

Electoral Violence and Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Democracy will not be consolidated in a state if its elections are characterized continuously by violence; consolidated democracy brings about good governance. Electoral violence has threatened the consolidation of democracy in most emerging democratic countries like Nigeria, resulting in the killings and destruction of properties before, during, and after elections. This study seeks to understand the causes, nature of electoral violence, how electoral violence affects the outcome of elections, and what the impacts of electoral violence are on the consolidation of democracy. The Marxian dialectical materialism theory was used as a foundation to understand man's action and the motives behind electoral violence. The theory is premised on how societies change from one mode of production to another and the relationships that exist between the superstructure and substructure. It identifies economic gain, among others, as the primary cause of the crisis. It, therefore, means that people struggle and might even use whatever means available to clinch to power for economic gain, as this "power" will enable them to determine how the state resources are to be distributed. The literature review revealed that electoral violence is responsible for the poor quality of leadership and underdevelopment in such democracies because it takes a credible process to produce credible leadership. The study uses secondary sources of data. It was discovered from the findings that attempt to rig the election led to violence, which in turn affected the outcome of the vote and consolidation of democracy. The paper concludes that democracy can only be consolidated when elections are devoid of violence, for only then can credible people who are capable of effecting positive change come into the process. The study recommends, among others, the use of card readers and electronic voting in all elections to checkmate electoral lapses and violence.

KEY WORD: Election, Violence, Democracy, Consolidation, State, Government, Development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

After over twenty years of uninterrupted democratic government in Nigeria (1999 to 2020), concern for the consolidation of democracy remains among scholars, political practitioners, civil societies, and the general public. Politically, the consolidation of democracy entails making democracy more effective and efficient. Electoral violence is one of the significant factors affecting the consolidation of democracy in emerging democracies like Nigeria. Fischer (2002) refers to electoral violence and conflict as to any action aimed at harassing or intimidating a political actor/participant in the process of election to obtain an electoral advantage. Politicians and their beneficiaries commit these acts. Igbuzor views it as:

Violence committed by political interest holders; it happens in the pre, during, and post-election process. Its manifestation is in the form of thuggery, use of deadly weapons to intimidate voters, use of force to disrupt political meetings or to vote at polling stations, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person, to obtain electoral advantage (Igbuzor, 2010:16).

The history of elections in Nigeria is one that shows that hardly had an election been held in Nigeria without visible reports of electoral violence. According to Aniekwe and Kushie (2011), the first election that was held in Nigeria after independence was in 1964, and the poll witnessed the killing, boycott, malpractice, and other forms of violence. From the commencement of the fourth republic, electoral violence has continued as the previous era. The election of 1999, in the view of Aniekwe and Kushie (2011), was accepted just to ease out the military regime that had ruled for over 30 years, and not for its credibility (Adesote and Abimbola 2014; Edet, 2015). Similarly, the 2003 General Elections witnessed the killing of opponents, electoral malpractices, manipulation of results, use of thugs, harassing of voters, and electoral officers (Durotoye, 2015).

Also, according to the Human Rights Watch Report (2004), over 100 people died, and several others injured in the month of May and April 2003 due to violence. In the 2007 general election, there were about 18 deaths between April 13 to 30th, 2007. In the 2011 general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reports:

The aftermaths of 2011 General Elections include deaths, injuries, arson, seizure, and destruction of election materials, assault, and abduction of political leaders or their supporters, looting, among other forms of election-induced malfeasances (INEC 2011:35).

According to the same report, five of his offices in Bauchi were destroyed, including private houses. Over 50 innocent persons, including Nine (9) Youth Corp Members, were also killed. There was also several other killing and destruction of properties in Kano, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, Niger State, Sokoto. European Union Election Observers Mission Final Report (2015) indicated over 41 incidents of violence on March 28, 2015, General Election, which caused the death of 19 persons, 4 cases of terrorist attacks, While before January 2015, the number of death was about 160. The recently held 2019 general elections of February 23 and March 9 were not an exception on electoral violence, as malpractice took different dimensions. Thanks to the conventional media and the new media (social media), as there were live verified video clips of vote-buying, underage voting, none use the Smart Card Reader for accreditation, ballot box snatching, harassment of INEC officers (adoption) and voters, gunshots, thugs and other armed men assisted by security men invading polling booth and moving ballot boxes (Okchukwu, Chukwuka, and Chikwado, 2019).

Electoral violence thus constitutes a limiting factor for the consolidation of democracy, as such violence has led to injuries, deaths, arson, and destruction of election materials, harassment of political opponents, and their supporters, including innocent citizens. These, therefore, constitute a problem that requires urgent attention if we have to have our democracy consolidated. This paper attempts to understand the significant factors causing electoral violence and, at large, affecting the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019. The paper uses secondary sources of data, which include textbooks, newspapers, internet, articles, journals, conferences, and seminar papers.

II. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

It will be necessary to clarify the concepts of election, electoral violence, and that of consolidation of democracy.

Election

Election is a selection process, which allows the people to vote for their choice during elections without fear or favor (Kimberling, 1992). It is about consent, free will to exercise one's preference; it is a virtue in any democratic government. Because it allows the people to periodically choose who will govern them in the next couple of years as specified in the constitution. It, therefore, means that election is a crucial feature of democracy (Nnanta, & Innocent, 2014). Democracy thrives when there is a periodic election, where the people will freely elect their preferred candidate/party. When elections are credible, the preferred candidates that will emerge will be determined by the electorate. To Alapiki (2004), voting is the actual determinant of how healthy democracy is in a country, as conduct of the election determines the health status of the commonwealth, level of acceptance of the government. To him, a vote is the weatherglass and stability of a government that is democratic.

Cyllah (2014) identified three electoral cycles: pre-electoral period, election period, and post-electoral period. Registrations of political parties/voters card, campaign, and others fall into the pre-electoral period. Voting and announcing of results among others falls into the period of election activities (Alabi, 2009). While reviews, reforms, and reactions as to accept/challenging the outcomes of the election are activities that dominate the post- result announcement period (Edet, 2015). Proper management of these is necessary to avoid derailing the process, as what happens in stage one will affect steps two and three also. Note: there are two types of elections; the primary elections (parties' primaries) and the general election. There are also special elections (bye-elections).

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence refers to any intentional act carried out by individuals and groups to mutate the outcome of elections. Thus, it is an organized activity aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear/threat to alter the result of an election. When such actions create fear, people will shy away from the process. Anifowose (1982) considers electoral violence to be any hostile action by individuals and groups against another's life or property, intending to alter the result of elections. To Albert (2007) it is a planned action or hostile act, which could be somatic, mental, and organizational. The intention is to harass, inflate, injure, or dent the image/identity of a perceived rival to thwart or manipulate the arrangement of election. Due to electoral violence, votes hardly count, as the politicians and political parties with their sponsors have devise means to manipulate the process for their victory. Obinna et al. (2019) noted that during the election that the electorates are made to believe their votes count, but in reality, these party big wigs have already decided who will emerge. Electoral processes in almost all emerging democracies have suffered many setbacks following alteration of the electoral process, thus raising the question about the sustainability and consolidation of democracy in these countries.

Galtung, cited in Ojo (2014) noted that the violence could be psychological, structural, and physical. Psychological abuse (violence) manifest in the mind, emotions, and these manifestations create fear on the targeted rival or perceived rival. These also involve denting the image and identity of the opponent through hate speech and malicious publications. Structurally, it manifests in the acts of force, creating certain conditions in exchange for specific service or items, alteration of electoral time's table and programs of event, unequal access to participants (campaign venue and facilities). These also include favoritism and nepotism by the state and electoral managers. Physical violence has the most deadly effects on the electoral process. This violence results in an open attack on people before the election, during, and after (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015). It involves kidnapping, killing of opponents, intentional destruction of properties, moving of polling units to another area, security and thugs forcing people to vote against their wishes, snatching of electoral materials, announcing different results other than the actual result. These create room for open riot and protest.

Democratic Consolidation

Democracy as a form of government has continued to spread the world over, and formerly colonized countries are not left out, as most of them have adopted. The question, however, is not centered on whether they will prefer it to an authoritarian regime but on how sincere the operators of these acclaimed democratic governments are to consolidate on the achieved democracy. The consolidation of democracy entails building democratic institutions to make them healthy through continuous development. How effective a democratic government is, could be determined by the level of maturity of the institutions.

A country by name and proclamation can claim to practice democracy, but autocratic in practice. Valenzuela (1990) has observed that there are two processes involved in transforming an authoritarian government to democratic administration. First is the "installation of a democratic government." This stage has characterized Nigeria and most Post-Colonial African states. The second transition is the consolidation of democracy, i.e., having institutions that are not just functional but consistently growing to maturity by continuous development. Attainment of democratic government is the first necessary step required in transiting from an authoritarian regime. However, the confirmations and harvest of the dividends of democracy can only be made possible when such democracy is allowed to consolidate.

According to the Minimalist conception of democracy, an election is a vital/major component of a functional democracy. For this school of thought, so long elections are held; there is democracy. Less attention is given to the oppression of opposition parties by violating civil and political rights and issues of consolidation (Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi&Przeworski, 1996). While the maximalists conceive the institutions (Political, legal, justice, administrative) being made more potent as the essential indicators of democratic government for only then can there be a consolidation of democracy (O' Donnell 2004). However, a bridge between the two schools will bring about development in these democracies. Because a democratic government must hold periodic elections, and such ballots must be devoid of violence to allow the people to make their choices freely without fear of harassment and intimidation. The importance of this is in its ability to create an enabling environment for the consolidation of democracy. Consolidation is about achieving strong political institutions in the state to ensure adherence to rules and regulations.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Electoral violence and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria could be analyzed from different theoretical frameworks because various factors account for electoral violence. One factor that has affected the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria is Electoral Violence. Electoral violence is because of material benefits attached to political offices. The act itself does not reward but is used as a means to attain the material/symbolic gain (Adetula, 2008). Such benefits become a motivator. Thus, for this study, the Marxian Political Economy Theory was adopted, using the Dialectical Materialism method, which was propounded by Karl Marx in 1859 (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015). To Marx, economic gains, among other reasons, are the causes of crisis. It, therefore, means that people struggle and even use whatever means available to clinch to the power for economic gain as this will enable them to determine how resources are shared (Abah and Nwokwu 2015). No wonder Ake (1981) identified the material disposition of a man, as what determines the political system.

To further justify the suitability of this theory for this study, Abbass (2008) noted that dialectic materialism exposed intrinsic motivations by man for economic gains and benefits. Election violence happens not because elections cannot be free and fair, but the material gains attached to such positions. These gains do not allow participants to play by the rules of the game (Atuobi, 2008). Because these actors see politics as a business that yields huge returns within a short while, and since no other venture can create such wealth, they thus engage in electoral fraud as a quick route. In other words, power in Nigeria has become a means to self-enrichment. The struggle to achieve this material gains has often resulted in the loss of life, destruction of properties (Ogbeidi, 2012). This happens because, in the process of the struggle, violence takes place to eliminate the perceived or imagined to be an obstacle on their path to power (Abah and Nwokwu, 2015).

IV. CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY AND THE ISSUES OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

Elections are the life wire of a democratic government and give life to its functionality. But how the polls take place and process of selecting leadership is the determinant of how consolidated democracy is in such democracies. When elections take place according to the political rules, the chances are that the best will emerge, and how well the leaders rule will determine if they can be reelected for another term as allowed by the constitution. In the case of Nigeria, consolidation of democracy has been the worst hit by frequent electoral violence that has reoccurred continuously from the first republic to this fourth republic.

In 1999 presidential poll in Nigeria as noted by Aniekwe and Kushie (2011), the election was accepted to give room for democratic rule and allow for growth (consolidation) and not taken because it was credible. In the 2003 general elections, about one hundred persons were killed (HRW, 2004). The 2007 election (HRW, 2007) put the number of death at 300, including police officers. Though the 2011 general elections were relatively peaceful, immediately, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) was declared the winner by INEC in the Presidential election; violence erupted in Northern Nigeria. Supporters of (CPC) candidate General Muhammadu Buhari took to protest and violence. According to HRW (2011), over 800 people were left dead. The killing took place within three days of protest and violence in 12 Northern States. According to European Union EOM Report (2015), the 2015 general elections witness one of Nigeria's most tense campaigns, as misguided words were commonly used. The National Human Rights Commission Report (2015) on pre-election violence identified 60 incidents and 58 persons killed over 50 days. Violence has continued to be a replicate experience in the fourth republic.

Electoral violence took a higher dimension in the 2019 general elections. The presidential and National Assembly elections were held on February 23, while the governorship and state assembly elections were held on March 9. What happened in 2019 general elections was worst of its kind judging from the experience of general elections held in 2015. It was the election that got the incumbent president Muhammadu Buhari elected for his second term. Before the elections, insecurity problems were at its peak following series of kidnapping, several attacks on farmers by some criminal herdsmen (farmers – herdsmen clash), and Boko Haram terrorist group (Oli, Ibekwe & Nwankwo, 2018). The high rate of pre-electoral violence, coupled with other factors, affected the voter turnout. According to INEC, voters' turnout was 35.6% for elections of February 23, while that of March 9 was even lower. The figure was lower than 44% percent recorded during the 2015 general elections (INEC, 2019)

Vote-buying, which gained prominence during the Ekiti governorship election in 2018 and that of Osun state, was an ordinary happening during the 2019 general elections. The poll was characterized by vote-buying, snatching of ballot box, harassment, and intimidation of electoral officials, voters, and oppositions by hired armed men and even by some security personnel (Nwankwo, 2018). According to the electoral act 2015 as amended, section 29(3), it is only INEC that has the mandate to request for deployment of security personnel when it is necessary, and that is done with consultation with the security agencies. Ebonugwo & Kumolu (2019) remarked that military was freely used during the election, many of whom were partial, as military men were alleged to have forced themselves into the INEC office at Port Harcourt Rivers state and obstructed the process. As Ebuzor (2019) cited in Okechukwu, Chukwuka and Chikwado, (2019) also reported that military men were beating up party agents at Bori Rivers State. European Union Election Observation Mission (cited by Sanni, 2019) said that about 152 people lost their lives during the election.

According to Justice (2019), violence was worst in six states, which include Bauchi, Benue, Kano, Sokoto, Plateau, and Rivers states. Consequently, The Independent National Electoral Commission had to cancel elections and reschedule another day for supplementary elections for Kano and Rivers states. The two states (Kano - APC and Rivers State – PDP) have become a hot spot for violence even during the past elections, which had resulted in several killings and destruction of properties. Human Rights Watch reported that 11 people died in the presidential election held on February 23, 2019, in the two states. Similarly, a Nongovernmental Organization "We the People" according to human right watch, reported that there was a retaliation of attack by soldiers after armed men killed one of them, and this led to the death of over 40 persons and with about 52 seriously wounded when they try to swim across as soldiers were shooting randomly. According to Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (cited in Sanni 2019), about 629 persons (North-West 172, North East- 146, South-south 120, North Central 121, South-west 63 and South-east 14) were killed before, during and immediately after the 2019 general elections over election-related matters.

The electoral body has a significant role to play in the success of a free, fair, and credible elections. It also seems that the electoral body: National Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) has not lived up to expectations. The Nigeria 1999 constitution and the Electoral Acts 2015 as amendment have mandated INEC to be in charge of the electoral process and ensure free and fair elections according to the rules and procedures stated (Obianyo & Vincent, 2015). Take, for instance, from Sections 117 to 132 of the Electoral Acts of 2010 as Amended identified various electoral offenses and their penalty, but in all sincerity, these provisions are violated

daily, but the body has been silent on this. Politicians have often engaged in corrupt practices to manipulate the process in their favor. Due to a reoccurring election-related crisis, Amnesty International, in its report (2008) noted that even when there is no armed conflict in Africa, desperation for power has made it look like there is one during elections. The happening is evident in the pre, during, and post-electoral process and has resulted in casualties.

If we must have our democracy consolidated, there is a need for protection of lives and properties and observance of fundamental human rights. For under democracy, there is the supremacy of the constitution and constitutionalism. The rule of law is essential for the consolidation of democracy. In the absence of the rule of law, democracy will lose its virtue. Anyaele (as cited in Igwe, 2010) posited that the rule of law is the "supremacy" of the law over the generality of the people, i.e., irrespective of one's identity or position. Thus, both the leadership and followership must act according to the stipulations of the law. But that has not been our experience, as some individuals and groups see themselves as practically above the law.

Causes of Electoral Violence

Politics, in most of the world, especially in developing countries, has become highly lucrative, and many people now see politics as the shortest route to wealth. Like Marx postulated, they are in an inherent quest for economic gain. Here, the control of the state, is now synonymous with control of the means of production, thus gaining political power is a necessity to manage and share resources of that state (superstructure and substructure).

This paper argues that is the attempt to rig an election that gave rise to violence in elections. The question is, if an attempt to rig the election is the primary cause of electoral violence, which in turn affects the consolidation of democracy, then why do people attempt to rig the election? What are the motivating factors that account for this? Note: There is no one single factor that leads to electoral violence. But the argument here is that elections would have been free and fair, if there was no intention to rig (manipulate) before, during, and after the elections. Therefore, this intention to rig the election now led to other reasons of electoral violence. Most political actors (individuals and groups), spent many resources to capture power, this they can't just imagine playing by the rules of the game at the risk of losing out. Thus they seek ways to manipulate the process. Aniekwe and Kushie (2011) attributed electoral violence partly to the enormous amount of contestants and sponsors put into it and the assumed benefit associated with holding public office in Nigeria. Similarly, the nature of Nigerian State, its weak economy, mono-economy and the unavailability of business opportunities has been a contributing factor as well.

Jega (as cited by Eke and Osaghae, 2016) agrees with Aniekwe and Kushie (2011) that politics is equated with a lucrative business that one need to put in many resources and utilized whatever approach (manipulations inclusive) that can guarantee victory, believing that holding public post is wealth itself. Ake (1981) noted that the ruling class considers the state as the means of accumulation of private wealth. Similarly, Ekekwe (1986) opined that those that emerged as winners in elections have often personalized the usage of the state wealth for boosting their economic base. The implication of Ekekwe's position was further stated by Fadakinte (2013) that when such happens, the constitution will have been subverted for personal interest, and the oppositions will be marginalized and oppressed. This justifies Olusegun Obasanjo's statement during the 2007 general election as cited by Fadakinte (2013) that the April 2007 elections would be a "do or die affair." I do not think there is any way to seek for a thing with a "do or die" approach, if not for the expected benefit attached to it, because whatever one can vouch his life for must be something whose benefit is rewarding. Just as stated in the theoretical framework, the material need of man seems to be the driving force for his actions.

Abah and Nwokwu (2015) identified eight factors as being responsible for electoral violence. These include lack of fairness and transparency in the electoral process, non-credibility of the electoral body, ineffectiveness of laws and enforcement agencies; inordinate political ambition; ethnic politics; unemployment; lush nature of Nigerian politics, and corruption. While re-echoing the effects of electoral violence on democratic consolidation, Atuobi (2010) noted that electoral violence is a menace to the strengthening of democracy, that when it characterizes a country democracy, it will thwart democratic values and institution, as it then means that power is gain and maintained via fraudulent means. Legitimacy comes from the people. Thus, such leaders have a problem of legitimacy and would not be able to pursue national unity. Outside that, as noted by Atuobi, such democracy will have widespread low voter turnout, which will affect the outcome of the election and is the voters that should determine the winners. It also affects the social relationship in the country as some groups will feel marginalized and would not want to accord the government respect, thus polarizing groups along ethnic lines. Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) needs the legal framework that can enable it to carry out its statutory obligation without interference from the executive. Though the provisions of the law give some level of leverage for independence, fear of job security does not allow people to show bravely by standing up against official malpractice or maybe resign when they feel authorities are going against the guidelines or when there is need to expose acts of irregularities.

Electoral Violence and Electronic Voting

Politicians have mastered the art of manipulation to the extent that it has become complicated to conduct a free and fair election using the conventional manual method. So disheartening that it has disenfranchised many citizens who wish to vote and be voted for during elections. Thus they are denied their civil right to vote. According to Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), every citizen must be involved in the running of the government of his country, either being elected or free participating in choosing a representative. That the consent/will of the people is what constitutes the authority of government, which means the people must vote in an adult universal suffrage and through a secret ballot. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Nigeria due to violence that has characterized most elections. Thus the introducing electronic voting machines (EVMs).

Before the 2015 general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission under the Leadership of Prof. Attahiru Jaga introduced the Smart Card Reader (SCR) for accreditation of voters. It was a significant innovation after INEC had earlier adopted a Permanent Voter Card (PVC). The work of the SCR then is to ascertain the eligibility of a voter to vote in a particular polling unit (Alebiosu, 2016). The goal was to reduce electoral malpractice by ensuring that people vote where they registered. Logistically, there were many challenges in accrediting some persons, but in such a situation, INEC approved the incident form as an alternative. Problems, however, may partly be due to its first time of use. The use in the 2019 general elections showed improvement. The card reader is only used for accreditation of voters, while the voting is still manual. Consequently, the expected result on the card reader was not felt much, as most of the riggers still had their way during voting. It is, therefore, necessary to complement card readers with EVMs. Electronic voting refers to the use of technology in voting against the manual method of ink to paper. It not limited to polling units but includes voting at the kiosk, use of mobile phones, other gadgets that uses the internet, including punch cards, mark sense, and optical scan ballots as the case in Indian (Habibu, Sharif and Nicholas 2017). The adoption of this method might look impossible, just as the Smart Card Reader, but if we must get it right in our elections, we must introduce electronic voting, even if we have to test run in a local government election, gradually it could be developed to the level that we eliminate the challenges it poses. Indian has the highest democracy in the world, with over 800 million registered voters (900 million in 2019). However, following cases of recurrent electoral fraud, denying the people the right to vote and be voted for, the Election Commission of India (ECI) had to introduce electronic voting in the 90s (Verma, 2005). It was first experimented with constituent elections in 1998, and following the success recorded, it was thus adopted for the general elections. According to Habibu, Sharif and Nicholas (2017), Electronic Voting, which is also known as e-voting, has helped to reduce electoral violence and has given Indians the civil right to exercise their franchise.

The electronic voting machine can be programmed to suit the numbers of voters to allow and be transmitted electronically to central cyber as people vote. In India, the voting machine, according to Kapoor & Debnath (2017), uses 6-volt alkaline battery; thus, it can be used in areas without electricity, and should machine break down, the vote cast is saved in the memory. It might not be all that easy, but the machine can be test run with bye-elections. But that will only be possible if the Electoral Act is amended and signed into law to accommodate that. The need for this is overdue, as these past elections have shown that the political players are not ready to exhibit traits of association with internal discipline (Ndu, 2016).

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

Impact of Electoral Violence on the Consolidation of Democracy.

From the review of literature, electoral violence has shown a negative impact on the consolidation of democracy. The conduct of election does not guarantee the consolidation of democracy; election is only an essential feature of democracy. However, to ensure the strengthening of democracy, an election should be free, fair, and credible. It takes a careful process to produce credible leadership. Violence has succeeded in eliminating quality leadership, leaving the thugs and their masters as the beneficiaries. From the analysis of the Marxian Dialectical Materialism used here, economic gain is the primary driving force of these political actors; they see power as the means to wealth, to control the sources. The reoccurring violence has resulted in low voter turnout (apathy). The people are now unable to hold their leaders accountable. The leaders likewise do not feel any obligation to deliver, as they believe that they worked themselves into the offices. It is when polls take place in a free, fair, and credible manner that the outcome can be democratic because it is only under such conditions that the people will come out to cast their votes. What is now obtained is likened to electing a democratic leadership through undemocratic means.

Aborisade (2006) noted that free consent is a critical ingredient that must accompany an electoral process as only such a condition can be called democracy. Therefore, these acts of trickery, manipulation and violence amount to taking people's consent by force. Consequently, it becomes complicated to have our democracy consolidated with strong institutions. According to Agbaje (2006) and Omotola (2007), an election that is devoid of violence is a prerequisite for development. According to Linz and Stepan (1996), a

consolidated democracy manifests in three ways: Behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutionally. Behaviorally, a consolidated democracy manifest when there is national peace; no individual, group, institutions adopt violent means or attempt to create an undemocratic regime. Attitudinally, democracy is consolidated in a country when the majorities of the citizens believe and have faith in democracy and its institution, seeing it as the best system of governance for the protection of life and property. Constitutionally, there is a consolidation of democracy when the people believe in the constitution and its stipulations, without seeing it as an imposed document whose making they were never part of. That is when the willingness to adhere to it comes naturally.

Finding shows that Nigeria democracy is under consolidated. Behaviorally, there are all kinds of protest over skewed appointments, agitations for secession by some groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which has now been proscribed (Adesomoju, 2018). Attitudinally too, it is oblivious that most groups and individual has little faith in most democratic institutions like INEC, security agencies, and others as they accused them of bias and always acting in the interests of some influential individuals and groups. Just like it has become a common practice of having elections INEC declared winners being canceled and some others upturn, all are creating more problems of trust in the institutions. Constitutionally, several court judgments have been disobeyed mostly by the government, e.g., Sambo Dasuki and Comrade Omoyele Sowore (Okakwu, 2019). These are indications that democracy is yet to be consolidated as some government and their agents take directive from a government official and not following court ruling as at and when due. Manifestation of consolidated democracy in Nigeria will mean that political actors will no longer use violent means to gain power or military overthrowing civilian administration, but rather, legal means are used. Such must be one that will give a fair judgment. Similarly, consolidation of democracy should be able to manifest in how issues of national importance/ interest are resolved, unlike presently when they are viewed from the religious and ethnic lines (Ashindorbe, 2018). Put differently, as Linz and Stepan will say, democracy must be as "the only game in town." However, the truth remains that no democracy is entirely perfect, as the above indication does not necessarily mean there is no consolidation of democracy. However, when it becomes frequent like in our case, it calls for worries and need to address it to have working and functional institutions, to achieve the associated benefits of a democratic government.

VI. CONCLUSION

Nigeria might not have had the best of democratic experience, but all hope is not lost. The fact must be appreciated that for the first time in the history of the country, democracy has lasted for straight 20years with six general elections that have produced four different presidents from two different political parties. This alone has shown that though we are not moving at the pace we should have, we still appreciate having democracy as a form of government to practice.

How fast we will grow in the next decade will be significantly determined by how elections are conducted. Most elected leaders in Nigeria have the problem of legitimacy when they emerge, which is widely due to electoral malpractices alleged to have heralded their emergence. The government needs the support of the people in all ramifications, but such is only possible when such leadership is a product of free, fair, and credible election (popular support). When there is widespread support, civil behaviour will come naturally from the people, and the government will be able to concentrate on the development of both human and capital growth, stead having court cases severally, trying to control and halt protests, and others.

Political actors and the people, in general, must not see politics as a zero-sum game; national interest should be the top priority, as opinions and ideas could be shared and harmonized. For the winners that emerged, protection of lives and property should not be a thing to be politicized; institutions must be built and strengthened as the government is continual. Then those who were unsuccessful (lost) must play by the rule of the game. If they are convinced that the process was not fair, while a peaceful protest is allowed, they must approach the court for redress. Consolidation of democracy begins from the mind; we must agree first as individuals that we must take our democracy to the level that it can sustain itself. Weak democratic institutions might favor a group today but work against the same group tomorrow. This is the reason why we must shun electoral violence, build on the achieved democracy, and allow the constitution and other rules to prevail to have a better country for both the rulers and the ruled.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having our democracy consolidated is a necessity for the development of our politics and state in general. Ever act of electoral violence is an intentional act. Naturally, it will not phase out on its own. Imagined benefits associated with political offices have consistently given impetus to political players to manipulate (rig) the process for selfish interest. However, measures can be adopted to ensure a free, fair, and credible election, for it is only when that is achieved that elections can lead to the selection of the best, which is a prerequisite for the attainment of democratic consolidation. It is based on this, that his paper recommends the following:

1. Amendment of the Electoral Act; There is a need to amend the electoral act further and be signed into law. Provisions should include financial autonomy, job security, and unique insurance cover for staff and personnel used during the election. B. Compulsory use of Smart Card Reader and the Adoption of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). C. Electoral Offence commission should be established with sole jurisdiction to investigate, enforce, and prosecute electoral offenders, including acting as a watchdog on INEC.
2. Internal Democracy: political parties must be supervised by INEC and ensure that their Primaries are transparent and according to lay down rules
3. Security agencies: security personnel (police and civil defense) have a significant role to play for the attainment of free fair and credible elections. They must be neutral and ensure that polling booths are orderly, and people cast their votes without fear of harassment.
4. Constitutionally: a political appointment must reflect the federal character in ramifications.
5. Civil Society: should help in creating awareness and voters' education on what constitutes electoral malpractice and act of violence and why people should not support vote-buying.

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