

Election and Security Challenges: Critical Issues in Nigeria's 2023 General Election**Francisca Obiageli Ifedi¹; Elias C. Ngwu²; Rebecca G. Nnamani*²**¹Department of Political Science and International Relations, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike²Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.***Correspondences:** rebecca.nnamani@unn.edu.ng**Abstract**

It has since been proven that the health of democracies, of whatever type and range, depends on the electoral procedure. This implies, that the spirit of democracy rests on election where leaders emerge through the sovereign power of the people. Since the end of the cold war, democracy has assumed the status of a universal norm as a result of which various governments lay claims to some form of democratic credentials. In spite of its global or universal acceptance, electoral process in the developing world has been marred by myriad security challenges. This has been particularly pronounced in Nigeria. Such challenges range from thuggery and arson, kidnapping and maiming to killing of political opponents. Against the backdrop of the current spiral of insecurity in Nigeria, this paper explores the implication of such security challenges for the conduct of the upcoming 2023 general election in Nigeria. The paper adopted the theory of the post-colonial state as its framework of analysis. Data were generated using documentary method while qualitative-descriptive method was engaged in analyzing the data. In the light of the above, the study found that the deliberate failure of the previous and incumbent administrations to address the recurring internal security challenges in Nigeria poses a real threat to the smooth and orderly conduct of the 2023 general election. The paper, therefore, identified the urgent need for the government to prioritize the tackling of the multifaceted security challenges in Nigeria as part of the preparations for the conduct of the 2023 general election. It argues that without deliberate effort to tackle these security challenges, the 2023 general elections, and by extension Nigeria's tottering democracy is greatly imperiled.

Keywords: Election; security challenges; democracy; electoral violence; Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

Introduction

Election as process of leadership recruitment has become a universal phenomenon. Its orchestration has been given fillip by the contemporary globalization process that which prescribes that every nation-state in the contemporary era must imbibe the spirit of democracy in its leadership recruitment. Going by this global demand, therefore, African states have since embarked on the path of democratization with varying degrees of successes. Nigeria embraced this global demand on May 29, 1999 after many decades of military authoritarianism thereby launching the nation's Fourth Republic. In Nigeria, the application of the electoral process in her historical

development can be traced to the 1922 Clifford constitution that introduced the elective principle. Subsequent upon this development, general elections have been held both in the first and second republics spanning from 1959, 1964, 1965, to 1979 and 1983. In 1993, there was another general election that could have brought about the third republic but that republic became a still-birth due to the annulment of that election the Babangida military junta.

Since 1999 that the contemporary democratic process emerged, there have been six successive general elections in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019. Most of these elections have been marked by one electoral violence or the other that posed serious challenges to democratization process in Nigeria. This has led analysts to conclude that electoral violence is an endemic feature of the Nigerian electoral process and an ever-present threat to the sustenance of the nation's democracy. This also led to concerns that the upcoming 2023 general elections may not be any different as far as the prevalence of violence before, during and after elections is concerned. This concern is further heightened by the wide-spread security challenges that has characterized the polity over the past decade or more. Such security challenges range from the activities of the terrorist groups like the Boko-Haram and the Islam State West African Province (ISWAP), Fulani herdsmen militants, other militant groups, the separatist movement, and bandits. Beside activities of these groups are the operations of kidnapers, armed robbers, ritualists and sundry violent criminals. The minor matter of political thuggery and the activities of traditional entrepreneurs of violence during elections in Nigeria cannot be countenanced as they all pose direct and indirect threat to the success of the 2023 general election.

To add to the milieu, Nigeria's security agencies that are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring peaceful, free and transparent elections have often been found to be complicit in the perpetration of electoral violence. Against this disquieting scenario, the central focus of this paper is to examine the potential threat of the country's myriad security challenges to the successful conduct of the upcoming 2023 general elections in Nigeria. For clarity, the rest of the paper is presented in the following order: theoretical perspective; brief literature survey; methodology; empirical presentation of data; and conclusion.

Theoretical Perspective

The study adopts the theory of the post-colonial state as its framework of analysis. The post-colonial direction was formed as colonized countries became independent. It is concerned with both how European nations captured and controlled third world cultures and how these groups

have since responded to and resisted those encroachments. Some of the major proponents of the theory of the post-colonial states Holsti (1995) and Ake (1981, 1985).

Holsti approached the post-colonial state theory from the perspective of dependency to explain the relationship between the colonized states and the metropolitan states (colonizers). Essentially, the idea of the interdependence in the lexicon of international relations implies equality and symmetry between societies. But contrary to the position of the developing states, asymmetry and inequalities are the most salient characteristics of contemporary international politics. Dependency analysts vigorously contested the characterization of the world contained in the pluralist-interdependence model. That model may be a reasonable rendering of the dynamics of relations between advanced capitalist states – the colonial masters but it cloaks the exploitative realities of the poor countries (the colonized) with an egalitarian vocabulary.

The picture of relations between societies in the dependency model is hierarchical, unequal, and exploitative. This is because the world capitalist system really began to develop during the colonial process as the European merchants and slavers expanded the continental commercial system across the globe. The colonization of Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East was hardly undertaken for the benefit of the local populations. It was done for the commercial gain of Europe, through plunder, monopolies, and slavery of the colonized territories. The imperialist exploited the natural resources of what is today called the third world, paying little or nothing for the benefits.

Over the centuries, the economies of the colonized were structured to fit the needs of the colonial masters. The colonial authorities consolidated the doctrine of mercantilism with a view to preventing local industrialization, so as to prevent competition against the industries in the metropolitan states. The colonies could not compete in the international trade system. Their markets were tied exclusively to the mother country. The educational and political institutions of the colonies were transplants of British, French, Dutch, German and Spanish institutions. These institutions were created with little regard for the needs of the indigenous colonies.

Formal independence for the colonies did not change much. The personnel changed, but the superior-subordinate economic, communications and cultural structure remained. This situation is termed neo-colonialism, or dependency. This situation witnessed the creation of the indigenous political merchants known as the “Comprador bourgeoisie”. They were recruited to sustain the economic interest of the imperial masters. Thus, this class of indigenous capitalists was designed

to sustain the strong trade and investment links between the centre (the industrial countries) and the peripheries (the former colonies).

In this hierarchical economic structure, the centre drains economic surplus (capital) from the poor countries. This is in the form of profits that are remitted, royalties, transfer payments, licensing fees, the sale of technology, and the like. The consequence of this scenario is that the poor countries are constantly decapitalized and their economies remain largely dependent upon decision made in New York, London, Paris and other metropolitan centres.

The edifices of exploitation is intensified by a variety of paternalistic leverages, which takes the form of foreign aid; grants of military assistance; training and retraining of officers and troops; cultural exchange program (where the flow is from north to south; invasion of the developing countries through the centre's media (film, television programming, and the like); advertising, and many other forms of indirect control and influence. The dependent status of the colonized states seemed to be widening because of the complex technological innovation and advancement of the imperial states.

The emphasis of Ake (1981), on the theoretical perspective centres on the class structure. Just like Holsti who identified the creation of comprador bourgeoisie to perpetuate colonial domination, Ake similarly, identified the emergence of the indigenous class as a colonial creation. Taken off from what he termed enclave development, that appeared to be a manifestation of the class contradictions of post-colonial socio-economic formations, he denotes inequalities the *prima facie* of the contradiction.

The inequalities evident among the sections and regions of the country combined with other forces of disunity to produce a brand of politics that threatens the very existence of these nations. In this type of politics, there is a frantic effort by political competitors to control the central government at all costs. Thus, the theory shows how the ruling class in the post-colonial state like Nigeria has slowed down the development of the country's electoral system. The theory is also based on the assumption that the political class of the contemporary state relentlessly device means of perpetuating themselves in power. They use all the paraphernalia of the state to assume dominance over others. According to Ake, monopoly tendencies and market imperfections are highly significant features of the post-colonial economy. They affect the character of accumulation, the prospect of liquidating underdeveloped and the characteristics of politics.

As a colonial creation, the electoral processes in the post-colonial states, especially the African region and Nigeria in particular is engulfed with all manners of electoral violence or security threat with a view to capturing political power. These attributes (electoral violence) were perhaps the teachings which the imperial masters taught the emerging colonized political elites which emphasized that political power is never “gotten on a platter of gold”. Nigeria is a good example for both the theoretical and empirical study of political violence. The source and dynamics of political violence in Nigeria are fundamentally comparable to those of civil violence in other parts of colonized states. Nigeria rioters/demonstrators share with their counterparts in the colonized region certain psychological characteristics. Most of them feel frustrated in the pursuit of their political and economic goals and in seeking redress for grievances. As a consequence, they are angered, and taking cognizance of their immediate social circumstances, they became desperate enough to act on that anger. This account for the armed revolt in western region immediately after the 1965 parliamentary elections because of the perceived wide rigging of the election. This frustration can also be used to explain the rebellion in the Middle Belt region, especially the Tiv for most part of the first Nigerian republic, 1960- 1966.

Today, privatization policy is the in-thing among the running elites. The essence is to divert public wealth to private enclave with a view to expanding their individual primitive accumulation. Thus, in the contemporary Nigeria, the political elites have continually strived to perpetuate themselves in power, hence, corruption, and high-level impunity has characterized the post-colonial Nigeria. The dangers of this scenario appear to be fanning the ember of discontentment among the teeming populace. One of the consequences of that manifest glaringly during electoral process in Nigeria has remained electoral violence and other forms of social vices perpetuated by the group holding power, the group losing power and the group seeking power.

The magnitude of the security threat is as a result of colonial mentality injected into the psyche of the political gladiators who see election as a means of acquiring power so as to be in a better position to control the state wealth. To this effect, the proposal that the upcoming 2023, Nigeria general election would be marred by security challenges via electoral violence can be made. This is because history haunts us like a bitter shadow.

Brief Literature Survey

Myriad of writings on the electoral process and its attendant violence, especially in Africa have been raised from many circles especially, the pursuits of democracy. In most African

countries for Instance, developments suggest that elections appear to be only an expedient political exercise for the ruling political powers. Even where these regimes came into power through popular elections like in Zambia, they have since relapsed into autocratic rule, conducting fabricated elections (Adejumobi, 2000). Thus, the dominant practice is that most rulers organize electoral “coup d’état” which ensures their selection in the name of constitutional democracy. Tactics employed include, stifling the Opposition parties and reducing them to docility, covertly, corrupting the electoral process through election rigging. This conduct approximates what Huntington (1970) long described as “Liberal Machiavellian elections”.

The above descriptions fit the Nigerian electoral processes. The transition programme in Nigeria so far has witnessed considerable incidents of political violence. Many of the electoral violence of the past like political thuggery, rioting, intimidation of opponents, shooting, maiming and killing, snatching of electoral materials, arson and abduction of opponents, as witnessed in the first and second republic reared their ugly heads in the present Nigeria democratic dispensation, 1999 to date. This has prompted Joseph (1991 P.24) to assert that:

despite the abrupt changes in regimes that Nigeria witnessed since the second world war, there is such a degree of continuity of ideas, problems, even of political personage throughout this period, that each new regime seems to make a new phase in an on-going experiment.

He went further to posit that elections and violence are woven together in the collective consciousness of Nigerians. The considerable loss of life and property during the final general elections of the First Republic was still deeply etched in the minds of the populace.

Moreover, many of the surviving members of the political class of the first republic, and their political machinations had moved once gain to the fore of the country’s politics. The expectation that the history was likely to repeat itself in any elections under a civilian party government was therefore, a national and even self-fulfilling one for the Nigerian citizenry. Commenting on the issue of violence in Nigeria elections, Kurfi (1999) stated that:

in Nigeria, however, party politics as a relentless struggle to procure individual and group benefits via the temporary appropriation of public offices eventually reduces the electoral process to a Hobbesian state-of-war ---However, a situation of near chaos developed as the party campaigns and subsequent elections became marked by acts of increasing violence and lawlessness.

Ogunsanwo and Adamu approached the discourse from the perspective of the compromising character of security personnel and officers of the electoral umpire in aiding and

abetting electoral violence in Nigeria. They explained that “at the polling stations, such personnel can permit voting by the underaged persons, multiple voting, deliberately taking the wrong lists to particular polling stations or deliberately failing to sign and stamp the envelopes given to voters” (Ogunsanwo and Adamu, 1979 P.12).

Ake, supported this view when he stated that:

Politics in Nigeria is an all-consuming business. Not only does it consume the energies of all too many Nigerians because, it is the gateway to wealth, it is also all-consuming because of the ways in which it affects the operations of the major institutions of the nation. The judiciary in Nigeria, like the electoral commission and the security agencies, come under considerable pressure to relinquish its independent stance and adopt a partisan one (Ake, 1993 P. 177).

According to the report from AU Election Observation Mission (2003), in a number of states, minimum standards for democratic elections were not met --- observers witnessed and obtained evidence of widespread ballot stuffing amidst the presence of security personnel in Benue, Cross River, Delta, Enugu, Imo and Rivers to mention but eight. INEC staff were observed thumb-printing ballots in favour of the ruling party. There were also, so many cases of electoral malpractices, which were brought to the court, or the electoral tribunal which were settled in favour of the ruling party PDP.

From the survey demonstrated here, it is crystal clear that electoral violence and other vices characterized the Nigeria electoral outings. The 2023 general election as at the time of this writing is a future election in Nigeria. As such, the issues of electoral violence as raised by scholars did not capture vividly the 2023 general election. Thus, this paper sets out to remedy the lacuna.

Methodology

Documentary method of data collection was employed in the gathering of information. This has to do with the examination of historical documents, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, journals and internet materials. The paper also adopted qualitative descriptive method of analysis. Qualitative descriptive method looks at the individuals, groups, institution, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyze and interpret the entities and events (Best, 1970).

Data Presentation and Discussion

In Nigeria, democratic processes from 1960 to the contemporary era has been characterized by one security threat or the other. Most of the time, the longitude and latitude of the scenario have been occasioned by a number of variables or indices. Sometimes the variables are covert or overt

and are employed by the over ambitious Nigeria politicians who strive to get political power by all means. Significantly, the violence usually takes two dimensions viz: pre-electoral one and post-electoral that is, violence before the election and violence after the election. Interrogation of electoral violence in political science just like any other social science and law is evidence-driven. It is such evidence that gives prudence to the scientific status of the discipline. Thus, the study on election and security challenges in Nigeria can only be deduced from substantive evidence. So, to prove the earlier assertion on proposition, the incidents of electoral violence as witnessed in the first Republic especially in Tiv land, 1960-1964; 1962 western region crisis; and 1964 general electoral crisis can provide the litmus test.

The Tiv Riots, 1960-1964

The Tiv riots of the 1960 was the aftermath of the 1959 federal election. The problem was precipitated by the pro-supporters of the Northern People Congress (NPC) ruling party in the northern region and the supporters of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), led by Joseph Tarka –a prominent party in the Tiv Division. An NPC candidate was beaten up and dumped into a pond by UMBC supporters. The intensity of the riot gathered momentum when the three policemen that were sent to safeguard the area were over-powered by the rioters. The development would have extended to the dispersion of the Vande Ikya market if not the timely intervention of the reinforced security agencies.

By March 1960, a greater part of Tiv Division and Wukari and Laifa Division (the neighbouring Divisions of Tiv), in the present-day Taraba and Nassarawa State respectively, the people became disgusted with the government and openly defied its authorities.

Three factors were primarily responsible for the 1960 Tiv imbroglio. These include:

- (i) The mobility of the NPC government to rip the problem in the bud by appealing to the Tiv Division NPC to stop the intimidation and harassment of its opponents in UMBC and to allow free party competition.
- (ii) Failure of the Regional Government to investigate and consider the expressed grievances of the Tiv.
- (iii) The stubborn refusal of the northern region government of dissolve and democratize the Native Authorities (NA) as demanded by the people.

The above factors contributed to the cynicism and mistrust of the government by the people. Thus, the quest to seek for self-help developed among the people.

In September, 1960, a new dimension was added to the political violence in Tiv land. When the NPC supporters were vehemently attacked by angry mob purported to be supporters of UMBC and AC alliance. This occurred when a convoy of NPC left Gboko for Wukari for a provincial party conference. This convoy was “ambushed by an angry mob, armed with poisoned bow, arrows, spears and dane guns” (Anifowose, 1982 P. 115). On that day, the UMBC was determined to frustrate the NPC convention in retaliation of similar action noted to them in previous months. The lorry drivers and some of the NPC delegates were mercilessly attacked that the convoy had to return to Gboko to seek for the assistance and protection of the police. The police which later accompanied the NPC convoy was attacked. The riot squad of the Nigeria police opened fire on the rioters and this led to the killing of one person. The response of the police that saw to the death of one of the rioters provided the outbreak and escalation of the Violence, particularly arson, between September and October 1960. The rioters burned down houses belonging to NPC functionaries and supporters but schools, hospitals and public buildings were excluded from the mayhem.

Subsequently upon the above development, several reforms reconciliation strategies were initiated by the government. But unfortunately, the efforts did not yield any positive result. As a result, by 1964, there was another outbreak of Tiv crisis. The outbreak of fresh violence in which the participants were again mostly UMBC supporters demonstrated that the underlying causes of the 1960 troubles had not been addressed but only suppressed. The level of intensity of the riot of 1964 was far greater than that of 1960. The casualty toll both in civilian and police was heavy.

The 1962 Western Region Crisis

The 1962 Western Region crisis was another significant one witnessed in the first republic. The major actors in the crisis were Chief Obafemi Awolowo- led faction of Action Group and the supporters of the S.I. Akintola-led faction.

The major causes of the crisis centered on four reasons:

- **Personality clash between the Duo**

The personality clash between the Awolowo, the leader of the Action Group and Akintola, the Deputy leader was amplified by the perceived feeling of Awolowo that his deputy was not only over ambitious to overthrow him but that Akintola was an egocentric person who always wished that his opinion and ways should hold sway in the party management and

programs. This made Awolowo to view Akintola as a traitor and perfidy personified who must be removed.

▪ **Power Struggle:**

There was the general allegation by the Akintola group that Awolowo who was the Shadow prime minister (leader of the opposition) in the Federal House of Representatives wanted to be consulted as the party leader before any important decisions were to be taken by Western Regional government headed by Akintola. This did not go down well with Akintola and his consortium. They rather saw Awolowo as a political usurper who wanted to govern the region by proxy.

▪ **Ideological Differences:**

Ideological rivalry among the members of Action Group in the western region fanned the ember of discord. Introduction of democratic socialism as the new ideology polarized members of Action Group into antagonistic ideological groups of the radicals and conservatives. The protagonist of the democratic socialism in the party envisaged a mixed economy that would imbibe some elements of socialism and capitalism where elements of public enterprise and private ownership would be combined. The capitalist conservative members, on the other hand, who had commercial and business interest frowned at the democratic socialist principle because the socialist ideology to them, jettisons competition and profit maximization.

▪ **Faction in Decision Over Coalition:**

Another serious conflicting issue that polarized members of the Action Group was the question of whether or not the party should participate in the formation of the National Government at the federal level. The Awolowo led faction fundamentally rejected an alliance with the NPC controlled government at the centre, instead they preferred a progressive alliance with the NCNC so as to overturn the NPC domination in the parliament and subsequently for the National government. The Akintola's group on their own side, supported "holy alliance" with NPC so as to consolidate the NPC control and subsequently free themselves from politics of opposition and its attendant denial of possible juicy positions.

As the Action Group crisis of the western region continued to defy all solutions because of the intractability of the fractionalization in the party, the region was branded as "wild wide west".

As a result of the prevailing situation, the Governor of the Western Region - Adesoji Aderemi dismissed Akintola when he observed the premier no longer command the confidence of the legislative. Chief D.S. Adegbenro, the Minister of Local Government was nominated as the head of Government by the party and subsequently, made premier of the region.

When the regional legislators convened at Ibadan to ratify the appointment, fresh fighting broke out within the legislative chamber and the mace, the symbol of parliamentary authority was destroyed. A second meeting was along the line convened to see if peace could be made. But unfortunately, it ended up in uproar. The Prime Minister that summoned the Federal Parliament to an emergency meeting on 29 May, 1962 to determine what action could be taken in the exceptional circumstances prevailing in western Nigeria. The motion to declare state of emergency was put before the Federal Parliament and the vote was 209 votes to 36 in the House of Representatives and 32 votes of to 7 with two abstentions in the senate. Subsequent upon this voting, a state of emergency was immediately declared in the Western Region and Senator M.A. Majekodumi, the Minister of Health was appointed by the Prime Minister as Administrator of the Region.

1964 General Electoral Crisis

The 1964 general election was an electoral battle between the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The NNA was composed of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), Akintola's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), and opposition parties representing ethnic minorities in the Mid-Western and Eastern regions while UPGA was an alliance of National Council for Nigerian Citizens and the remnants of the Action Group (AG) and the two minority-based northern allies, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). The electoral battle produced a political stalemate which for the first time since 1914 amalgamation left the country in a state of anarchy for about three days.

The magnitude of the political impasse between NNA and UPGA saw the utilization of Power of incumbency in all ramifications within the sphere of authority available to each party. For instance, at the national level where the NNA held sway, apart from arresting, detaining and jailing some members of the UPGA, the NNA deliberately prevented some candidates of its opponent, (UPGA) from filing nomination papers and declared several of its candidates unopposed. In addition, the election was characterized by nationwide rigging, thuggery, violence and arson. Similar action repeated itself in UPGA controlled regional government. Instances

abound in Eastern and mid-western regions where UPGA spared no effort, fair or foul in brutalizing members of the NNA and employed state machinery to strengthen its electoral position. Equally, the story in the western region was the same. For instance, in the region where the NNNDP formed the government, the AG demonstrated that it had its own apparatus of violence. The demonstration led to the murder of two prominent local leaders of the NNNDP – Adepoju Odufanade and Fukunmoju.

In the face of the stalemate, the supporters of UPGA and other non-actors called on the President, Dr. Azikiwe to dissolve the Federal Government and form a coalition Government of equal member from NNA and UPGA on interim basis until the country's political climate favoured the conduct of general election. The NNA jettisoned the call and on 30 December, 1964, the contentious election was held. The election was boycotted by the UPGA in western Nigeria. The NNA won majority seats in the parliament and because Nigeria was a parliamentary democracy then, the incumbent Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa expected the president to invite him to form a government. The president was reluctant to recognize the election and the formation of a new government following the perceived violence and rigging that characterized the election. Thus, the country was left without a legally-constituted government for about three days.

Although, the deadlock was eventually resolved in favour of the NNA after much national calls from every nook and cranny of the country, the new formed government of Balewa emerged without addressing the fundamental issues that caused the crisis. The relief was transient because the subsequent post-electoral violence that resurfaced from 1965 threw Nigeria into political quagmire that eventually led to the intervention of the military and terminated the first republic.

1979 general elections were relatively peaceful in contrast to the escalation of violence that characterized the elections of the 1950s and 1960s. Though, the 1979 election was not marred by violence, its outcome, especially with regards to the result of the election to office of the president was seriously disputed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the UPN who went to court over what constituted 2/3 of 19. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) has scored 33% of the total votes cast, having won the requisite 2/3 majority in 12 out of the 19 states of the federation, while the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), scored 29.2% of the votes.

The supreme court in a unanimous decision upheld the election of Alhaji Shehu Shagari of NPN earlier declared winner by Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), thus, deftly resolving the constitutional impasses as to the rightly interpretation of 2/3 of the then 19 states. The civil

populace demonstrated an unusual readiness to overlook various electoral transgressions by the parties and the seeming connivance of FEDECO in the imbroglio. This was because of the desire of the populace and the political class in particular, to bring authoritarian rule to an end after thirteen years of military rule. The consequences of not learning from past mistakes proved costly in the 1983 elections. There was massive rigging. Part of the rigging was made possible by criminal manipulation of the election register.

However, as the commission was preparing for the elections so were the political parties amassing all kinds of illegal and other resources to put into use. There were media reports of importation of guns, importation of ballots boxes and papers, as well as organization of private armies to protect their interests. The NPN- controlled government made use of the Army and Police to suppress political dissention. The Partisan attitude of the then Inspector-General of Police, was so apparent that many saw him as a card-carrying member of the NPN government. He issued statements that were meant to intimidate members of the opposition parties. There was also massive rigging of election by NPN in state like Ondo, Oyo, Kaduna and Anambra and this resulted in uncontrollable violence in those states. Arson, looting, and politically motivated killings became the order of the day. So blatant and widespread was the subversion of the electoral process by the political class and their hirelings that the ordinary citizens lost faith in the democratic process and openly began to canvass for the military to rescue the nation. As if heeding those calls, the military struck once again on December 31, 1983 and terminated the Nigerian second experiment at democratic rule.

Following the coup d'état, on 31st December, 1983, Nigeria was once more relaunched into military government where Major General Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the new Head of State. The Buhari government lasted for almost one and a half (1 ½) years when Nigeria witnessed another counter Coup in August 1985, which brought General Ibrahim Babangida into power. Within the era, the global quest for the democratization of all states across the globe began to gather momentum. As a result of this, Nigeria embraced the demand by instituting the Transition Programme. The 1993 Nigeria elections were held on 12 June 1993. The election was the outcome of a transitional process to civil rule. Nigerians from all parts of the country and foreign observers adjudged the conduct of the elections by the new commission known as the National Electoral Commission (NECO) as peaceful, free and fair. Despite this, the result of the election which indicated that the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, Chief MKO Abiola was on the way

to a landslide victory over Bashir Tofa of the National Republican Convention (NPC), was annulled by the military government.

The renewed process of transition to civilian rule progressed in August 1998 following the sudden demise of General Sani Abacha. The leading parties that emerge out of the process were the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). At the local government elections which took place on 5 December, 1998, the PDP gained control of about 60% of local councils. INEC ruled that only the PDP, APP and AD had received the requisite number of votes at the local elections to be allowed to contest the elections at state and federal levels in January and February 1999. At the party conventions in February 1999, Obasanjo was nominated as the PDP presidential candidate. The AD-APP alliance adopted Olu Falae of the AD as its presidential candidate.

On 27 February 1999, the general election to usher in the third republic was held and the PDP presidential candidate won the race. Although, the 1999 election was relatively smooth in the sense that it was relatively free of political violence perhaps because of the fact that the military midwifed the election. However, the propensity of electoral crisis reared its ugly head through the activities and actions of the political gladiators. Nevertheless, the 1999 election was relatively smooth in the sense that, it was relatively free of political violence. Deegan (2003) observed that the problems associated with the 1999 elections were attributed to the absence to transitional structures, as Nigeria only launched into elections barely 11 months after the death of General Abacha.

However, with the inception of the Fourth Republic, the usual struggle for power, position and privileges amongst politicians and party loyalists took the front burner. This struggle for perquisites of office led to both inter-and intra-party squabbles, sometimes resulting in violent clashes amongst party supporters. Parts of the consequences of this development, was the fractionalization of parties, and the emergence of numerous contending party warlords, whose apparent differences were not based on any ideological belief, policy objective or strategy, but on who wields power for the sake of power. For instance, there was a violent confrontation between the national factions in the Alliance for Democracy (AD). Also, clashes between supporters of Governor Bisi Akande and Deputy Governor Iyiola Omisore in Osun State, Senator Modu Sherriff and Governor Malla Kachallah in the APP-controlled Borno State, Senator Olusola Saraki and Governor Mohammed Lawal in Kwara State, Governor Sam Egwu and the then Senate President,

Pius Anyim, in Ebonyi State, Governor Chimaroke Nnamani and Senator Jim Nwobodo in Enugu State, Governor Kure and Prof. Jerry Gana in Niger State, Governor Mbadiniju and Chief Emeka Offor in Anambra State amongst others. These political confrontations resulted in some cases, in the violent killings of numerous persons as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Some examples of victims of politically-motivated killings and attempted assaults in Nigeria between 1999-2006.

S/N	Victims of Political Conflicts	Date Killed or Attacked	Remarks
1.	Mr. Sunday Ugwu	September 9, 1999	This was a case of mistaken identity as the victim was the elder brother of Hon. Nwabueze Ugwu, the target who is a member of Enugu State House of Assembly.
2.	Chukwudozie Nwachukwu	January 10, 2000	This victim and the next one (in serial no. 3) were brutally murdered by Bakassi Boys in Abia State.
3.	Okechukwu Mmaduekwe	January 10, 2000	Same as the preceding narration.
4.	James Ibori	February 4, 2001	Delta State Governor escaped death at the hands of assassins by the whiskers. The crisis leading to the attack was intra-party.
5.	Momoh Lawal	March 5, 2001	A victim of intra-party conflict between ANPP and PDP in the Okene LGA of Kogi state.
6.	An unidentified person killed.	August 24, 2001	A result of Protest by Market Women and Youths against the Council Interference in Internal Affairs of Ebony State by Senator Anyim Pius Anyim.
7.	Odunayo Olagbaju	December 21, 2001	The victim was a member of the Osun State House of Assembly and was killed by an unknown assailant.
8.	Bola Ige	December 23, 2001	The victim was the late Minister of Justice whose assassination is still a riddle that the police have not unraveled till date.
9.	Three students reportedly lost their lives.	March 7, 2002	This incident occurred after a PDP Rally held at Efurum Warri, the headquarters of the Petroleum Training Institute.
10.	Janet Olapade	August 13, 2002	A prominent PDP leader clubbed to death by assailants, mainly youths, for preventing them from pasting the poster of a chairmanship candidate on her house.
11.	Ahmed Pategi	August 15, 2002	The victim was the Kwara state chairman of the PDP who was murdered along with his police orderly when his car was accosted on his way to Abuja.
12.	Victor Nwankwo	August 29, 2002	The victim was the younger brother of Dr. Arthur Nwankwo, the founder of the Eastern

			Mandate Union (EMU). A high profile politician.
13.	Bannabas Igwe and his wife Abigail	September 1, 2002	Both of them were lawyers with the husband also serving as the chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association of Onitsha Branch.
14.	John Nunu	September 26, 2002	The victim was the Treasurer of Akossa LGA.
15.	Alhaji Isyaku Mohammed	September 2002	The victim was until his death, the National Vice-chairman of the United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP) for the North-West.
16.	Dele Arojo	November 25, 2002	The victim was the PDP's gubernatorial aspirant for Lagos state.
17.	Unspecified number of people died from gunshot wounds in Ibadan	January 13, 2003	This was intra-party clash at the Oyo state secretariat of the ANPP.
18.	Adamu Wasiri	January 13, 2003	Gangs from the rival ANPP attacked campaign convoy of the PDP gubernatorial candidate Adamu Wasiri at the Gulani-Bularafa-Dokini area of Yobe state.
19.	A soldier and three youths were killed in clash over PDP primary elections in Warri.	January, 2003	The cause was the rivalry between factions within the PDP.
20.	One person killed in Owo, Ondo state.	February, 2003	It was caused by factional fighting in the Alliance for Democracy (AD) party.
21.	Eight people killed in Benue state.	February 18, 2003	A security man attached to the residence of Paul Unongo, the ANPP candidate in Benue state, was killed by unknown persons. When news of the death got to ANPP supporters, believing that the victim was killed on a rampage mission, violence erupted which eventually led to the death of seven more persons.
22.	Assassination Attempt	February 23, 2003	An attempt on the life of the Speaker, Borno State House of Assembly Malla Inuwa Kobo, in Maiduguri by three gunmen. This incident led to the killing of a security man on duty on the fateful day.
23.	Ogbonnaya Uche	February, 2003	He was one of the Senatorial candidates of the ANPP in Imo state. Speculations were rife that he was eliminated because of his huge popularity and the high probability of winning the senatorial election.
24.	Theodore A. Agwatu	February, 2003	The victim was a principal secretary to the Imo state Governor.
25.	Eight people died in political clashes.	February, 2003	ANPP and PDP thugs engaged in a battle for supremacy in Jato-Aka, Kwande LGA.
26.	Mrs. Emily Omope (a.k.a Mrs. Thatcher)	March 3, 2003	She died on this day by the acid poured on her in December 2002. She belonged to the Alliance for Democracy party.

27.	Marshal Harry	March 5, 2003	The victim who started as a PDP stalwart decamped to the ANPP where he also became a leading member. He was the south-south coordinator of the presidential campaign of the ANPP.
28.	20 Houses burnt to ashes in Tunger Dan-Nupe, Bunza LGA, Kebbi state.	March 12, 2003	70 people were arrested. The fracas was between ANPP and PDP supporters of the respective gubernatorial candidates of the two parties.
29.	One person killed and several others wounded, including two commissioners in Obubra, Cross River State.	March 21, 2003	The incident occurred when the Governor of the state was on a campaign tour of the area, which is a stronghold of his former Deputy, now a gubernatorial candidate of the rival political party-ANPP.
30.	Moshood Gidado and Ibrahim Razak	March 21, 2003	One of the killings took place at the Idi-Ape family quarters of the Kwara state Governor, Alhaji Mohammed Lawal. The first of the two victims was the Governor's cousin; properties were also destroyed with several hundreds injured. This was as a result of inter-party conflict.
31.	One person killed	March 24, 2003	The unidentified victim was killed in Ogaminana in Adavi LGA of Kogi state in an inter-party clash.
32.	Chief Funsho Williams:	July 27, 2006	The PDP's gubernatorial candidate in the 2003 election and the most popular aspirant for Lagos state governorship in 2007.
33.	Chief Ayodeji Daramola	August, 2006	He was set to challenge the incumbent governor of Ekiti, Ayo Fayose, for the PDP ticket in 2007, was murdered.

Source: Adapted from Yaqub (2003, PP. 298-302)

The magnitude of the electoral violence that resulted to the maiming and killing of political opponents as demonstrated in the table above appeared to have engulfed the Nigerian nascent electoral process. Consequent upon this development, cynicism and apathy developed with people believing that whether they voted or not, stood for election or not, it would not make any difference because the ruling party then PDP had engaged all manners of manipulations to sidetrack the electoral process. This scenario reflected in the subsequent general election in 2003, 2007 and 2011. After the 2011 general election for instance, the Northern region became so disenchanted by the electoral process that they took the law into their hands to develop and fine-tune a new dimension of electoral violence following the widespread violence. The incidence saw to the loss of hundreds of lives, thousands displaced, and properties destroyed. According to Human Rights watch, about 140 were killed in political violence before the election alone from November 2010 to April, 2011. The day after the election. The reaction of the Northern region intensified the

activities of the terrorist groups in which it was alleged from every nook and cranny that the group had vowed to make Nigeria ungovernable for the government in power.

Another general election was held in Nigeria on 28 and 29 March, 2015. The election was extended to 29 March, due to delays and technical problems with the bio-metric card readers. Before the election, the ruling, PDP began to have internal party problem because of the perceived insistence of President Jonathan to run for the election. The development led to the fractionalization in the party and subsequently saw the emergence of a new PDP. The new PDP was championed by leading Northern Political elites in the party. It was the new PDP that entered into alliance with Congress for Progressive Change and Action Congress of Nigeria to form new party, All Progressive Congress (APC). The new party in its presidential primary overwhelmingly elected Major General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd) as the presidential candidate. Muhammadu Buhari won the presidential election. Incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan conceded defeat on 31 March, before the results from all 36 states were announced. The election marked the first time an incumbent president lost re-election in Nigeria. It also, marked the first time since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, that a sitting government peacefully transferred power to an elected member of the opposition. By 23 February, 2019, Nigeria went for another general poll. Incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari won the Presidential election. In both the 23rd February, presidential and 9th March, 2019 Gubernatorial elections in the country, very disturbing electoral violence was reported in Lagos, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Nassarawa, Benue, Plateau, Ekiti, Bauchi, Kwara, Oyo and River States with scores of lives lost and property destroyed. (CSSR, 2019).

Conclusion

Going by the periodic election in Nigeria, 2023 would mark another general election. The question that has remained in the lips of the analyst is: would the 2023 general election go down the way like other previous elections that were characterized by significant violence? The campaign for the 2023 general election has been flagged-off in October, 2022 and the political behaviour of the Nigerian political class since the declaration by INEC for the campaign appear inelastic reflecting perhaps the same pattern of behaviour exhibited in the campaigns that preceded previous elections. The essence of history as earlier established in this paper is to avoid repetition of the mistakes of the past. So, how can electoral violence be averted in the upcoming 2023 general election?

The general security situation in Nigeria is a worrisome development. Thus, there is palpable fear about the eruption of violence in the course of the 2023 elections. However, concerted efforts have been put in place to ensuring not only a violent free election but also a free and fair one. In this bid therefore, the new electoral Act of 2022 and the peace pact signed by the stakeholders of political parties attest to the new hope.

The new electoral Bill which was assented to by President Muhammadu Buhari on 25th February, 2022 repealed the 2010 Act and enacted a new Electoral Act. The new Act provides a legal framework that empowers the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to determine the mode of voting and transmission of results as well as to review declaration of election results made under duress. It legalized the use of technology in electoral and redefines the electoral process.

The peace pact on the other hand, was signed on 29th September 2022 by the stakeholders of the 18 political parties that are vying for elective positions in the 2023 general election for a peaceful conduct before, during and after the general election. The peace pact accord was put together under the auspices of the National Peace Committee (NPC) led by former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Other members include: Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar II; Cardinal John Onyeikon, Bishop Hassan Kukah and other eminent statesmen. The main objective of the peace accord is to support efforts at ensuring free, fair, credible and violent free elections in Nigeria. All Chairmen and Presidential candidates of the registered 18 political parties signed the peace accord under the guidance of officials of the NPC at a meeting held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja.

Going by the provisions of the electoral Act and the Peace Accord, one may not be far from being correct if one says that the 2023 general election in Nigeria would be free of electoral violence and all manner of security threat especially if the provisions of the Act and Peace initiatives are adhered to. On this premises, the following recommendations are made:

- **Strict Adherence to the 2022 Electoral Act and the Peace Accord:** Law generally guide the civilized society, hence, it is said that the modern society is guided by rule of law. The efficacy of any law rests on the peoples' obedience to the law. In international relations for instance, the principle of "pacta sunt servanda" (every agreement reached must be kept) holds sways in guiding treaties. This implies that the usefulness of law rest entirely on its application. Beautiful and germane as the Electoral Act and Peace Accord appear, their relevancy as far as

the 2023 general election is concerned demands complete adherence to the provisions, else the two will end up in mere political rhetoric. To this effect, the Nigeria government and relevant authorities must ensure that the provisions of the Electoral Act and Peace Accord are strictly observed so as to overcome the general impression that characterized Nigeria as country where good laws are made but not implemented.

- **National Legislation on the Reduction of the Nomination Fees/ The Over-Monetization of Political Offices:** Nigerian politics in the contemporary era is hugely monetized. Various political offices in Nigeria ranging from the local government to the national level have been made so attractive that no sooner a relatively poor fellow occupies any political position than he becomes a very rich person. Because of this, the struggle to gain political office is characterized by do or die affair. A situation whereby a ruling party pegged its nomination fee, for party primary to presidential aspirants up to one hundred million naira (₦100,000,000) is glaringly a flagrant over monetization of the electoral process. It is in fact embarrassing. Paying such a huge amount of money for party primary would make the contest so fierce and complex because every participant would employ all manners of strategy to outwit his opponent legally or illegally. To address such a situation, the government must come up with necessary registration that would make the political offices relatively unattractive. Such legislation has to compel every political party to either reduce the nomination fee or outright refunding of the candidate that lost the election. Political participation in its entirety is not restricted to only the people that have deep pockets or the rich but rather it is people-oriented, hence, it is also always said that in democracy, sovereignty lies with the people who look for integrity in their voting behaviour. In the civilized world, election is not won by personal egoism but rather by the ability and track record of the aspirants. If the over-monetization of politics as witnessed today in Nigeria is not checked, violent free election will continue to elude Nigeria.

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