

## **MULTI-PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS: A STUDY OF EBONYI STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*Elections in Nigeria have historically been conflict ridden. Equally, multi-party politics has been characterised with wanton level of violence stemming from the colonial period to the contemporary time, thereby constituting various periods of election in Nigeria into theatres of electoral violence. Following the creation of Ebonyi State in 1996, the state has traversed 1998/99, 2003, 2007, 2011 general elections, but the 2015 general elections presented unique features with remarkable electoral violence. One of the features and problems is the renewed tempo of violence among the contending political parties in the 2015 general elections. Political parties play fundamental roles in bringing about successful elections in a democracy, but in Ebonyi State rather than political parties playing positive roles, intra and interparty frictions, and identity politics, generated electoral violence and crimes thereby constituting and posing difficulties and obstacles to free, fair and credible elections in the March 28<sup>th</sup> and April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 general elections. The study adopted post colonial state theory. It relied on observation and interview as instruments of data collection, and equally adopted interpretive research studies and content analysis as preferred tools for data analysis. The findings showed that the interplay of identity politics among the political parties that participated in the 2015 general elections precipitated electoral violence in Ebonyi State. Therefore, the study recommends the cross cultural clan cooperation of intra and inters party relations, and reduction of personalisation of power by elites will ensure violent free election in Ebonyi State.*

**Keywords:** Multi-Party, Elections, Violence, Ebonyi State

### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of party politics anchored on multi-party structure has been the bedrock of political activities in Nigeria since the colonial period. The introduction of elective principles in 1922 sparked off the formation of political parties in Nigeria, with the formation of Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Herbert Macaulay. The Lagos Youth Movement in 1933 and its transformation in 1936 as the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) changed the election landscape in Lagos. Between 1938 and 1941 the NYM defeated NNDP in all the elections conducted.

The Lyttleton constitution of 1954 introduced certain electoral laws or criteria for elective posts. Electoral violence however began when certain individuals were disqualified on the basis of obnoxious colonial electoral laws (Abbas, 2008). Ethnic

politics and regionalisation played out in the 1954 general elections into among the NCNC, AG, and NPC that secured overwhelming majority votes in their ethnic or regional boundaries. Subsequently, in the 1959 general elections, the AG, and NCNC carried out mobilisation in their respective ethnic enclaves in order to ensure victory. They however, carried out vigorous campaign in the minority ethnic areas outside their ethnic domain in order also to break monolithic electoral support of their political parties and widen their political horizon. The NPC confined her political activities in the North and had total control to win simple majority of the legislature.

Election results, no doubt reflected the dominant role of ethnicity in Nigerian politics and the struggle for political power. Ethnic and regional politics therefore, had been nurtured since colonial era with trends and dimensions taking place over time and space. While the NCNC and AG won elections outside their home base, only in the minority ethnic enclaves. Any attempt to change this trend produced electoral violence.

In the 1964 general elections, the NPC/NCNC coalition government had broken down leading to emergence of new party formations and alliances. Smaller parties emerged including the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), Niger Delta Congress (NDC) and the United National Independent Party (UNIP). Some of these later joined the major parties to form alliances. Thus, there was an alliance between NPC and NNDP- a faction of AG lead by S.L. Akintola emerged to form the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). Similarly, there emerged the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), an alliance that comprised the NCNC, the AG and the Northern Progressive Front (NPF, which itself was an amalgam of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UBMC) (Akinboye and Anifowose, 2005).

There were pre-election and post-election violence mainly in Western Nigeria. The 1964 general election in Nigeria was described as the most perilous display of brinkmanship (Kirk-Green, 1971). The country also tottered on the brink of disintegration and bloodshed (Anglin, 1965). Many scholars agree that political parties of the First Republic performed below expectation, especially in the area of violence and rigging in 1964 and 1965 general elections. This in turn led to the collapse of the First Republic on January 15, 1966 (Nwolise, 1988).

The collapse of the First Republic ushered in the military interregnum between the 1966 and the 1979. In preparation to conduct election that ushered in the Second Republic, the military lifted the ban on political associations, this development Nigeria allowed for multi-party system. Five political associations that applied for registration were registered as political parties in December, 1978. They were the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP), the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), and the Peoples Redemption (PRP). The NPN dominated the politics of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. Apart from its control of the federal government, the party also controlled most of the state governments in the federation from 1979 till 1983, when the NPN controlled federal government was toppled by another military coup (Elekwa, 2001).

The 1983 elections produced results similar to that of the 1964 general elections with all forms of electoral manipulations and other fraudulent activities employed by the ruling party and turned results in its own favour notwithstanding. The political, environment therefore became charged and unstable and subsequently degenerated into rancour and mayhem in some parts of the country. Ethnic issues and other parochial sentiments had constituted the platforms during electioneering campaigns and thus the incumbency factors made the ruling party to have won in almost all the states especially the strongest holds of the opposition parties. This was occasioned by massive rigging, electoral violence, and all forms of electoral manipulations and fraud (Umaru, 2003). The electoral violence in Ondo state stood clear and outstanding.

In the botched 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic 1992-93, the pendulum changed as the country witnessed a paradigm shift from multi party politics to two party system, following the sudden cancellation of the eleven political associations formed by the politicians. The Babangida military administration imposed two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the National Republican Convention (NRC). The introduction of the two party systems witnessed a minimal application of electoral violence. The junta also provided for a new voting procedure which seemed acceptable to the Nigerians at large and even the international community. This was the option A4 where voters were required to queue behind the photograph of the candidates with results declared instantly. Elections were successfully conducted for all the levels of government. Unfortunately, the annulment of the June 12, presidential elections adjudged to be most the free and fair election resulted into post election violence.

The collapse of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic paved way for military regime in November 1993, the country was returned to a multiparty system. The following parties were registered –the United Nigeria Congress Party ( UNCP), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), the Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), and the Congress for National Consensus (CNC). It will be recalled that elections could not hold to produce the president due to the sudden demise of Gen Sani Abacha, which led to the dissolution of the five political parties by the new regime headed by Abdusalami Abubakar, who piloted the transition to civil rule that terminated in May 1999. Three out of the nine political associations that contested the local government elections in December, 1998 were finally registered as new political parties. These were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP), and the Alliance for Democracy. These three political parties contested the gubernatorial, state and National Assembly, and the presidential elections that ushered in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic.

The level of electoral violence was minimal in the 1999 elections. This is adumbrated by Okolie (2004), when he said that elections conducted in 1959, 1979, 1993, and 1999, were generally more peaceful and relatively less violence prone. Conversely, violent and disrupted were those in 1964, 1983, and 2003. Abbas (2008) noted also that the electoral processes of the 1999 elections were similar to those of 1979 as they were supervised by the military and conducted with less violence which

enabled the military to vacate power. The 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections however shared a lot and even more with that of 1964 and 1983.

Generally, the history of elections in Nigeria has not been encouraging. Elections have always been a source of unrestrained resentments, irrational actions and political instability. Elections have invariably been accompanied by breakdown of the political regime (Dipo, 1988). The character and nature of electoral violence in the past mediated through multi party system continue to reproduce itself with manifestations of electoral violence in 2011 and 2015 general elections. The study is set to investigate how multiparty politics among the contending groups triggered off electoral violence in the 2015 general elections in Ebonyi state.

### **The Contending Issue**

The problem of political violence and electoral violence continue to beset burgeoning and fledgling Nigerian state. Political violence is one variant of the struggle for power. It is mostly common in the bottom billion states that are struggling to overcome citizenship questions and identity crisis problem (Collier, 2010). The quests for power in Nigeria also precipitate electoral violence because the premium on political power is always rising higher and higher with it the intensity of political competition and its domination by efficiency norms (Ake, 2001).

The increasing competition and conflicts among nationalities, ethnic groups and communal interest groups was reflected in their ranks (Ake, 2001). Ake's thesis is justified looking critically at the political history of Nigeria in respect to the practice of multiparty politics and electoral violence. The 1953 Kano violence was the first collective outburst between the southerners and the northerners or more correctly, among the major political parties- the NPC, the AG and the NCNC, which were contending for influence or control over the operations of the government in the centre (Anifowose, 2011). The ripples of electoral violence have taken unprecedented dimensions giving reference to our political independence and the contemporary time in Nigeria.

According to IFES Reports (2007), there were 967 incidents of electoral violence in the 2007. Cases of abduction and kidnapping, murder and killing, protest, disruption, intimidation and physical attack and as well as poster defacing all featured in the incidents. Over three hundred people were killed on issues relating to 2007 general elections. Okafor, (2015) noted that deadly election related and communal violence in northern Nigeria following the April 2011 presidential voting left more than eight hundred people dead in the post election violence. He argued further that all the violence linked to elections is mostly perpetrated by the youths who are not only in the service of the politicians but financed by them so long as they do their biddings. With the benefits of their vigour, seeming lawlessness and lackadaisical attitude to the Nigerian project, the youth are ready-made weapons in the hands of the political leaders who think less of the development of the state and more of the parochial interest.

Prevalent forms of electoral violence in Nigeria manifest in political assassination, arson, violence-pruned campaigns, election- related ethno-religious

crisis, snatching of ballot boxes, and so on and so forth (Bakhedo, 2011). The contemporary incidences of intra and interparty squabbles associated with party politics in the country is nothing but a throwback to the past which was replete with schism, bickering, backbiting, intrigues, violence, packing and sacking (Olaniyan, 2009). Thus, the study proceeds from the following problematic:

### **Prior Studies**

This study looked into the dimensions of elite interests within the framework of political parties, and the upsurge of electoral violence in Nigeria.

Abbas (2008) argued that the fierce struggle to win elections and control the state apparatuses, and invariably exploit the situation for personal economic aggrandisement and advantage spark off the root of all electoral violence in Nigeria.

On the basic function of political parties, they are meant to aggregate interests in the political terrain and seek to mobilise and rally support for the candidates they offer for election into public offices (Jega, 2007). The aggregation of these interests is not in the mobilisation of support for all rather than the interest of few elite who control the party machinery. Nwodo (2010) averred that the image of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has grossly eroded due to strife, imposition of candidates, godfatherism, money bag politics, injustice, and lack of understanding of the party manifesto. Inferences from the above thesis entails that the condition that gives rise to intra and inter party political violence, is the high premium placed on the acquisition of political power as a means of advancing the elite wealth accumulations. It has been observed in recent times that many political parties in Nigeria find it difficult to adopt an open system that will not only allow members of the party to participate in decision making, but also give them unrestricted opportunity to contest in elections under the party platform (Ojukwu, 2011). These kind of socio-political restrictions and constraints have increasingly resulted in party wrangling, war of attrition, recrimination, acrimony, violence, and cross-carpeting in many political parties. Awosika (1999) captured the scenario this way when he said that such restricted politics is poisonous. It is politics of war not of peace, of acrimony, and mudslinging. This scenario has consistently metamorphosed into wanton level of violence such as the electoral violence of 1964/65 regarded as the Wild West fire. The crises of lack of internal democracy due to the preponderance of elite interest in PDP in 2013 led to the formation of New PDP which, joined the merger of All Progressives Congress (APC). Democracy finds it difficult to stand where elite interests are supreme over the fundamental interest of the state (Ikpe, 2011).

Significantly, the fragmentation emanating from lack of internal democracy in PDP and many of the parties have given rise to high wave of electoral and political violence in the country. Political parties are fundamental to modern political processes, to this end their significance cannot be overemphasised, in the other words; political party is the major organising principle of modern politics (Heywood, 1997). It is a group of persons bound in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause which essentially is the pursuit, capture, and retention for as long as

democratically feasible, of government, and its officials (Agbaje, 1999).

Looking at the contributions of political parties to electoral violence in Nigeria, Cohen (2015) noted that acts of violence between or within political parties in Nigeria are usually associated with general elections. He observed that killing occurred in 2007 in Nigeria within political parties. He argued further that political parties are operated by political godfathers who use money, and violence to control the political process. Olaninya (2009) observed that intra and interparty squabbles associated with party politics in Nigeria is nothing but a throwback to the past which was replete with schism, bickering, backbiting, intrigues, and violence. This scenario justifies the position borne out of the fact that party politics is about contestation for political power between or among the political elites. The high premium placed on political power in Nigeria tends always to generate political conflict (Ake, 2001). Landman (2005) captured the uncertain peaceful competition necessary democratic rule, a principle which presumes the legitimacy of some opposition, the right to challenge the incumbents, the existence of free and fair elections and a consolidated party system.

Indeed, the gamut of activities that take place in political parties make it needful for their members to articulate their common or divergent interests and this sometimes engenders intra or inter party conflict, which consequently create factionalisation within parties or some sort intra-party conflict. Harmel et al (1995) observed that factions exist; factionalisation is a fact of life within most political parties. Really, most political parties have wings or tendencies (Chambers, 2008). It is obvious that that faction hold different preferences and conflicting views about party platform (Debus and Brauninger, 2009). Consequently, political parties are driven by the spirit of factions, which are ubiquitous (Heller, 2008). Ultimately, factionalisation creates the incentive for the political elites to align and realign their political interests in the polity. The formation of Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) and United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) in the first Republic and the current ruling party All Progressive Congress (APC) are by-products of conflicts interest among the political elite within political parties in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Fourth Republic is replete and has been characterised more by recurring intra and interparty squabbles resulting in factionalisation of the major political parties at the national, state and local levels, than bequeathing a legacy of progress and development on the nation (Momodu, and Matudi, 2013). Equally, Rubin et al (1994) argued that intra party violence is always triggered by factors such as favouritism and poor revenue sharing formula contribute significantly to electoral violence. Kuka (2015) noted that the amount of psychological and physical terror that has been visited on non-supporters of All Progressive Congress (APC) was frightening. He noted the stories of young northerners telling Christians that they are lucky because had the election gone the other way, they would all be dead. It is this kind of zest and ideology that led to the outburst of post election violence that took toll on the Nigerian state in 2011. This confirmed the fact that the activities of political parties induce and generate electoral violence. Electoral violence is a variant of political terrorism, which aims at changing the political dynamics of states. Nigeria today is floodgate of political terrorism.

However, the authors did not observe other underlying issues capable of igniting electoral violence among the political parties internally and externally. This stands as limitation to the academic views and positions of the authors in the above theses. Most importantly how can we account for gruesome killings and violence in the 2015 general elections in Ebony State?

Generally, the review of the extant literatures above revealed that there are many factors that cause electoral violence which includes: leadership tussles, dominant elite interest, paucity of ideology, absence of internal democracy, interference by the executive arm in the domestic affairs of political parties, personalisation, desperations for power guarantee opportunity for elite aggrandisement of culture of impunity and poor management of elections by the electoral bodies. The scholars did not go further to examine the critical behavioural issues that underpinned the outburst of electoral violence particularly in Ebony State. The underpinning factor of autochthonous cross cultural infusion contending clans over political resources in Ebony State that precipitate electoral violence, this becomes our critical point of departure of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted theory of post colonial state in analysing this study. The proponents of theory argue that the post colonial state is rooted after the colonial legacy. It will be recalled that colonialism instituted violence, force and lumping up of various ethnic groups without considering their mutual compatibilities. This has created political crises and electoral violence. The post colonial state in Africa is found in various conflicts and problems particularly on the issues of nation building and democratic consolidation. Many political differences have ended in civil war in Africa.

At the creation of Ebony State, different cultural groups and clans came to form the state from Enugu and Abia bloc, it became marriage of political inconvenience given the fact that northern part has preponderant control of political machinery, thereby riding roughshod on the southern part. In Ebony State the struggle for the control of the state apparatus between the southern and the northern bloc has thrown up violent behaviour in an unprecedented dimension.

The relationship between the framework of multi party politics and electoral violence in Ebony State is mediated by contending struggle between the dominant group, the northern majority and the southern minority is explained in the light of post colonial state. Party politics from the creation of the state was structured on the cultural affinities and identities of these zones. The nexus between multi party politics and electoral violence in the 2015 general elections in Ebony State is explained in the light of the above theory.

### **INEC and the 2015 General Elections**

The Independent National Electoral Commission and other electoral bodies have actually conducted and managed many general elections from 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 respectively. In all these elections, the

Independent National Electoral Commission has been in the storm of criticism of very many irregularities. Obakhedo (2011) noted that Shagari led government organised a civilian to civilian transition that massively rigged the 1983 general elections like that of the first Republic through very violent means in connivance with the electoral management body, Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) and security forces. He noted that indictment of the Electoral Management body partly set the stage for the second wave of military intervention in Nigeria.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as an institution plays important roles in the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Some of these functions include: to monitor the organisation and operation of political parties, registration of voters, delineation of constituencies, supervision of elections, and carry out other functions assigned by the electoral laws. The roles of INEC are clear in the light of the above statement, but the critical issue remain, how to effectively carry out her constitutional roles. Chukwuma (2006) asserted that the INEC used electronic devices – the direct data capture machine for the voter’s registration but recorded failure. He further noted that INEC failed to display the voter’s register as provided in the Electoral Act.

#### **Carpet-Crossing among the Political Parties led to Armed Clashes and Killings in the 2015 General Elections in Ebonyi State.**

The table 1 below indicated the occurrences of armed clashes and killings in the 2015 general across the three geopolitical zones in Ebonyi state.

S/N	Ebonyi North	Ebonyi Central	Ebonyi South
1	Ocho Monday was stabbed to death at Ohage Village Effium Ward 1	Clash between LP and PDP supporters at Onueke	Killing of Mr Ifeanyi Onu
2	Destruction of APGA party office at Ohaukwu LGA	Destruction of bill board at Onueke	Destruction of Bill board at Obiozara
3	Armed clash among PDP supporters at Judiciary Abakaliki	Mr Emeka Nworie PDP Chairman killed in Isielu at his residence	At Ejikwu Primary School Owute Edda, Mr. Okporie Arisi was shot with bullets wounds
4	Attacks on vehicles conveying INEC material to Abakaliki LGA	Mike Ojon was killed at Ikwo Noyo	Attacks on INEC adhoc staff at Okposi
5	Two INEC staff wounded at Ebonyi LGA		Ike Ukpai INEC staff was attacked at Akpoha

Source Cardinal Point April 13, 2015 pp 16-17



**Table 2** showed electoral offences that constituted electoral violence

S/N	Date & time	Names of suspect	Offence	Place of offence	Exhibits recovered	Police action
1	28/03/2015	Simon Nwobiya 'm' 22yr & Nwoguzor Vincent 'm' 31yrs	Unlawful possession of firearm	Nnodo Kpirikpiri	Locally made double barrel	Under prosecution
2	28/03/2015	Igwe Nwonu 'm' 42yrs	Unlawful possession of firearm	Ekpe Omekaa Noyo Ikwo	Locally made pistol	Under prosecution
3	27/03/2015	Alo Chinonso 'm'	Unlawful possession of firearm	Aeka Comm Ezza South	Twenty (24) live AK 47 ammunition and dagger	Release on bail
4	28/3/2015	Eze Cherechukwu 'm'	Unlawful possession of firearm	Ohara Village Abakaliki	One locally made pistol	Under prosecution
5	28/03/2015	Nil	Snatching of electoral material	Mbamini Nkaliki	Three ballot boxes	Under prosecution
6	28/3/2015	Nil	Snatching of electoral material	Okpoto Isielu LGA	Volks wagen passat saloon car	Under prosecution
7	29/03/2015	Monday Nworie, Nwangwu Joseph, Nwali Okechukwu, & Nwafia Sunday	Unlawful possession of expended cartridges	Uburu village	Two expended	Under prosecution

Source: INEC Report on the 2015 general elections Ebonyi State.

In Ebonyi State, elections began to take place first in 1998/9 general elections. As Ebonyi State began to participate in politics and election, it followed trends of elections in Nigeria. Although, it is axiomatic that regime breakdown has not occurred since the return of democracy in 1999, but electoral campaigns have been characterised with violence pointing towards anarchy and regime breakdown. Ebonyi State remains a case in point in assessing the spate of political violence as the country participated in general elections this year. Free and regular elections are the criteria for evaluating whether a nation is democratic or otherwise.

Elections provide opportunities for political participation in any political system (Onah,2010). Rather than taking the trend of normal liberal democratic elections as obtained in the mature democracies; the previous elections in Ebonyi State have been fraught with minor electoral fraud and violence. The 1999 general

elections which were supervised by the military junta were largely rigged throughout the federation with minimal level violence.

The 2015 General Elections presented a unique feature in Ebonyi State. All the elections were contested by multiparty structure comprising the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party(LP), All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), All Progressive Congress (APC). The pre-election activities were characterised with campaign full of violence with remarkable deaths. In Ohaozara Local Government Area, Mr. Ifeanyi Onu was shot dead by political thugs that were pitched in the battle of supremacy between two leading contending political parties, the Peoples Democratic Party, and the Labour Party on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015(Sunonline.com).

Also in the month of February of 2015, the Labour Party rally in Ejikwu Primary School, Owutu Edda Mr. Okporie Arisi was shot, seven persons were injured and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed, which included: three thousand plastic chairs, two tents, forty-five canopies, and other campaign materials. In the same vein, the Labour Party vehicle in Ohaozara, and campaign bill board were vandalised by the PDP led thugs, while the campaign team of the senatorial candidate of Labour Party was massively attacked in Onueke Ezza South and Ikwo Local Government respectively. It will be recalled that these attacks were followed with loss of lives in Afikpo South, Ikwo and Ohaukwu Local Governments where APGA campaign office was burnt down during the campaign period (Otu, 2015).

Adding more credence to avalanche of political and electoral violence, the new Assistant Inspector General of Police AIG in charge of Zone 6 Calabar, during his one day official visit to Ebonyi State noted that the state has the highest number of electoral offences in the Zone (see Cardinal Point, 2 March, 2015).

The Judicial proceedings have been disrupted as the faction of PDP that went to obtain court injunction to stop gubernatorial primaries were attacked by thugs. There were tensions towards the elections. The clash of interest between the Governor and his deputy within the ruling PDP informed the level of political conflicts and violence.

The outcome of the PDP primaries polarised the party in the state, which led to the emergence of Labour Party a creation from the aggrieved members of PDP, who were more in numbers than the faction that hijacked the primaries. The faction that won the PDP primaries was led by the sitting Deputy Governor, Chief Dave Umahi. The growing popularity of the Labour Party put fear into the PDP, thereby throwing serious challenge to the ruling PDP. Hence, resort to violence by PDP to ensure victory became inevitable as the party moved into the 2015 general election.

Participants interviewed in the three senatorial zones held consensus opinion that there was wide spread of political violence in the state due to the greed of political kingpins who recruited political thugs to achieve their selfish political ambitions. For instance, the burning of chairs, canopies, and campaign materials of the Labour Party in Afikpo South were sponsored by political leaders in the area. They revealed that corruption, unemployment, and the politics of godfathers were the main sources of electoral violence in the state.

The toll of electoral violence during the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections came in drove. Mr. Mike Emeka Nworie, the Peoples Democratic Party chairman was killed in his house in Ishielu Local Government Area while six other young men lost their lives in Ezza South Local Government Area during the gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 (Salam, 2015). In Okposi town, Ohaozara Local Government Area, political thugs working for the ruling party led by a gangster called ‘chopper’ attacked the Labour Party and All Progressives Congress agents at different polling units. It was noticed that security agents failed to stem the tide, (see Cardinal Point April, 13, 2015). A staff of INEC a barrister who was a respondent in the interview noted that INEC officials were attacked because they joined the vehicles hired from a known politician in the area. This is because the political thugs and attackers believed that the INEC officials have been bought over by their opponents during the elections. The interviewee was a victim of this attack. Similarly, Channels TV correspondent, INEC officials, and ad-hoc staff of INEC were injured in various degrees. In the same vein, Mike Ojon was killed at Noyo Ikwo LGA by political thugs, while Ocho Monday was stabbed to death for confronting political thugs involved in illegal thumb printing at Ohage Village Square, Effium Ward 1 in Ohaukwu LGA. The collation officer was also injured (Channels TV News, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2015). It was evident that the personalities of the political actors who are deviant to the rule of law constitute grounds for blossoming electoral violence in the state.

Interview conducted in Afikpo South LGA, revealed that although social cultural identity played out in the elections as determining the political zone that could produce the Governor. From the submissions of the respondents, socio-cultural identity are critical sub-structural latent factors responsible for the increased electoral violence in the 2015 general elections, while the activities of political parties are super-structural manifestations of electoral violence in Ebonyi State.

### **Lack of Party Ideology among the Political Parties Contributed to Burning of Property during the 2015 General Elections in Ebonyi State.**

The issue of party ideology has been contentious among the political parties in Nigeria. Politicians jump from one political party to the other on flimsy excuses. It is sometimes predicated on a number of factors such lack of party discipline, contention on the choice of candidates for the general elections, and more importantly on the lack of internal democracy among the political parties.

Following the aftermath of the Peoples Democratic Primaries (PDP) in Ebonyi State in November 2014, there was mass defection of PDP members to Labour Party (LP). The emergence of LP due to lack of party ideology within the PDP added verve and necessitated electoral violence in the 2015 general elections.

The preparation before elections was marked with violence, on 24<sup>th</sup>, February, 2015, the political rivalry between the ruling PDP and the LP in the Ebonyi State House of Assembly led to the burning of House Chambers and the Account Department (see Cardinal Point March 8, 2015 and EBBC News, Feb 24, 2015). The two parties were accusing each other concerning the fire incident in the House of

Assembly. It will be recalled that the crises of impeachment have rocked the House of Assembly since July, 2014 prior to the 2015 general elections constituted violent scenarios. The impeachment threats indiscriminately issued to the governor generated conflict and violence between LP and PDP members in the Ebonyi State House of Assembly. Destruction of posters, billboards, and burning of vehicles belonging to one party or the other characterised the campaign period and the elections particularly on gubernatorial election.

Similarly, Channels TV correspondent, INEC officials, and adhoc staff of INEC were injured in various degrees. In the same vein, Mike Ojon was killed at Noyo Ikwo LGA by political thugs, while Ocho Monday was stabbed to death for confronting political thugs involved in illegal thumb printing at Ohage Village Square, Effium Ward 1 in Ohaukwu LGA. The collation officer was also injured (Channel TV News, April, 12<sup>th</sup> 2015). The various degrees of electoral violence attested in the 2015 General Election proved right the predictions of CLEEN Foundation that Ebonyi was on the top list of states predicted to be sitting on the Pandora box of electoral violence prior to the elections. As was concluded, the former Governor of the state, Chief Martin N Elecchi decried, and deprecated the wanton level of violence that characterised the gubernatorial and the House of Assembly elections in Ebonyi state (Channel TV News, April, 12<sup>th</sup> 2015). It was true that the Governor's party LP lost, but the turn of violence as seen in this study indicates that indeed violence marred the elections.

The pre-election violence took toll as gleaned from the available literatures, as observed that although, zoning formula played roles in the elections as determining the political zone that could produce the Governor pitted the Northern zone against the Southern part, it was noted that zoning generated bitterness within the PDP, and also the refusal by other parties like LP and APGA to zone governorship seat to the south engendered various degrees of electoral violence in Ebonyi State. This is because there is no strict adherence to party ideology before, during and after elections are held. From the analyses, it is suggested that the socio-cultural identities are critical sub-structural latent factors responsible for the increased electoral violence in the 2015 general elections, while the activities of political parties are super-structural manifestations of electoral violence in Ebonyi State.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The ability of the interacting parties to employ conflict management or resolution mechanism will ensure harmonious coexistence. Whereas, competitiveness is a guiding principle for liberal democracy, adherence to rules reduces conflict and violence in political process. In Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular, political parties conduct her activities and violate laid down rules with impunity thereby orchestrating unrestrained and untrammelled electoral violence. This ugly trend raises a fundamental question on the capacity of the Nigerian state to avert electoral violence, and fraud since security agencies and INEC officials are implicated (Obakhedo, 2011). In fact, the nature, magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria are posing a serious threat to democratic consolidation

(Malu, 2009).

Ethno-religious conflict, spoils system, patronage, prebendalism, and current armed conflict orchestrated by the onslaught of the dread Boko Haram on the Nigerian state attest to lack of democratic consolidation and apparent abysmal failure of good governance.

For Nigeria to deepen democracy, political elites, politicians, political parties, their supporters, and electorate alike should shun all manner of electoral violence. Political education, enlightenment, prosecution of perpetrators of electoral offences should be sustained.

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