

## **Problems and Prospect of Post-Election Peace Building in Nigeria: The 2015 & 2019 General Elections**

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### **Abstract**

*Successful peace building among others requires political gladiators to see election and electioneering campaign as a political game, whereby politics ends with election and government takes off. Experiences in Nigeria since independence were to the contrary thereby making post election peace building a herculean task. The study, therefore, examined basic constraints to conduct of acceptable elections and the prospect of overcoming such. The study was descriptive and relied on secondary data source. It argued that low incidences of post election violence did not translate to enthronement of enduring peace now and in future. The study found that campaign of calumny, corrupt practices by election stakeholders, political ethnicity and religion indoctrination, sensational news by the press, violence perpetrated by known agents, exclusive government and poverty constituted huge challenges to post elections peace building. The study recommended that to ensure smooth post-election peace building, the electoral laws should be strengthened while violators are brought to book. In addition, an inclusive government could help to minimize political antagonism while political education should be encouraged as to see election as a means and not an end in itself.*

**Key words: Election, political ethnicity, Religion, violence, peace building, and Consociationalism**

### **Introduction**

Political conflicts associated with elections have the tendency to remain problematic for a long time except a concerted and intentional efforts are made to resolve or transform issues associated with it. The term ‘conflict’ emerges from ‘confligere’, which means ‘Shocking together’. This meaning, according to

Galtung (2010), is compatible with the usual Anglo-American behavioral interpretation as parties ‘shocking together’ in violence; and what is ‘shocking together’ are goals or interests held by the parties when the realization of one excludes the realization of others. For this purpose of this study, direct violence according to Galtung (2010) captures its essence, meaning physical assault, killing, and willful destruction of property among others, which are often associated with pre and post election situations in Nigeria. In another word, direct violence is viewed as the illegitimate use of force by either government, its agents, political party and/or the citizenry manifesting the killing, maiming, and destruction of property among others. This explains why Anifowose (1982) argues that electoral violence is often employed as a tactic of political action during or/and after election.

Goodhand and Hulme (1999) in a Biblical sense note that peace is “the beating of swords into ploughshare”. By this, he agrees with Galtung (2000) that peace is a situation devoid of physical or direct violence. Peace building is therefore a process and not the end, of creating the tangible and intangible conditions to enable a conflict-habituated system to become a peace system. In this instance, peace building is a continuous, concerted and systematical movement from a crisis situation to that of sustaining peace and the efforts directed at sustain the prevailing relative peace. Peace building is therefore a difficult and pain staking effort to make peace possible even under impossible circumstances.

Though the scope of this paper is post election violence and peace building, but this could not be studied in isolation as contrary to previous elections where more violence were recorded in post election period, the 2015 and 2019 general elections witnessed pre-election violence. As observed by Alao (2012), the perception of significant number of citizenry in Nigeria is that the only language understood by government to bring about instant change is violence. This is made possible partly because security agencies often compromise the professional ethnic by supporting one group or party against the other instead of remaining neutral.

With specific reference to 2015 and 2019 elections, electoral violence was generally accepted as political tactic that dominated pre-election particularly among the major political parties such as People Democratic Party (PDP) All People Congress (APC) and All Parties Grand Alliance (APGA). However, few cases of violence that were recorded in post-election period. The prevailing post-election relative peace cannot be completely divulged from the peace initiatives that commenced shortly immediately after the 2011 elections where stakeholders including development partners, non-governmental organizations and even the government showed interests. This led to the establishment of a National Peace Committee and the signing of the Abuja Peace Accord in January 2015, which extended to February 2019 elections by some political stakeholders. This paper argues that post election peace building is largely a function of pre election situation and the maturity of the political gladiators, who as well as the citizenry to see peace building as a worthy goal that must be pursued with all vigor. This is borne out of the realization that without enduring peace, socio-economic development will be jeopardize, the effort

of the government will be diverted to maintaining peace and the joy of democratization will be defeated.

A short reflection on general elections violence between 1999 and 2011 as detailed by Ujo (2015) revealed that an unestimated lives were lost. Among the prominent politicians that were victims of political violence were Bola Ige, Hon. Monday Ndor, Lai Balogun, Tony Dimegwu, Aminasaori Dikibo and Funsho William. Ndimele (2015) revealed that over 1000 lost their lives due to electoral violence in 2011 election alone. Odiakalu (2015) recalled that three states between January and February 2015 were noted for election violence. He noted that

*the three states are Lagos, with 11 incidences and 22 persons killed, Kaduna with three incidences and nine people killed and Rivers with one incidence and at least 6 deaths.*

He further observed that within fifty days, sixty-one incidences of election violence occurred in twenty-two states with 58 people killed. In addition, the Guardian Sunday Magazine March 17, 2019 posits that over 40 families lost their loved ones during the 2019 pool in Rivers state, Nigeria.

The assurance and reassurance by the Police and the military particularly by Lt. General Kenneth Minimah, the Army chief that whosoever wants to invoke or provoke violence will meet organized violence from the security could not prevent election violence yielded no positive result. In addition, the signed undertaking between (former President Ebelle Jonathan and the incumbent President Buhari in the first hand as well as President Buhari, Atiku Abubakar, etc in the 2019) of violence free election could not prevent pre election violence. Such a scenario could not but make post election peace building a herculean task. This situation constitutes the basic motive why this paper is set out to examine problems and prospects of post election peace building in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria: The paper is set to answer these questions including: Does lack of post election violence make peace building easier? What are the challenges of successful post-election peace building and what are the prospects of post 2015/2019 general election peace building in Nigeria? The paper was descriptive and data sourced from secondary sources such as relevant textbooks, journals, documentary evidences and Internet materials.

The paper outlay consists of introduction in the first section as well as conceptual review and theoretical framework in sections two and three, respectively. Section four deals with the challenges of post-election peace building and section five considers the prospects of post-election peace building. The last focused on conclusion and recommendation.

### **Consociational Arrangement**

The concept of consociation has a multifaceted and multi-dimensional principle. It is believed to be a panacea for a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, ethnically divided, heterogeneous and complex society with array diversity. It is looked at as theory for power sharing, a democratic practice, and a conflict resolution strategies for attainment of peace in a divided society where power or power struggle and contention often more that not lead to face-off that threaten the political stability and tranquility of society that is relatively at peace (Adekanye, 2009). McGarry and O’Leary (2005) among other scholars suggest that consociation as a theory can be both democratic and authoritarian but is suitable be it in regions or states with historically antagonistic ethnically, religiously or linguistically divided peoples like Nigeria.

Explaining the democratic perspective, McGarry and O’Leary (2005:44) drew four organizational principles of Consociational arrangement. These are Executive Power-Sharing (EPS), Autonomy or Self-government arrangement, Proportionality and the Veto-rights. It is therefore imperative that it preserves peace and the integrity of political settlement and can therefore manage ethno-nationalist, ethno-linguistic, and ethno-religious conflicts with non-discrimination.

Lijphart (1969:207) provides additional insight noting, “Consociation is one of the ‘management of differences’ strategies, applicable to our system where factors such as ethnicity, nationality, and religion coincided with struggle for political power. McGarry and O’Leary (2005) drew examples of nations that have adopted this arrangement after 1945 such as Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland (which has combined consociation and federation), Cyprus, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Macedonia, Northern Ireland and. beyond Europe, Lebanon and Zimbabwe.

The paper argues that though consociationalism has the tendency among others to lead to fusion of parties and weaken active opposition particularly in a situation like Nigeria where people gravitate to party in government, but the inherent values overshadow the defects if carefully managed.

### **Political Education**

Democratic societies are both enriched and challenged by a diverse citizenry. Democratic education encompasses the varied institutional structures and curricular contents that are suitable for instructing citizens of democratic societies. This explains why Gutmann, Ben-Porath(2014) notes that modern democracies need an educated citizenry to survive and to thrive. “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of [civilization](#),” Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1816, “it expects what never was and what never will be.” In effect, Oakeshott (nd) notes that the expression political education

*has fallen on evil day, in the willful and duplicitous corruption of language which is characteristic of our time, it has acquired a sinister meaning, it*

*is associated with that softening of mind, by force, by alarm or by the hypnotism of endless repetition of what was scarcely worth saying, once, by means of which whole population has been reduced to submission.*

From the classic to the contemporary scholars, the concept of Education is critical to civic obligation and responsibilities as it helped individuals and groups to be conscious and embrace values that will be supportive of orderly transfer of power and perform their civic responsibilities. Therefore, interest in political socialization and education can be traced back to the beginning of political theory (Phillips 1989:21). To both Plato and Aristotle educating citizens prevent defective political system, however, wherever political socialization and civic training is defective, a political system would inevitably degenerate to timocracy, oligarchy, tyranny. Aristotle however holds that legislator should make the political education of youth a major goal, in other to ensure the stability of the constitution, which is believed is not the only framework of government but a way of life (Socker and Langtry, 1986:29).

This explains why the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA (2006) states that without social and political education, the youth operate in a political world without the skills and insight they need to be in control of their own destiny. In addition, (Lynch 2000: 2-3; 17) notes that social science education plays a key role in informing people as to how social and political institutions operate and of the importance of political institutions in shaping our society. It therefore imperative to know that political education that will support stable and peaceful society is of utmost need in Nigeria as a right step to post election Peace building.

### **Peace Building**

The challenges of moving from conflict and violence to enduring peaceful coexistence and political stability are daunting. International Monetary Fund research suggests that 20 per cent of countries that emerge from civil conflict return to violence in one year and 40 per cent return to violence in five years Cevik and Rahmati (2013). Peace-building is a slippery and complex concept and therefore susceptible to different interpretations by scholars and analysts as noted by Aghedo, (2011). Peace-building has been defined as ‘a means of preventing outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflicts’ (Hassan, 2009: 119). It denotes the absence of ‘conflicts, violence, war, and the conditions that warrant, induce and sustain them such as poverty, injustice, oppression, repression, exclusion, deprivation and discrimination’ (Ikelegbe, 2010: 6); (Aghedo 2012:268) .

Post- election peace building goes beyond the establishment of physical peace rather it encompasses arrays of issues such as development and human security. It can be long, medium and short term depending on the co nature of the issue at stake. The aim is to interrogate and bring resolution between the aggrieved parties that brought about the conflict in the first instance as well as a commitment to political stability (Aghedo, 2012:268-269).

In their analysis of post conflict peace building in Kenya, Wilson, Nicolien, Van Luijk Boit (2013) illustrate how celebrity-Run for- Peace sports, helped in achieving peace reconstruction, transformation and reconciliation after the presidential election. This study realizes that major event that unites Nigeria is sports. Therefore among other methods for peace building sports is central. The success of post election peace building is predicated on impartial government, enlightened citizens and the strong political will by government and other stake holders.

### **General Election**

In any State that is democratic, the authority of the government can only be derived from the will of the people as expressed in genuine, free and fair elections held at regular intervals on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage, Guy, (2006). In effect, one of the basic tenets of democracy is the conduct of election in choosing representatives. Conducting fair and credible elections is undoubtedly a big challenge particularly in societies with the political culture that see violence as a viable instrument of calling the attention of government to their predicament or achieving their objectives like in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical framework**

The paper adopts the mega game of regime transition and multi track diplomacy theories to underpin the challenges and prospect of post election peace building in Nigeria. The mega game of regime transition theory was based on the works of Dahl (1971:14-16) and O'Donnell and Schedler (1986) in Schmitter (1999:336). O'Donnell and Schmitter (1999) posit that an authoritarian ruling elite can often see their interests as opposite to democracy. This they justified by asking why the ruling elites are holding on to authoritarianism when democracy would best serve their interest and goal. This authoritarianism is achieved since they combine regulatory and coercive powers on their side. The ruling elites are united in their believe that their interest as being threatened by democratic reforms and may work against regime reproduction and even autocratization. They also view the opposing parties or reformers though looking democratic as a mixture of unholy alliance and strange bedfellows who are sometimes crooks rather than democrats. Hence, there is the difficulty of identifying a single interest that can unify them other than their wish to change the existing regime and unseat the incumbent ruling elites.

In his submission, therefore, (Dahl 1978:14-16) argues that any move toward polygarchy, that is any threat to the interest (Lives, wealth etc) of the incumbents in government, the sitting government have to confront two interrelated issues. First, to what extent or at what points are the potential costs of reforms leading to increasing competition and inclusion that are tolerable in terms of losing power, wealth, status and position. Second, given that all reforms are associated with some form of cost to the ruling autocrats, what do they regard as the level of acceptable cost to using oppression in suppressing reform. Though there is no unified

agreement on the acceptable cost. In addition, (Dahl 197:15) posits that “the more the cost of suppression exceed the cost of toleration, the greater the chances for a competitive regime”. Therefore, oppression and toleration are the two main strategies.

Applying this theory to Nigeria situation, the ruling elites in People Democratic Party (PDP) saw in the opposing coalition of parties that formed All Peoples Congress (APC) as mutiny assembly that attempted to wrestle power from them and deny them of their position of relevance in the nation rather than craving for societal transformation. This might have informed several comments from members of PDP that they would retain power and rule Nigeria for the next thirty years. This group war largely accounted for violence particularly in pre election period.

There is no doubt that the political terrain in Nigeria is loaded with tension such as Niger-Delta crisis, the Avengers, Fulani murderous raid and Boko Haram insurgence. All these could be traced to political and leadership crises which are offshoots of disgruntle elements who felt schemed out of power. In effect, Multi track diplomacy as popularized by Notter and diamond (1996) provides an opportunity to overcome exclusive arrangement in governance by adopting inclusive consociational arrangement to resolving political as well as election crises. They proposed 9 tracks consisting of government, conflict resolution, business, private citizen, Research, training and education. Others include peace activism, religion and funding thereby making it possible for all the segment of the society to participate in peace process which is also relevant to pre and post election peace building. Alao (2012) with specific reference to Nigerian situation proposed the expansion of the tracks to ten to accommodate the traditional ruler because of their relevance. The adoption of inclusive arrangement in pre and post peace building and governance could enhance the capacity to overcome challenges associated with election.

The two theories might not in all cases explain Nigerian situation simply because events often defile precise application of known models as it appears that they manifest unpredictable circumstances. For instance, in 1999, the political climate manifested the tendencies of outbreak of violence but the death of General Sanni Abacha and Mashood Abiola brought unanticipated peace. Same was the expectation before and during 2015 General elections that there would be post election violence. However, the decision of the former President Goodluck Jonathan to congratulate President Buhari as the winner of the Presidential election in 2015 dosed the post-election tension likewise the desire of the PDP not to take laws into their hands but through judicial means calm electoral tension Nonetheless, the two theories provided the mirror to view electoral violence in Nigeria and prospect of post election peace building.

## Discussion

### Does lack of serious post election violence make peace building a simple exercise?

Lack of Pre and post election violence is a political culture desirable in any political system to ensure political stability. Ndimele (2015) noted that more than 1000 people lost their lives in post-election violence across Nigeria in 2011 while other source noted that in the Northern part of Nigeria alone, over 800 lives were lost which made the post election peace building to be a herculean task. [Ibeh](#), (2015) quoting Human Right Commission observed that within 50 days before 2015 elections, 61 electoral incidences occurred in 22 states in Nigeria. The breakdown included eleven cases in Lagos that claimed twenty-two lives. There were 3 cases in known in Kaduna claiming 9 lives and 6 cases in Rivers state among others. The monumental nature of pre-election violence led both the US and UK governments to warn the stakeholders of the likely high propensity of post election violence. The scenario led President Jonathan and Buhari reaffirming their unalloyed support to "free, fair and credible elections" after signing of the Abuja Accord in January 2015. As widely reported in Nigerian dailies, the underlisted violent attacks took place between January 10 and 24, and February/March 2019 elections as tabulated below on Table I

Table I Pre- election violence in Nigeria's 2015 and 2019 general elections:

Dates	Place	Events	Causality
Jan 10, 2015	Jos	PDP Campaign Bus Burnt	-
Jan 21	Katsina	Jonathan Campaign team attacked	-
Jan 23	Bauchi	Security aides to Jonathan attacked	6
Jan 24	Okrika – River State	APC Campaign disrupted	2
Feb 23, 2019	Rivers	2019 Presidential election	40 families
March 9, 2019	Oyo	Gubernatorial Election Killing	Hon. Temitope Olatoye (Sugar)
Feb 23, 2019	Amagu Ward 1, Ebonyi State	Political Killing	2 persons Killed (Igwe Ukwa & Egbe Simon) Injured are Ejike Simon and Alo Nwamgbo



March 23, 2019	Oyo (Kudeti Ibadan)	Gubernatorial electoral violence (Killing).	Mr. Monsuru
March 9, 2019	Ese-Odo, Ondo state	Political killing	Mr. Ibrahim Olalekan
March 9, 2019	Katsina State	Political Killing	Officer Umar Aliyu
Feb, 23. 2019	Kogi State	Electoral killing	Daniel Usman

Source: Compiled by the Researchers

Because of the precautions adopted by the stakeholders both local and foreign and the golden phone call to President Buhari by President Jonathan, the Post-election violence was minimal in 2015. Also, the determination of PDP Presidential candidate in the 2019 election to proceed to the court of law doused down post-election violence. Among the reported cases of violence as revealed by Nwakanma (2015), 4 persons were killed in Rivers State. Three persons were reportedly, killed in Ile Ife due to fracas that broke out between Peoples Democratic Party and the All Progressives Congress supporters when the result of the election was announced Nigerian Eye (2015). In addition, eight people were reported arrested at Ilorin due to violence that broke out at Ilorin, Kwara state between the two aforementioned supporters according to Eudini (2015). These few isolated cases of violence were incomparable with those reported in 2011. In the same vein,

Peace building, according to (Hassan 2009: 119) is ‘a means of preventing outbreak, recurrence or continuation of armed conflicts’. Maiese (2003) view the goal of peace building as that creating positive peace, a "stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war." It is important to acknowledge that the relative peace that followed the post 2015 election could not be regarded as sustaining and enduring. To achieve successful peace building, the two legs in an election are of utmost importance. These are the pre election and post election situations. The paper argues that the factors that complicates post election peace building took its roots from pre election relationship .if the root is not taken care off, cutting the stem does not imply that the tree would not grow again.

In effect, the injury suffered by the ‘victims’ of the elections particularly by the known ‘agents’ be the winning or opposing parties or supporters might not allow the wound to heal faster as Nigeria government have not sufficient mastered the art of peace building beyond palliative measures aimed at addressing the effect rather the causative factors in violence. The implication therefore is that lack of post-election violence in both 2015 and 2019 general elections is not a sufficient ground to assume that the peace building process is easy.

### **The challenges of successful post election peace building in Nigeria.**

The challenges of successful post election peace building are intricately connected with the political environment in which election were organized and contested. This

environment consists of the preparedness of INEC, the influence of ethnicity, religious antagonism, the state of economy, and government in power factor, godfatherism and security agencies among others. Nigeria is a nation of diversities and Nnoli, (1980) put the number of ethnic groupings in Nigeria at two hundred and fifty while he noted that it holds individual together, gives them internal cohesion, encourages them to provide natural security for each other and promotes their sense of identity and direction. This explains why (Enloe 1973:3) notes that “of all the groups that man attaches himself to; ethnic groups seem the most encompassing and enduring”. Ethnic conflict has therefore become a recurring feature within Nigeria. Osinubi and Osinubi (2006) observed that political elites utilize it as a springboard for their selfish interest. Hence, efforts toward national integration in Nigeria have been a mirage. Addressing minority issue through creation of States and Local Government among others have created a new round of hostility as the old minority group becomes the majority and new struggle by the new minorities emerges...

The nexus between ethnic conflict and challenges of post-election peace building is that election violence that coincides ethnic boundary is often so difficult to management whether at intra or inter level. For instance, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in 1983 exploited the Ife/Modakeke crisis for political mobilization in Osun State. This further explains why most of the Northern states in Nigeria voted for President Buhari, why South-South, South East voted Jonathan in the 2015 Presidential election. Ethnic conflicts have the tendency to be deep-rooted and protracted but when combined with election violence, victims often find it difficult to forgive. The implication therefore is that the tense security situation because of ethnic difference is further complicated as politician in order to win votes often expand the scope of differences among ethnic groupings thereby complicating the process of post-election peace building.

Religion as a belief system anchored on the existence of a supernatural being called ‘God’ based on commonly agreed code by the adherents with emotional and social attachment rather than reasons. Instead of connecting people to their creator, it has been a source of discord in Nigeria and even beyond. Africans, particularly Nigerians are generally, regarded as religious even if the belief system as practiced has not translated to peaceful coexistence, harmony and speedy socio-economic development.

It is, however, sad that since early 1980s, religion in the Nigerian political system has been contentious as no religion is completely free of disharmony as observed by Popoola and Alao (2011). There are two major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity while various traditional worshippers abound. However, religious antagonism has been a permanent feature in Nigeria starting with Maitasene of 1980s to Boko- Haram of recent. The ugly situation is that religious conflict is often intertwined with ethnic conflict as manifested in Jos township, Kaduna, Kano, Zaria crises among others. The persistence of religious conflicts informed Abram (2005) therefore note religion as we began the millennium still starts more conflict than it resolves. Rotgak (2004) rightly observed that there is also undue government

interference or involvement in purely religious matter. The implication for post election peace building is that when politics assumes religious dimension, the ripples generated during election or at extreme case if it degenerated to violence, there is the tendency for the process of to be complicated.

Furthermore, the economic system in Nigeria is in comatose. The nation is there witnessing massive unemployment which is put at 23 per cent by NBS (2011) while poverty stands at 61.2 per cent as at 2010. Most programmes evolved by previous governments include Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Better Life Program (BLP), establishments such as Peoples Bank of Nigeria. Others are National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), and Directorate of Employment (NDE). It is however sad that the fund for most of these programmes ended up in the pockets of politicians and bureaucrats rather than creating employment and alleviating poverty. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2005), reveals that in 1980, an estimated 27% of Nigerians lived in poverty. By 1999, 70% had income of less than \$1 per day (an equivalent of N200 by bank rate 201). Nigeria, which was one of the richest 50 countries in early 1970's has dropped to one of the twenty five poorest countries as observed by Elumilade & Asaolu, (2006).

The implication is that frustration, anger and starvation are visible in the land that make the active poor to provide the recruiting ground for foot soldiers in prosecuting electoral violence as thugs or body guards. The cheap sources of fund from criminal activities are too sweet to abandon making peace building to be a complex task particularly when agents are identifiable within the same community.

Corrupt practices associated with elections are challenges to post election peace building. Vanguard (2015) noted that, election cycle is all about immediate cash while achievement recorded in terms of provision of infrastructural development projects is secondary. Politics in Nigeria has been monetized at the expense of the integrity of the contestants. While the political gladiators are corrupt, the electorates are equally culpable because of the unreasonable expectation and demands beyond available fund. The financial resources at the disposal of the politicians provided opportunity to mobilize citizenry for violence at pre and post election period. Except there exists stern institutional mechanism to effectively checkmate the excesses of these politicians, the hope of peace building is in doubt.

In addition, when politics is seen as a means of livelihood, for a person that perceived his loss at election to be characterized with corrupt, fraudulent and sharp practices, his willingness to overlook the injustice done to him is often difficult. This is a situation when such individuals do not believe in making use of constitutional remedies; violence might be the result such a scenario creates acrimony and animosity that is often a challenge to post election peace building.

Politics is expected to end with election; it is at that point that government takes off. Political acrimonies associated with elections should ordinarily be left behind by government in power and adopt inclusive approach to governance. The experience in Nigeria is to the contrary. Government that is supposed to be father

of all often failed to live up to that expectation. A semblance of such arrangement was the coalition government formed by former President Shehu Shagari's administration in 1979 that eventually collapsed.

This makes 'winner takes it all' syndrome constituted a huge challenge to peace building that manifested in a non-inclusive government. Developmental programmes, which are supposed to assuage the political opponents, were often denied particularly to recognized communities that did not vote for the party in power. Such individuals and communities who were made to face pre-election violence and further denied access to infrastructural development projects in post election period could not be supportive of government in power. This does not imply that only government in powers were the agents of violence, for instance at Ile-Ife both the ruling party supporters (APC) and opposing party (PDP) engaged in violence just as the election result was declared claiming three lives, Nigerian Eye (2015). The political violence experienced in Rivers state during the 2019 Presidential election resultant effect was the complication of the post election peace building while each of the parties concentrated on nursing its wounds.

The predominance of political godfathers in the Nigerian political landscape who must be allowed to determine the choice of candidates and be placated may not work very well for effective peace building as the interests were often insatiable. They were often responsible for instigating violence when any settlement arrangement might not favour them and this could further lead to explosive situation. This explains why groups like Odua People Congress, Egbesu Boys, Arewa People's Congress and The Road Transport Worker Union or their rivals were engaged to prosecute violence. The security agents often failed to perform their constitutional duties while they were often drafted to be agents of violence as reported in the case of Ekiti State gubernatorial election. This particular incident has warranted of recent the setting up of an investigation team by the Federal Government to look into the allegation. Instances of this nature affected the process of peace build.

### **The prospect of peace building in post general elections Nigeria**

The 2015 as well as the 2019 general elections were acclaimed to be relatively successful and the elections held with little or no post election violence. The "success" cannot but raise some fundamental questions such as: Was the "success" attributable to the determination of leadership of INEC to make a success out of the rotten system or is the institutional arrangement supportive of the system and could sustain future elections. Furthermore, is the government in Nigeria sincere on the need for peace building and what other institutional mechanisms existing to seek redress on electoral dispute? This could be examined by considering the institutional and attitudinal factors.

The task of enduring post-election peace building in Nigeria is not an insurmountable task first, it is generally believed that INEC in 2015 general elections performed creditably well beyond what was experience in previous elections, while the efforts of the electoral body in 2019 elections cannot be underrated. The implication is that the prospect for peace commences from the

management of intra party disputes to the conduct of the election and beyond. The management of intra party affairs is largely a function of sincerity of purpose, the determination to do all that is legally right in the process of selecting a candidate and giving necessary support to successful conduct of election and take over the running of government. Indeed, personal gain dominates the reasoning of the political gladiators and their supporters. Hence, carpet crossing is the other of the day due to ideological deficit. In such an arrangement, though not good for a virile political system but could minimize post-election violence and make peace building easier as politician are after their own welfare and they move to any direction where such could be attained.

Peace building after any election is beyond occasional production of personality that will do a good job as an electoral body and such good job dies with him. If the electoral body could be found to be consistently fair and just in their assignment, the propensity for post-election peace is largely guaranteed. This might explain why Igbuzor, (2015) observed that:

*Institutional reform is necessary to deal with decreasing public service quality and dysfunction in Public Administration in Nigeria. All champions of change must ensure that politicians and political parties jostling for power must address issues of institutional reform as a priority.*

Though the judiciary has been subjected to various criticisms on issues of integrity and sincerity in the dispensation of justice, there is no doubt; many election disputes were finally resolved by the court. A vibrant and impartial judicial system is an indispensable requirement for a stable political system and an instrument for resolution of conflict particularly in post election peacebuilding. For instance, in 2011 elections, among others, the election tribunal nullified Kebbi State governorship election and ordered fresh poll. Tunde (2011) reported that the Supreme Court ordered the re-trial of the election petitions of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) candidates in Benue and Akwa Ibom States.

As part of the fall out of 2015 general election, the election tribunals order the sack of the governors of Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Taraba states as contained in the Guardian (2015) among other mass media. The tribunal also ordered the conduct of new elections for twenty legislators in River state among others. The provision that the verdict of election tribunal can also go as far as the Court of Appeal for gubernatorial, Senatorial and House of Representatives election and Supreme Court for Presidential election provides opportunities for redress by aggrieved politicians. Also, in April, the Supreme Court sacked all the Zamfara state APC National Assembly members as well as the elected governor and his deputy for intra-party conflict. The implication for peace building is that various mechanisms provide for seeking redress also serve as platforms for enduring peace. The role of the security agencies as a supportive institution in the conduct of elections and the handling of post-election challenges has not been credible. At times, security agents become more political than the politician as manifested in the conduct of Ekiti state gubernatorial elections. For the security agencies to serve as an instrument of peace building demands that they remain neutral and their loyalty is supposed to be to the

nation and not individuals. If this could be achieved, it shall encourage peace building in post-election situation in Nigeria

The mass media is an essential instrument for peace building if in the conduct of the business there in fairness in reporting and less of sensational news that has the tendency of creating disorder. The press can be used as a means of achieving successful post-election peace building. The attitudinal factors revolved largely on our political culture. Political tolerance is largely lacking and the perception of political offices as matters of “do or die” are issues needed to be addressed for post election peace building. The ray of hope was notably demonstrated for the first time in Nigeria in 2015 and 2019 by Dr. Kayode Fayemi, the then former governor of Ekiti state and Akinwumi Ambode, immediate past Governor of Lagos State as well as former President Ebele Jonathan who conceded defeat before the declaration of results and went ahead to congratulate the winners. Political maturity as demonstrated in these instances can serve as a solid foundation for post elections peace building if other politicians could emulate them. This was alluded to by Ekweremadu, as recorded by Paulinus (2015) that “the magnanimity of President Goodluck Jonathan to concede defeat in the just concluded presidential election, saved Nigeria of a post-election violence”.

To a large extent, governments in Nigeria still run an exclusive system of administration. One of the basic requirements for effective post election peace building is the adoption of inclusive arrangement in governance as practiced in Kenya and Zimbabwe that guaranteed peace building. Inclusive government is defined as “A range of distinct constituent interests whose representation is necessary in order to legitimate the exercise of aggregate political authority” (Carl LeVan 2011). This might explain while Sullivan (2005) attributed crises of governance in Africa to incomplete implementation of consociationalism while Lemarchand (2006) cited Burundi and Rwanda in the 1990s as typical examples. This paper argues that inclusive government if not implemented in terms of sharing offices with opposing parties but take the dimension of impartiality in the distribution of essential infrastructural facilities to the benefit of all and sundry will reduce violence. This is an area of attitudinal change in our political system that is not negotiable to achieve successful post-election peace building.

In addition, a virile political party system that will cut across ethnic and religious cleavages is a necessity in Nigeria. A critical analysis of the result of the 2015 and 2019 general elections revealed that President Buhari pulled most of his votes from the North while former President Jonathan and former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar in 2019 got their votes from the South-South and South East regions, which is not healthy for an enduring political system and post-election peace building. The socio-political culture of Africans as rightly observed by Al Mazur (2015) that Africans possess a short memory of hate can guarantee a good prospect for post-election peace building in Nigeria. The political scene is governed by deficit of political ideology and politics is redefined in Nigerian society as “the means of process of acquiring what one will eat or become”. This understanding largely makes serious identification to a particular political party dubious and

politicians are most ready to decamp to party in power. Such a scenario cannot but make the prospect of peace building be possible.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper concludes that the prospect of peace building that will be enduring in post 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria is a herculean task but not insurmountable. The experiences within Africa in Zimbabwe and Kenya are the testimonies to successful post-election peace building. The challenges are man-made while a change in institutional and attitudinal behaviour is required. The Institutional and attitudinal factors revolve around the extent to which the nation is able to put in place enduring structures that can sustain peace and the determination of government and citizenry to support the structures.

The study, therefore, recommends that:

1. A consociational arrangement be adopted and truly implemented by governments in Nigeria to guarantee better inclusive system that will ensure that politicians after winning election see the whole nation as their constituency rather than areas that gave the highest vote in the allocation and distribution of essential development project. Same is true of governors and chairmen of Local Governments.
2. That the government needs not be carried away by the present relative peace in Nigeria to assume that subsequent elections can manifest same pattern. In effect, efforts should be to ensure that necessary institutions like INEC, security agencies, judiciary among others be allowed to function in line with established laws.
3. Government should sincerely address unemployment and poverty that constitute serious challenges to stable and virile democratic system and reduce recruitment ground of thug and undesirable elements used in prosecuting conflicts thereby frustrate the chances of ensuring enduring peace building.
4. Government should emphasize the need for political education beyond rhetoric as currently done by the National Orientation Agencies among other.
5. The study recommends the active involvement of peace agent both local and internationally in future elections to put pressure on political parties and contestants to see peaceful conduct of election as nonnegotiable issue while stern sanction for failure to comply.
6. Punishments are given to any individual associated with the violation of electoral law regardless of his/her status in the society.

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