguard*, June 25, 2018). Thus, the struggle for power in Nigeria is not about the people and development, but to further accumulation of wealth by the corrupt elites (Omotoso, 2019: 44).

To conclude this section, another major thing in the perversion of electoral politics and/or political process is the issue of political godfatherism. Godfatherism is an informal way of doing politics and it is associated with a series of other problems of the electoral process such as corruption, influence peddling, patronage, nepotism, favouritism, etc. that impact negatively the quality of democracy. For instance, godfatherism hinders the three legitimacy pillars of democracy by provoking a net decline in the levels of trust in/support to state institutions – it damages input legitimacy by reducing the act of voting to a quid pro quo exchange and by barring or limiting access to the administration to those individuals with sufficient social capital to

make their problems/needs heard; it damages throughput legitimacy because it perverts the rules of the game in a non-transparent way to favour the interests of clientele; and it damages output legitimacy because it leads to irresponsible and unaccountable public spending (De Sousa, 2008). Particularly, political godfathers pervert electoral politics by swinging electoral victory in favour of their anointed godsons often through vote buying and/or political violence being fomented by political thugs recruited, armed and paid by the godfathers. The action and inaction of these godfathers and the crises precipitated by them in States like Abia, Anambra, Edo, Enugu, Oyo, Kwara, Lagos, Borno, Rivers, etc. have nearly destroyed the current democratic dispensation in Nigeria (Omotoso, 2019: 30). In a peculiar case, the then Governor of Anambra state, Chris Ngige, on the order of his erstwhile political godfather, Chris Uba, was kidnapped by armed 'policemen' and forced at gunpoint to resign from office. A similar scenario also played out in Oyo state, where Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja was sacked from office as the Governor of the state by political thugs of his former political godfather Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. In the two cases, the offence of the political godsons was that they refused to give the godfathers unfettered access to their states treasury.

### **Electoral Violence and the Youths in Nigeria**

Over the post-cold war era in Africa, it has been observed that electoral violence is endemic to the extent that more than half, 55 percent, of states on the continent have experienced electoral violence (Burchard, 2015: 50). Indeed, and as argued before, electoral violence has dominated and shaped the processes and outcomes of virtually all elections in Nigeria since 1999. For instance, the desire to be in power or stay in the corridors of power or close to the centre of power in Nigeria has led politicians and the political class to be so ruthless while seeking power (Omotoso, 2019: 65). While there is indeed perverse and unbridled competition for political power among political elites in Nigeria, this always involves the co-optation of the agency of youths to perpetrate electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. In

fact, these youths often represent the ‘private security’ wing of most political or ethnic groups in their quest to dominate the state and its resources by winning elections at all costs.

A dominant narrative on the crisis of electoral politics, especially in transitioning democracies like Nigeria, tends to see electoral violence as being underpinned by unbridled patronage politics (Albert, 2005; Omotola, 2010). The central thesis of patronage politics is the assumption that there exists a relationship between people who seek to gain and retain power – patrons – and those they use to achieve this goal – clients (Alapiki & Ukiwo, 2013). Consequently, patrons buy the support of clients by promising the later rewards and access to political patronage once the former gains political control of the state (Agbibo, 2018). However, in what ways does patronage politics result in the recruitment and securitization of youths by political/ethnic elites for the purposes of political violence in Nigeria? In providing answer to this question, the first place to start would be an understanding of the emergence and structure of Nigerian state.

There is a lot of literature on the colonial origin of state in Africa and how this results in the distortions and/or disruptions of the traditional societies in the continent and that should not disturb us here. However, it is important to note that the emergence of a modern state in Nigeria resulted in the transfer of resources from traditional societies to a centralised state and thus making the state the major dispenser of patronage. Consequently, the Nigerian state plays a dominant role in the national economy in the face of the underdevelopment of private capitalist enterprise (Animashaun, 2010). In fact, buoyed by the expanded oil revenues of the early 1970s, the state effectively dominated all aspects of the national political economy (Jega, 2000). This made the state not only the biggest spender of resources but also the largest employer of labour. Under this circumstance, access to the state becomes a platform for primitive accumulation. Providing an enlightening view on how the nature and character of Nigerian state constitutes a major

hurdle for democratic and electoral stability, Claude Ake argues that the state is everywhere and its power appears boundless. There is hardly any aspect of life in which the state does not exercise power and control. That makes the capture of state power singularly important (Ake, 1996: 23).

Therefore, the strategic interaction among ethnic groups is characterised by competition for control of the state as the dominant group in the state sets the terms of competition between its rivals (Araoye, 2012). In fact, due to its lack of autonomy or its limited autonomy from competing ethnic groups, the state becomes the core contested terrain, the deadly serious theatre of ethnic conflict over which ethnic groups or coalitions of ethnic groups should control it and its vast resources. The major consequence of this for electoral politics is that elections, instead of fostering peaceful means of power transfer, have resulted in inter/intra ethnic political violence. Indeed, post-military elections in Nigeria have become a hegemonic vehicle for contending ethnic groups. An emergent trend, especially in the Fourth Republic, is the development of militia youth wings of these ethno-regional groups usually arm and finance by *ethno-regional political entrepreneurs* in their endless quest for political power and the neutralization of their ‘ethnic/political others’.

For example, there have been emergence and involvement of several ethnic militant groups in electoral/political violence in Nigeria over the post-military period. However, a caveat from the outset! While there is no denying that these militia groups have been vanguards of political violence, it may be difficult to sustain the argument that whenever they engage in electoral violence they do so on behalf of their ethnic groups. In fact, some leaders of the so-called ethnic militias started off as clients (political thugs) recruited by patrons (politicians) to perpetrate electoral violence. For instance, before they established the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the

Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV)<sup>2</sup> and transformed into armed militia leaders, Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom were hired thugs used by the then Rivers State Governor, Peter Odili, and his political party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), during the 2003 general elections in the state (Ebiede, 2018; HRW, 2007). Though Odili and his party denied<sup>3</sup> using thugs to rig the Rivers' 2003 election, a 2007 Human Rights Watch's report indicated that the 2003 elections in Rivers sowed the seed of violence as they were 'both violent and more brazenly rigged than most other parts of the country' (HRW, 2007: 80). According to Ebiede (2018), "this marked the beginning of the transition of youths who had been involved in electoral violence into armed militants" (p. 140).

However, given the over ethnicization of politics in Nigeria, there are many ethno-regional militia groups scattered all over the country all claiming to be the main defenders of their ethnic/regional groups. Indeed, their formation and funding enjoyed the tacit approval of the various ethnic elites, who usually project these militant groups as 'messiahs' who can always protect and ensure that members of their ethnic group get a fair share of the national resources (Omotoso, 2019: 50). In other words, militias are armed youth wings of given ethnic groups that often started as 'ethnic private security' outfit (vigilante) and transformed into defenders of ethnic interests through violent means (Pratten, 2008). For example, the Odua People's Congress (OPC) could be seen as the 'armed youth' wing of the Yoruba social-cultural group, *Afenifere*. The Ijaw nation has the *Egbesu Boys* and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) as its militant youth wings to act as the defender of the Ijaw interest in Nigeria. In wider context of the Niger Delta, the emergence in 2005 of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

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<sup>2</sup>NDPVF was established by Asari Dokubo while NDV was established by Ateke Tom.

<sup>3</sup>Despite the denial, in an interview granted Human Rights Watch (HRW), Ateke Tom said the then Governor Odili promised cash and jobs in great quantities for himself and his *boys* and that in return, so 'any place Odili sent me, I conquered for him (HRW, 2007: 81).

could be said to spark the proliferation of armed militant groups as ‘defenders’ of the Niger Delta against perceived and real injustice of federal government and international oil companies (IOCs) in the area (Bøås, 2011). In the north, there existed *Yandaba* armed group and today Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders’ Association. Though *Yandaba* was an unorganized group, they were easily mobilized to defend the northern agenda (Yoroms, n.d.: 18). Other important ethno-nationalist groups in Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the Ombatse group.

These groups have, often time, been mobilised and used for the purposes of electoral violence. However, the case of the Niger Delta is quite intriguing. In the specific case of the Niger Delta region, where the stake is always very high given the political economy of oil exploration and proliferation of militant groups, there have always been incidences of electoral violence in the region. There were particularly high stakes in the region during the 2015 general elections because the presidential election was between one of the region’s sons – the then incumbent president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan – and a Muslim Northerner and ex-military general, Muhammadu Buhari (Ani, 2017). Consequently, there were reports of election-related incidents in connection to the 2015 electoral process in the Niger Delta (Partners for Peace, 2015). Indeed, ex-warlords in the area were prominently visible in the electoral process using their network of ex-fighters, financial resources and influence to mobilize support for candidates. While majority of the ex-militant leaders understandably supported the *homeboy*, Goodluck Jonathan, and his party, the PDP, a handful of them, especially the Africa Ukparasia group, defected to and provided support for the All Progressives Congress (APC) (Ezuikwu, 2015). It should be noted that, apart from ethnic politics, the support PDP enjoyed during the 2015 elections in the Niger Delta from most of the ex-warlords may not be unconnected with the oil industry and waterways patronage schemes, like the pipeline protection contract and the

security of the waterways, they enjoyed from Jonathan's administration (*Pm News*, 2016; Ezuikwu, 2015). Thus, each faction of the ex-militants threw their weight behind candidates and parties of choice through the mobilization and use of armed thugs, which sparked various forms of electoral violence: violent disruption of campaign rallies, clashes and shootings between supporters of candidates, voters' intimidation and above all destruction of election materials (Partners for Peace, 2015).

Apart from ethno-regional youth groups, other youth groups like the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), which Albert (2007) sees as the 'most politicised and violent trade union in Nigeria', have been recruited and used to unleash electoral violence by desperate politicians in Nigeria. In the specific case of Southwest Nigeria, particularly in Lagos and Ibadan, members of the NURTW usually called *agbero*, a euphemism for a gang of hardboiled young street urchins who earn a living through parasitic dependence on the control of passenger transport<sup>4</sup>, seem to constitute a reserve army of workers who are capable of relapsing into full-time touting (Okpara, 1988: 331). Consequently, the NURTW is usually perceived as the home of an army of battle-ready *agberos* who do not just collect illegal tolls from transport operators, but who also serve as political thugs for political parties/politicians during election times (Agbibo, 2018: 221). For instance, the NURTW chairmen, especially in Lagos, usually act as suppliers of thugs from among union members to assist the state governor during his electoral campaign rallies in exchange for large autonomy to levy taxes at motor parks of the state (Fourchard, 2010: 51).

However, this is not peculiar to Lagos alone, similar cases of NURTW members loyal to Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu, *the Garrison Commander of Ibadan Politics*, causing various forms of electoral cum political violence were rife, especially because of the split between him and his former godson,

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<sup>4</sup>Initially, the term applies to people (young and old male and, at times, female) who make a living by helping drivers get passengers and load their luggage into vehicles at motor parks.



former governor of Oyo State, Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja. For instance, in the run-up to the 2007 elections in the state, the split between Adedibu and Ladoja resulted in numerous clashes among members of the NURTW in the state loyal to the two gladiators to which several lives and properties were lost (Bello, 2015: 11). Furthermore, in the North, particularly in Gombe State, the *Kalare boys*, a group of young touts, used to provide a ready army of political thugs for politicians in exchange for money, weapons, drugs, and alcohol. The boys are used as bodyguards during rallies and as agents of terror to intimidate or assault political opponents (Aniekwe & Agbiboa, 2014: 12).

Indeed, armed gangs, party thugs, ethnic militias, private security guards, vigilante groups and community subalterns became security managers, relatively developed and enhanced in competition with state security apparatus. They became deployed and engaged for both offensive and defensive purposes, either to intimidate their opponents and/or to protect themselves against surprise attacks by other opponents (Yoroms, n.d.: 20). For instance, in one of its editorials, the *Vanguard* addresses the political instrumentality of youths as thugs in the following words:

Our youths, for a good part of the life of a government, are starved of genuine opportunities; no employment, no education or training. And then come campaign time; the politicians sprinkle slush money and they unleash the beasts; rent a thug. These people are given money and small weapons to intimidate the opposition and ordinary citizens. They create fear and fan terror so that people are prevented from performing their constitutional obligations. (*Vanguard* 2015).

Consequently, the perverse nature of electoral politics in Nigeria increases the need for 'hard guys' (clients) capable of 'delivering votes' for and protecting patrons (politicians), while at the same time enjoys the patrons'

protection – huge financial rewards and protection against the law. That is, the quid pro quo exchange between politicians and armed youths for the purposes of electoral violence results in securitization of these youth gangs. But what does it mean to be securitized? In what ways are the violent youths being used for electoral violence purposes securitised? What are the implications of the securitization for security and peace in Nigeria? In the next section of this paper, we provide answers to these questions by drawing some lessons from the theory of securitization, which has become a new way of thinking and understanding the social construction of threats and security policies (Albert, n.d.).

### **‘Securitized Youths’ and Peace and Security in Nigeria**

So far, we have been able to prove that the Nigerian electoral experience has been historically, especially in the Fourth Republic, perverse by excessive politicking through patronage system involving political elites (patrons) recruiting and using political thugs (clients) to unleash electoral violence. However, the very trajectory of this perverse electoral politics has resulted in the development of securitized youths. Basically, securitization analyses how, why and by whom a non-security issue became a security issue (Walker & Seegers, 2012: 23). Securitization theory is developed by Barry Buzan (1983), when he argued that security could not only be defined “as the threat, the use, and control of military force, in the hands of states” (Walt, 1991: 212). Thus, securitization theory widens understanding of security by providing framework for examining the way by which something gets removed from the political process and gets into security agenda (Albert, n.d.: 4). Put differently, by securitization, security agendas are chosen, constructed or created (Walker & Seegers, 2012: 23).

The securitization process involves the inter-subjective establishment of an existential threat that requires urgent and immediate attention, as well as extraordinary measures to counter (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde, 1998: 24-5). That is, securitization begins when an actor claims that the existence of an object is threatened. Then the given issue must be perceived as an

existential threat. That is, if it is not addressed, the referent object is destroyed or conquered (Buzan, *et.al.*, 1998: 34). According to Albert (n.d.: 5), the securitizing process involves three things. One, a group must exist that is securitizing a referent object. That is, there must be a group alleging that the other group constitutes a security threat. Two, there must be a group labelled as a security risk. And three, there must be an audience to be convinced that indeed the object of securitization is indeed a security threat (Albert, n.d.: 5). Put together, these three elements are germane to understanding how perverse electoral politics results in the securitization of political thugs in Nigeria.

Drawing on classical elite theory, it is arguable to maintain that the elites – governing elite and non-governing elite (Bottomore, 1993) – would continue to dominate the political process in any state. Put in another way, the forces in every political society will tend to always produce elite domination – a process of *embourgeoisement* (Roberts & Edwards, 1991). Thus and as argued by Albert (n.d.), the main concern should not be the right of the elite to rule but how they use/exercise power (p. 5). Ordinarily, electoral politics should provide ordered and legitimated means through which elites acquire and exercise power in a democratic state. However, and as we have maintained in this paper when electoral process is perverse, this opportunity is lost and what occurred would be jaundiced democratic order. Indeed, since the elites determine what and who threatens the security of the state, then securitization is therefore done by them. For this reason, the citizens tend to fear the state since it is capable of securitizing anybody. While Buzan (1991: 55) points to four ways the state constitute threat to citizens, the one that is relevant to our situation here is those emanating from struggles over control of the state machinery.

Under the condition of perverse electoral politics, where political thugs are used for perpetrating electoral violence, security threats may not only be seen as inability of the state to make the right policies but fundamentally as its inability to enforce laws. Since there exists a quid pro quo relationship

between the elites and the militia youths being used to unleash electoral violence, the youths must be protected against the law. The youths are usually criminal gangs who should be prosecuted and kept behind bars, but they are shielded from being prosecuted or jailed by the political class. Thus, given the overbearing protection being enjoyed by these militant youths from political elites, their influence and power grow and they are dreaded by ordinary citizens (and at times by politicians) within their communities. In fact, there are so many instances of ‘grass to grace’ among the *street boys* all over Nigeria. The point, therefore, is that the electoral disorder in Nigeria works well to securitize ordinary youths (usually non-elite street urchins – Area Boys). In other words, the militant youths are securitized by both ordinary citizens and the political class since their violent activities might not be limited to election period alone and may have adverse effects on everyone.

It must be pointed out that the politicians often hide behind ‘insecurity’ and excruciating poverty in the country to recruit youths as private bodyguards and possibly as a vigilante group to supplement the efforts of formal security agents. Thus, these private security guards must be equipped with arms and ammunitions by their patrons. Indeed, politicians often cited the need to provide security for the importation of arms and ammunitions. For example, Alhaji Abdulaziz Yari, the former governor of Zamfara State, justified the importation of some 1,500 illegal arms into the state as necessary to arm the state’s vigilante groups to counter the threats of insecurity in the state (Yoroms, n.d.: 23). But, as noted before, beyond providing *security* for their patrons and/or community, the private security guards also serve as instruments to intimidate political opponents as agents of electoral violence. However, these militias and their patrons – politicians – often enjoy tacit acceptance and protection of their conduct by the police and state officials (Agbibo, 2018). Indeed, while the intricate relationships between the political class and militant youths undermine the capacity of the state, it nonetheless strengthens the lawlessness of these youths. This creates a

predatory pattern of interaction between militias and their local community and destroys the moral certainties of ordinary citizens. This situation has been described as a pre-Leviathan Hobbesian state of war where there is a set of formal rules obeyed by a few people, a set of informal rules followed by most people and a lack of legitimacy attached to both (Brass, 1997).

The implications of the relationship between politicians and the securitized youths for peace and security in Nigeria are many. For instance, the relationships tend to lead to the security structure being incapacitated and weakened to provide public safety and security. As Peters (2007) notes: the patron-client relationships could be responsible for outbreak of violence. In the specific case of Niger Delta, pieces of evidence abound to show that former political thugs were instrumental to formations of armed groups that have been engaging the state in ‘oil war’ in the region (Nwamaka Okeke-Ogbuafor, Ani & Gray 2019). In fact, Human Rights Watch documents how political sponsorship of armed groups in the Niger Delta sparked the proliferation of militias engaging in oil bunkering, bank robberies, cult wars and kidnappings for ransom (HRW, 2007: 82). For instance, due to unguarded spread of arms and ammunitions into wrong hands, cases of arm robberies and kidnapping have become widespread and common occurrences in Nigeria (Oladeji, 2016). In fact, kidnapping has blossomed into a ‘lucrative business’ and there is no region or state spare of its spectre today.

Furthermore, the emergence of the dreaded Boko Haram insurgent group in the Northeast could be blamed on the securitization of youths through blind, chaotic and unbridled crave for power by some northern political elites who recruited and used members of the insurgent to gain political power. Indeed, the recruitment could be said to have been enhanced by the widespread of abject poverty and the prevalence of the ‘almajiri’ system in that region of the country. For example, it has become a public knowledge in Nigeria that getting recruited as insurgent by Boko Hara pays better than serving in the Nigerian military or civil service. Consequently, the insurgent constitutes

one of the major security threats in the country and has earned Nigeria the title of ‘terrorist state’ (Ani & Osisoma, 2014). In fact, there is no end in sight to the menace of the insurgency as the group still carry out attacks almost daily despite the claim by the federal government to have ‘technically defeated the insurgents’.

Moreover, especially in Lagos where the politics of transportation is rife and very lucrative, the patron-client relationship between politicians and touts (*agberos*) often results in intra-labour union wars, particularly among NURTW members over who controls garages (motor parks). In fact, the lucrative economy of motor park underscores the explosion of motor parks and inter/intra union violent conflicts to control these parks. Many ordinary *garage boys* have become *big men* in their own right through *taxes* they extort from public transport drivers. This must-have led Albert (2007: 134) to argue that:

The huge revenue being collected by NURTW leaders, and the high social mobility this facilitates, explains why every member of the union aspires to become a chairman – whether at a branch, city, state, zonal or national level. This partly explains why the members regularly engage one another in bloody skirmishes. It explains why NURTW members and members of other transport unions kill each other to defend their position in most Nigerian cities.

These unions’ conflicts have often resulted in the compromise of peace and security of the society, which could involve wanton destruction of lives and properties of innocent ordinary citizens. Because the unions' chairmen don't *eat alone* as large chunk of the garage largesse go to security agents, local government chairmen and political party officials, especially of the party in government at the state or local government levels, security agents often look away while the bloodbaths last. Demonstrating government's complacency

or lack of capacity to confront most of the threats to national security and their perpetrators, the former National Security Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki, while addressing the spate of bomb attacks by Boko Haram, stated that:

There is a lot we know that they are doing, and there is a lot that could be done to address the problem...But, then I must also be quick to point out that today, even if all the leaders that we know in Boko Haram are arrested, I don't think the problem would end, because there are tentacles. I don't think that people would be satisfied, because the situations that created the problems are not just about religion, poverty or the desire to rule Nigeria...I think it's a combination of everything. Except you address all those things comprehensively, it would not work. It is not enough for us to have a problem in 2009 and you send soldiers to stop the situation, then tomorrow you drive everybody under-ground. You must look at what structures you need to put in place to address the problem holistically (National Mirror, April 28 2012, cited in Albert, n.d.: 22).

The above shows that the political class does not only know the root causes of this problem as well as the people behind it, but they lack the courage to confront them because they are part of the problem. What this suggests is that the youth gangs would continue to constitute major security threats in Nigeria as long as the electoral process is perverse and these youths serve as the instruments of political violence in the hands of the political class. Indeed, this may portend a great danger for the continued existence of Nigeria as a geo-political entity. For example, while there has been genuine demand for inter/intra ethnic equitable distribution of state's resources and

accommodation of dissenting voices/opinions, such as the current agitations for restructuring in Nigeria, “the demands/agitations could be hijacked by greedy and/or opportunistic elite, rebels or warlords and thus turned to separatist agitations, which are sometimes regarded as the most dangerous threat to the state” (Olasupo, Oladeji and Ijeoma, 2016: 274-5). A very good example is the ‘oil wars’ in the Niger Delta region, where ethno-nationalist militants and warlords highjack the longstanding grievances and redress-seeking agitations over environmental degradation and resource injustices. Thus, if the perverse electoral system and politics is not sufficiently reversed and the attendant political violence reduce to the barest minimum, the future looks bleak for Nigeria as a united geo-political entity.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have engaged with the dynamic relationship between perverse electoral politics and securitized youths and how this compromise peace and security in Nigeria, especially since it returned to democracy in 1999. The paper shows how electoral violence emerges through perverse politicking and unbridled political competition among politicians, who usually engage the services of militant youths. Indeed, prebendalism, which involves the principle that state power could be treated as ‘congeries of offices that can be competed for, appropriated and administered for the benefit of individual occupants and their supporters’ (Joseph, 1987: 8), intensifies the combusive electoral politics in Nigeria. Furthermore, the huge financial rewards attached to political offices and the winner wins all syndrome gives electoral contests the stamp of a do-or-die affair with everyone in a political contest or in power to employ all means-legal or otherwise-either to acquire or maintain power.

We equally demonstrate that the dialectic of relationship between politicians and militia youths compromise peace and security in the country. That is, this dialectic is incompatible with political stability, the rule of law or democracy because it is constituted as warfare (Ake, 1976 cited in Akinsanya & Ayoade, 2013: 176). A way out of this precarious situation, as suggested



by Albert (n.d.: 22), is good governance, which must be championed by non-violent actions of the civil society groups. Also, there must be socio-political reengineering to convert private interests promoting militancy and political violence into public interests to ensure peaceful electoral politics capable of ensuring legitimacy and good governance. Thus, there is a need for citizens' collective action against perverse political class and their securitised youth gangs. Conclusively, there is need for spirited youth-related programmes like capacity building workshops and skills for entrepreneurial leadership for the youth to take most of them out of the pond of excruciating poverty they are currently trapped and show them other means of becoming wealthy other than engaging in criminality.

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**INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN  
ISUOKOMA: FOCUS ON IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION**

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**Abstract**

*The role of individuals and groups in community development cannot be neglected. In different parts of the globe, individuals drive powerful development dynamics for their communities, states and provinces. This is focused on Isuokoma clan in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. It traced the origin of Isuokoma people before accounting for the rise of Isuokoma Progressive Minds. The study relied primarily on key informant interviews as source of data. The data that were collected were interpreted and presented thematically. The finding of the study reveals that a number of Isuokoma sons and daughters as well as groups like Isuokoma Progressive Minds has advanced the development of the clan. It also revealed that the development that these individuals and group has brought to the community has political and environmental implications. The study therefore recommends Isuokoma development through industrialization and business development, electrification, road construction, provision of hospital facilities and federal employment as well as educational development as major areas of human and resource development paths.*

**Keywords:** *Individuals, community, Isuokoma Progressive Minds, development & Isuokoma*

**Introduction**

Isuokoma is a clan in Igboland, South Eastern Nigeria. The people has a long historical origin. They migration from the ancestral Nri community, where the earliest Igbo man settled and moved many centuries ago through Isukwuator to their present location. Connell (1930) wrote that the weight of

historical evidence suggests that Ezentumoke account of Isuokoma origin is the correct version of Isu origin, notwithstanding colonial efforts to trace Isuokoma to Ezekuna. The present Isuokoma clan of Onicha Local Government Area in Ebonyi State “was founded around the 14<sup>th</sup> Century AD by Ezentumoke Nwokeigbota, a brave hunter from Isukwuator” (Ani, 2012; Ani & Osioma, 2015; Ani, Ogbonna & Ojakorotu, 2018). This great hunter first settled in Agbabor and from there, his descendants began to disperse and establish different communities and groups. One of those groups that has been established by the descendants of Ezentumoke is the Isuokoma Progressive Minds.

This Association was recently established to bring together gifted and resourceful Isuokoma men and women together, with the ultimate aim of ensuring sustainable Isuokoma development. Unfortunately, while a number of arm-chair developmental annalists would focus and depend on government for all round developmental projects; the reality of the changing world order is that the citizenry of every society, gather together and make frantic efforts to champion the development of their community in what is referred as the “think home development strategy” (Ajaegbo, Enwo-Irem, Ani & Ugbudian, 2017). Nnewi people of Anambra State, Nigeria is a good example of a people that compete to ensure that part(s) of their businesses has a branch within Nnewi and its environs. Ironically, the process of ensuring sustainable home-front development is often challenging due to the multiple societal problems that are inherent in rural communities. Nevertheless, while sustainable development is a difficult task, the reality is that communal development starts from the minds of men and women who gather together with the determination to ensure that they progressively advance the developmental status of their communities irrespective of their personal and family challenges.



## **Methodology**

This study was carried out in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study made use of qualitative data, collected in 2020 within a number of communities that make up Isuokoma. During the study, ten semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs) and three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted in Obeagu and Umuniko communities and each FGD comprised between four and six respondents. During this stage, all respondents were recruited through social networking. Since relying on social networking to recruit participants can be problematic as respondents are more likely to recommend people who hold similar views to themselves, hence, to encourage heterogeneity and obtain a variety of perspectives; a wide range of respondents were recruited. The KIs include informants whose profession cuts across the academia, community leader, civil servants and community development analysts. There were six telephone interviews (TI) meant to validate some of the information earlier obtained from the key informants. Interviewers' questions for both KIs and TIs were generally semi-structured, allowing respondents the flexibility of reflection, thereby providing both an extensive and in-depth account of the role of the individuals toward community development. It should be noted that Isuokoma has multiple development challenges, but emphasis by the researcher centres on the multiplier drivers of other rural development like education, electricity, road and construction of physical structures. All KIs and TIs responses were transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis.

## **Landmark Developmental Dynamics in Isuokoma**

“Electricity has come as a stage in modern human social development as lightening and energy needs of man were met through stones and coal, at least in this part of the globe” (Olufemi & Mokuye 2018:6). Our fore-fathers made frantic efforts to access light and energy of different forms. Okudolo,

Amamkpa & Ani (2019) maintain that without sustainable energy security, the quest for societal development and transformation will be reduced.

Isuokoma is one of the clans in Igboland that lacks electricity thereby undermining the quest for sustainable development. It will be recalled that the roadmap to electricity supply in Isuokoma has a long history notwithstanding how slow the project has been. The World Bank assistance in solar- electrification was pursued by Isuachara, Umuniko and Obeagu people. Ironically, it was that of Obeagu that was approved. The project is currently ongoing and is expected to light up the heavy forest environment of some parts of Obeagu when completed (KI-1, 2020). The quest to ensure sustainable electricity in other parts of Isuokoma has recorded the contributions of individuals that made historic efforts to approach NEPA, PHCN and recently EEDC. It would be recalled that Chief Nwanoke made efforts to mount electricity poles in parts of Isuokoma. Consequently, under Obasi Nwode, the wires/ high-tension cables were connected initially through Abaomege-Ukawu to Isuokoma through Agbaebor. The light was drawn to Nkwoagu Isu where it was unfortunately commissioned with generator due to multiple challenges that undermined the logistics (KI-2, 2020; KI-3, 2020). Under the leadership of Chinyere Nwanoke, she made personal efforts to access the support of the Ebonyi State Community and Social Development Agency under Mbam's leadership. Her effort and that of her supporting group lead to the bringing of two transformers. In order to ensure that Mgbaleze people had faster access to electricity, Chinyere Nwanoke met with the then Deputy Governor of Enugu State, Chief Sunday Onyebuchi that is from Ishiogbo Nara to discuss the possibility of sourcing light for Mgbaleze through Ishiogbo Nara. The then Deputy Governor instructed his townsmen to support the Isuokoma people and ensure that they access light without disturbances. The Mgbaleze electricity was consequently stepped down but the outstanding debt of nearly four million naira undermined its full operation at that time (KI-2, 2020). Olufemi and Mokuye (2018) maintain that there should be collective responsibility among

sub-sectors of electricity industry as well as individuals to ensure that remote areas would have access to energy supply.

It should be noted that “the operation of the power industry should not be run, regulated or subjected to the dictates of party politics” (Olufemi & Mokuye, 2018: 13). This is very necessary because electricity supply is fundamental to the development of any society. There will hardly be any sustainable business in any part of the globe without access to electricity. Unfortunately, if the access to electricity causes heavy cost burden on the investor or entrepreneur, businesses in that area will begin to suffer. Thus, to ensure sustainable development, men and women of goodwill need to contribute in the process of ensuring that all Isuokoma communities have adequate power supply.

The education sector is another area that fundamental in the quest for sustainable communal and national development (Ani, 2011). Chief Ifeanyi Chukwuma Odii (Anyi Chuks) has contributed positively in this direction. He did renovate a school in Isuachara and made huge financial donations to Isu Secondary School (KI-3, 2020; KI-4; 2020). He has also built houses for a number of less privileged people in Isuokoma and that is worthy of praise. The individual philanthropic culture of Anyi Chuks is popular both in Isu, Ebonyi State and Nigeria at large. However, a review of the focus of Anyi Chuks philanthropic culture could be redirected towards that path of sustainable Isuokoma development. He could graciously channel money into the construction of industries and tertiary institutions in Isuokoma as done by Innoson group and other Nnewi business moguls. Such industries will primarily generate employment, which will place Isuokoma on the path of industrialization, thereby attracting more investments and government presence.

The place of integrated individual and group efforts in Isuokoma’s development can also be seen more in the journey towards the emergence of

the new Federal College of Education (Technical) Isu. It would be recalled that Chief Sunny Bright Chukwu and Bar Vitalis Ude Umanta led the group that contacted Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu, the current Minister of Science and Technology and scheduled the visit to his house at Uburu (KI-5, 2020, KI-6, 2020; KI-7, 2020). They followed-up on that visit leading to the location of the tertiary institution in Isu. Noteworthy is the fact that the quest for location of the school has opened up a number of developmental challenges. It has shown that Isuokoma generally lacked a descent secondary school where sound pedagogy and sustainable learning can take place. This is due to unlimited lack of infrastructure and other necessary facilities for sound teaching and learning. It also reveals the degree of disunity and the cry of marginalization within the communities that make up Isuokoma.

Furthermore, it has heightened the politicization of institutions that should lead to the sustainable development of Isuokoma, which has multiple negative implications. This problem emerged because liberal democracy as practiced in Nigeria has the problem of managing majority, especially when the majority neglects the part of equity and humane development. Again, liberal democracy is driven by the oligarchy of few political elite, whose selfish ambitions in many cases undermines the collective good of majority of the citizenry (Ani, 2013). The above problems of politicization of development, impoverishment of Isuokoma men and women in a bid to attain self or group or village interest must be consciously evaluated and reduced in all actions and inactions of the Isuokoma Progressive Minds, in order to allow for maximal contributions of Isuokoma men and women from every strata of the society, towards the transformation of our clan. In order to achieve that, the Isuokoma Progressive Minds must make extraordinary efforts to pursue mega developmental projects that will give a stamp of transformative ambassadors to the members of the Association. It is when the Progressive Minds begin to flood Isuokoma communities with outstanding projects that were strategically planed or high jacked from

political circles that the poor and downtrodden in Isuokoma will passionately encourage selfless development of the clan.

### **Strategic Roadmap to the Sustainable Transformation of Isuokoma**

The quest for the transformation of Isuokoma should be driven by patriotic townsmen and women who are conscious of the fact that individuals are born to transform their societies. Emphasis for speedy Isuokoma development should be laid on the areas of industrialization and business development, electrification, road construction, hospital facilities, federal employment and educational development as major areas of human and resource development paths. The Progressive Minds need to discourage the act of dashing money while encouraging the use of such money for sustainable vocational, business and technological trainings that will transform the innate talents of the persons targeted in the quest for sustainable empowerment.

There is the need to re-orientate the minds of Isuokoma townsmen as well as women and ensure that people think of one project or another that will change the face of their communities at one time or another. One way of achieving that is the revival of age-grade driven development or turning all Isuokoma associations into a platform for the birth of multiple projects towards kindred, village, community and overall Isuokoma clan development. When each Isuokoma group, from the kindred to the overall clan level thinks of Isuokoma development principally, the culture of selfish enrichment of an individual when millions around him or her are dying of mass penury, will start reducing.

The Isuokoma Progressive Minds could also pursue the construction of Isuokoma Entrepreneurial University. This will be a business-oriented university that will have the normal primary, secondary and university programs and then establish multiple businesses. The businesses that will be incorporated there-in will include a functional university radio station, manufacturing companies that can produce major goods that Isuokoma business moguls have expertise in, hence those university production units

will continuously generate money for the funding of the university. At the onset, shares could be sold to allow people to buy into and support the project. The money generated from the sale of shares would be used to start up the University while individual and group donors within and outside Isuokoma communities would be encouraged to support the project (KI-5, 2020). If given birth to, the Isuokoma Entrepreneurial University will become a multiple mother of companies and businesses, while employing its youths, men and women. The university will give scholarship to her sons and daughters till graduation and they can in turn serve any arm of the university for few years before exiting and pursuing other existential adventures. Only credible and selfless Isuokoma men and women would be encouraged to manage units and departments of the institution while sourcing the best of diligent hands to ensure progressive turn-around of positive outputs from the university and its component businesses.

### **Implications for Political and Environmental Transformation**

The political implications of individual driven development projects are multi-dimensional. First, the individuals that drive community development becomes influential townsmen and women that often wield the powers to influence communal behaviours in relations to politics and governance. Their sphere of influence due to their contributions to community development begins to influence the public opinion of many political actors within that political environment. It would be recalled that there is no permanent friendship in politics but rather, politics is driven by interests. Hence, men and women whose developmental interests have been advanced positively will tend to follow the political path of those men and women that have championed or attracted sustainable development to the electorates in their local political wards or constituency.

Similarly, the political party that such community developmental actors enters tend to record the mass defection and increased party membership from all development and resource dependent apologists of communal

development. It is such movement or defection that sometimes changes, shakes, shapes and rewrites the dynamics of party affiliations as well as influences internal party democracy by influencing those to be nominated or elected into political party offices at the grassroots. It is worthy of note that Sunny Bright, Chinyere Nwanoke and Ifeanyi Chuks have successfully influenced the political ideology, party affiliation and public opinion of many sons and daughters of Isuokoma through the projects that they have championed, which have gotten widespread support from well-meaning sons and daughters of Isuokoma land.

The environmental impact of individual and group championed - developmental projects cannot be neglected. It can easily be evaluated from the multiplier advantages of social amenities to individuals, groups, communities and societies across the globe. The presence of electricity has multiplier environmental advantages. It generates the needed energy for the rise of many forms of businesses. It leads to the preservation of food and makes life at home more comfortable. The implication of electricity towards sustainable health management in rural areas cannot be neglected. While it should be noted that electricity could spark and burn some material items, destroy human resources and structures; the multiple positive advantages that it presents for even the poor farmer in Isuokoma cannot be under-estimated. Furthermore, the rise of schools through individual and group support has unlimited advantages for the environmental transformation of Isuokoma. The school plant creates the foundation for increased habitation, clustering and increased concentration of houses around the school, thereby changing the people's pattern of settlement. The school naturally drives road construction, rise of markets as well as increased transportation and other small scale businesses that would be clustered within the school environment. Ultimately, the school enhances the global human resource index, which influences the standard of living of many men and women. There is no gainsaying that the new world order and the 21<sup>st</sup> century is driven by

knowledge economy that is hatched in schools as well as other citadel of learning.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has traced the origin of Isuokoma while emphasizing that the clan is bedeviled by multiple development challenges. It documents the historic efforts made by a number of Isuokoma men and women in the quest to transform the clan. It made a number of recommendations on the path that can lead to sustainable development of Isuokoma clan. What remains certain is that anything the mind of man can clearly imagine, believe-in and diligently pursue remains attainable. If the Isuokoma Progressive Minds will turn their social media and physical contacts as well as communication into channels for the sharing and dissemination of ideas towards the development of the clan; one day, God will allow good environment for the realization of a particular developmental goal and the people would progress to another stage of Isuokoma development.



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