

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RESOLVING POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE NORTHERN STATES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of religious education in resolving political violence in Nigeria, with focus on Northern States from 1951 to 2003. The paper also reviews political violence in Nigeria, and examine the role of religious education in combating political violence in Nigeria. The study employed inter-disciplinary method in the gathering of information. Findings from the research revealed that political violence is pervasive in Nigeria, especially Northern States. The paper recommends among others, that Christian religious education should be encouraged to debunk the persistent religious and political violence in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In the world politics today, religions education occupies the centre stage. Religions have created a rift in the national development. This rift makes the history of humankind to be incomplete without mention of the periods of political violence, discord and lawlessness. In Nigeria, democracy came with new games. One of the games is political violence before, during and after elections. Nigerians have experienced series of violent politics and elections in their attempts to democratically elect their leaders. Sometimes, these elections assume violent dimensions, leading to loss of lives and property. The area that is highly affected by political violence is the Northern Nigeria. The effects of this violence have raised many issues in Nigeria. Among them are: mutual suspicion, distrust and reprisal attacks (Kaigama, 2006).

These violence attacks though have long history have become more persistent since the return to civilian rule in 1999 (Abba, 2008). Political violence during elections threatens peaceful co-existence and national stability which are necessary ingredients for economic development and prosperity. Thus, despite the efforts made by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and its predecessors (FEDECO, NECON, and NEC) they have not been able to conduct elections that are free of violence in Nigeria (Tamuno, 1966). This, however, calls for the need to resolve violent politics and elections in Nigeria through religious education. This study focuses on Christian Religious Education in resolving political violence in Northern Nigeria.

The word “education” is viewed from a broad spectrum meaning different things to different people. Thus, the term is better described than defined. Lannap and Kazi (2003) have indicated that education is the oldest discipline in human

history. Therefore, it may not be easy to come out with a definite and universally acceptable definition of the term. This notwithstanding, Farrant (1964) defines education as the process by which an individual acquires knowledge, skills and values. Worsely (1975) describes it as knowledge; a systematic cultivation of the mind and other natural powers on the acquisition of knowledge and skills through training and instruction. Bull (1973) views education as the imparting of knowledge through instruction to affect discipline and maturity of mind.

Dare (1989) says it is the act of simulating the intellect and expanding the limits of human rational powers, while Mkema (1970) describes it as the total process of human training by which knowledge is imparted. Education is the importation of knowledge that affects discipline and maturity in the recipient to enable him/her survive as an independent entity (Danfulani, 2009). The term “religious education” simply refers to the art of imparting or acquiring knowledge or ability of acquiring knowledge through teaching and learning at home or school or similar institutions (Encarta, Microsoft, 2006). This definition is the most appropriate because it incorporates all forms of religious education in Nigeria, namely, Islamic education, traditional education and Christian education.

Politics lends itself to a more definite and precise explanation. Its original Greek roots are polis (city) and techno (art, skill or method). Thus, political scientists believe that political life as an organized mode of living started in the city and spread to the neighborhood. In this classical sense, politics is held to be the art of organizing men in a society to live and interact with one another for the full realization of social structures such as the establishment of legal and government systems to facilitate this interaction (Worsely, 1975). In its wider extension, politics has been applied to the different forms of organization a direction of human interest at various levels of the society including the family, village, church and school. With some purpose in view, since politics is essentially about governance, it primarily involves the structuring of power for achieving some articulated goals.

Thus, political scientists usually distinguish two levels of operation, in form of external and internal. The external level of operations concerns the administrative organization. While the internal level of operation refers to the guiding ideology which informs policy, hence the two broad fields of organization and theory in political analysis (Ekeh, 1989). Ejizu (1998) has classical notions of politics when he groups African political system into two narrow categories of centralized and segmentary societies. The centralized state system is characterized by administrative hierarchy, presided over by the paramount chief or king. While in non-centralized or seminary systems, power and authority are in the hands of lineage heads and elders (Brown, 1957). Some scholars have added a third category, the stateless society in which powerful association rather than seminary lineage system dominate the regulations of political relations (Onwuejeogwu, 1981).

Brown (1957) further grouped various indigenous societies, including those of Africa along the line of the three fold levels, instead of two fold patterns. In this

paper, our illustration of the wide ranging patterns in the interaction of religion and politics in traditional setting will be drawn from the three major types of political organization with different ethnic groups in Africa cultivated as their political systems in modern time. Thus, in this context, religious politics simply refers to ...attitude of the mind which enables people to express their motives and beliefs with the sole aim of achieving religious and political goals in life (Ushe, 2007).

Violence on the other hand covers a wider scope, ranging from physical dispute, disagreement between two persons to war and genocide where many may die as a result. Political violence therefore, covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that are commonly physical or emotional and are in the forms of verbal abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation, and victimization. Political violence, therefore refers to the exercise of physical force so as to cause injury or damage to a person(s), property and so forth in the name of politics (Ujo, 2000). It is a physical violent behaviour or treatment; a violent to injury act, a physical assault or unlawful exercise of physical force in the name of politics. Some trace its etymology to the Latin verb violare "to treat with violence, violate, injure, dishonour". From the inherent meaning political violence is related to another word, which connotes "strength, force".

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The history of religious education in Nigeria is divided into three phases. These are Islamic, Traditional and Christian or Western education. Islamic education brought cultural streams which are religious at heart, with education rarely organized, but hardly differentiated from the all pervading religious way of living. Islamic education like most other forms of education is centred on enabling individuals who acquire it and become the kind of people an Islamic society thinks appropriate for its members (Enoch, 1987). The traditional education though rarely institutionalized, was inseparable from the pattern of living and culture of a community. During the epoch, traditional education was a holistic way of life. Here, the child or young adult develops the aggregate of all the processes, abilities and attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives (Fafunwa, 1974). Christian or Western education which is our main focus in this presentation was introduced by Christian missionaries who brought different individuals and values together with the purpose of human development. It is divided into two phases, namely: non-formal Christian education and formal educational system.

The Non-formal Christian Religious Education: The major problem about non-formal Christian religious education is how it can be tailored towards resolving political violence in Nigeria. However, it is important to stress that Christian religious education take place in non-formal settings where people gather for work or leisure through socialization, initiation process in the community, conventions and so on (Gunut, 2004). Thus, the Christian religious education being given in this phase

should be the type that should achieve magical and spiritual power. This includes practising what is preached, creating fear of God, commitment and dedication. The Christian religious education at this level should stop preaching only for health and wealth, which are common features of most churches today. Rather, Christian religious education should go on preaching honesty, fair play and contentment which are all actual virtues of true democracy and peace.

Gunut (2004) has asserted that there are many children who are not opportune to attend the formal educational system where Christian religious education is being taught. The Christian denominations can organize children into Sunday school to educate them on the need for peace and respect for democratic structures. Christian parents at home could also stress the importance of religious unity, conformity and believe by ignoring differences within their religious backgrounds. As they grow, there must be clear understanding and blending of Christianity, peace and democracy. In this way, children can grow to understand their full role in the sustenance of peaceful politics and democracy in Nigeria.

Formal Educational System: A cross section of lecturers and students, have expressed their doubts in using Christian religious education in sustaining peace and democracy looking at the level of electoral malpractices and the re-election scandals characterising our fledgling democracy. But they also indicated that Christian religious education can help Christian students to interact and to live in peace with people of other religious faiths. It can also encourage dialogue, friendship, good leadership traits, Christian principles of democracy and governance. In this way, the products of this educational phase can also contribute their quota in the sustenance of democracy and peaceful co-existence. It is also pertinent to state that the schools, colleges and universities controlled by Christian denominations and missionaries can tailor the teaching of peace and democracy into their curricular. Thus, the teaching of subjects like ‘peace education’, have a Christian education background.

In the 16th century, that is, during the reformation, three churches were sworn in the Anabaptists tradition which today is called the “historic peace churches”, namely, the church of Brethren, the Mennonites and Quakers. These churches resisted participation in the use of force and warfare (Haselbarth, 1952). Christianity has teachings on peace entrenched in the Holy Bible. This can easily be used as an instrument of peace and sustenance of democracy among young persons and adherents. It is in school that children begin to participate in national discourse and to learn the basic elements of such discourse. The Christian schools therefore can encourage and permit students to experience the participation of rational deliberation. This is especially significant at primary and secondary levels where children develop their abilities in order to become committed citizens. Students are taught both political criticism and political participation to keep them abreast with democratic ethos.

In schools, children and adults are taught the values of tolerance, respect for others, non-repression and non-discrimination which are the hallmarks of the

democratic ethos. Teachers including religious teachers must exhibit these democratic virtues in their day-to-day activities with students. Teachers must avoid authoritarian approaches to teaching, since such approaches are least likely to instil in students the desire to participate and be effective in political discourse later (Durel, 1997). In the formal educational system, Christian religious education uses proverbs, poems, anecdotes, parables, songs or hymns, Holy Bible and other subject fields which have to do with personal and economic problems. All these are put into the curriculum of Christian religious education with a view to making it life centred. This conforms to one of the major aims of Christian religious education where democracy and education are also emphasized. All that is best in democracy and in education is enhanced and made more vital by the faith in God which Jesus opened to mankind. Nothing less than the whole range of life and education is to be conceived and fulfilled in the spirit of religious faith (Ilori, 1990).

Election Experience in Northern Nigeria: The persistence violence in the conduct of elections in Nigeria is disturbing to all people. This is so when one put into account experiences the people of Nigeria have in politics and the conduct of elections in spite of the intermittent periods of military rule (Abba, 2008). Even though Nigerians have twenty-eight out of fifty-two years of independence under military rule, democratic experience in the country has spanned almost twenty two years. In these twenty-two years, the country conducted six national elections. There were in 1961, 1964/65, 1979, 1983, 1999 and 2003. In their transition programmes, the military conducted two elections, namely, in 1979 and 1999 which resulted in the handing over of political power to civilians.

Even under the military rule, Nigerians have had the elections. This was the case when governors, state and National Assembly legislators were elected preparatory to the 1993 handover of power to civilians (Abba, 2008). Presidential election was also conducted even though the process was not concluded. If we also put into account the experience of the conduct of elections under colonial rule, Nigerians have had four elections across under British rule. There were in 1951, 1954, 1956 and 1959. The last election ushered in the political leadership of the First Republic (Tanumo, 1966), while in Lagos, they have had much longer period and experience in conducting elections, which date back to 1919 when the colonial government introduced elections into Lagos municipal council. In 1923, provisions were also made for the Lagos and Calabar African elite to elect representatives to the central legislative council in Nigeria (Usman, 2002). The most astonishing fact about the inability of Nigerians to conduct elections devoid of violence is that from 1951 to 1983, politics in Nigeria was dominated by the same generation of politicians. This is to say that in this fifty-two years period, people who started their political career under British rule have continued to dominate politics and public life in the country, under both civilian and military leadership.

By virtue of this, they were required to have gathered sufficient experience

in politics, public affairs and the conduct of elections. However, within this period of fifty-two years, Nigerians went through the motions of conducting thirteen national elections. This was an average of one election in every four years, despite military rule, in the period 1951-2003. This is sufficient because even in a normal democracy, conducting elections after every four years is an ideal. So why it is that after fifty-two years of conducting elections, Nigerians have not been able to overcome the problem of violent politics and elections? One important fact to note is that violent politics in Nigeria started when the British colonial government introduced contest in 1951.

This violent politics started in Northern Nigeria, by the British colonial government, in collaboration with the Native Authority notables led by emirs and chiefs (Abba, 1993). It actually started in an organized and coordinated fashion in Kano as a reaction to the political activities of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) following its massive electoral victories at the primary stage of the five stage-staggered elections into the Northern Region House of Assembly in late 1951. For example, in Kano city and the surrounding areas, NEPU Candidates won 19 out of 26 seats (Report in Nigerian Citizen, 1951).

Consequently, this development frightened the British because NEPU was a political party that dedicated itself to among their important aspirations, the attainment of independence for Nigeria in 1956 and the introduction of sweeping reforms of the oppressive system of government called the Native Authority, which the British firmly placed under the control of emirs and chiefs. The latter were allowed by the British to exercise autocratic powers against their opponents and those of the colonial government (Abba, 1993). Thus, the 1951 election victory of NEPU in Kano, which was one of the most important and powerful Native Authorities in Northern Nigeria attracted hostile and immediate reaction from senior British officials. They quickly mobilized the state apparatus and the media organs to unleash terror and vile propaganda against NEPU, its members, sympathizers and leaders. The purpose was to frighten the electorate away from the party and if possible, annihilate NEPU from the political landscape of Nigeria (Tanko, 2004). The reaction of the colonial government to this political development could be seen in the secret letter addressed to the secretary, Northern provinces by the Resident, Kano Province, Mr. Bryant Sharwood Smith dated 29th October, 1951. He (the Resident), emphatically warned that:

...to repeat what I have frequently said before, the executive of NEPU and its founding members are a worthless lot in terms both of mental calibre and experience. They do, however, possess drive, zeal and an appreciable measure of organizing ability. This thing can spread and it will spread unless responsible Africans who have the real future of the North at heart get down to it at once and organize a counter-offensive...what does seriously perturb me is the impression that I received from a number of sources that, in other provinces, it is not realized that what has happened in Kano can easily happen elsewhere, and that once this quite worthless

movement is permitted to gain adequate momentum, it will effectively penetrate the rural areas (SNPIS, ACC, 349, National Archives, Kaduna).

With this attitude of most senior colonial officer in Kano province and the most senior British resident in Northern Nigeria, the stage was set for the persecution of NEPU, its members, supporters and leaders. The British colonial government mobilized the machinery of Kano Native Authority made up of traditional institutions, police, judiciary and prison and transformed them into the instruments of repression and violence against the adherents of NEPU. They created a gangster group called “Jam’iyya Mahaukata” (the political party of “crazy people”), which moved from house-to-house and street-to-street to fish out, molest and viciously attack anyone associated with NEPU (Tanko, 2004). This government inspired violence started from 1951 and gradually developed into a full-blown and coordinated political violence across Northern Nigeria.

One of the victims of this violence was Mallam Aminu Kano, who was the president-General of NEPU from 1953-1966. He documented some of this violence in a NEPU memorandum prepared for submission to the minorities’ commission in 1957. The attitude of the colonial government became more hardened when in 1952 Sharwood Smith was elevated from the position of the Resident of Kano province to that of the Governor of Northern Nigeria. He held this position, from 1952-1957, a period, which enabled him to supervise the extension of this violent politics from Kano to the rest of Northern Nigerian. Soon after he became Governor, branches of the “Jam’iyya Mahaukata” (the political party of crazy people”) were opened in other parts of the North where NEPU was active, thriving and poised to win elections. Servants of emirs and NPC officials opened these branches and they wore red badges, mostly made from Kano (Tanko, 2004).

Violent Election in Northern Nigeria: Violent election is a direct product of violent politics in Nigeria. This is because if politics is violent, then elections are bound to become violent. Just before Federal elections of 1954, Sharwood Smith invited and addressed emirs and chiefs in Kaduna, and warned them that “the enemies of traditional authority” were increasing in number in the Northern Region. Thus, therefore, set the stage for another wave of violent attacks on the opposition parties in the Northern Region, especially the NEPU (Abba, 1993). As a result of this policy of the colonial government, the 1954 Federal elections were marred with violence.

Kano, the birthplace of NEPU became the most important target. According to Mallam Aminu Kano there was terrorism all over. People were afraid to vote for the NEPU by show of hand because the district heads were always on the spot to see which way people voted and these district heads were the NPC candidates in the final college. Many of these constant arrests and imprisonments of NEPU members and their daily broadcast over the radio did not only frighten electorates away from the NEPU but demoralised its members and supporters all over the Region (Ekeh, 1989). This intimidation paid off because NPC was declared the winner of the 1954

Federal elections and NEPU did not win a single seat. The gangster politics continued right through the end of colonial rule and it attained its primary objectives of preventing the development of democracy and political pluralism in Northern Nigeria, which controlled 5% of the seats in the House of Representatives. It was at the 1959 Federal elections, when the NPC had consolidated itself in power that the British allowed a handful of opposition members from the North to get elected into the House of Representatives (Dare, 2003). When Nigeria became independent in 1960, the political leaders of the NPC who had dominated politics in Nigeria by the sheer size of its members in the Federal and Regional legislatures had perfected the art of election violence, political repression and rigging.

They continued and extended this, from NEPU to all the opposition parties operating in the Northern Region. This lack of political pluralism was to such an extent that the leader of NPC, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and a number of other leading figures of the party were often returned unopposed from their constituencies because elections were not allowed to be held there (Abba, 1985). Thus, the dominant political party in Nigeria did not know the essence of democratic content and did not really participate in nurturing it. In the case of the Sardauna, the British did not even permit any opposition party to campaign in his Raba constituency (Abba, 1985). And with the attainment of independence, elections became a façade in Northern Nigeria where nearly half of the seats were often declared unopposed in favour of the NPC. The prolonged Tiv riots of 1962-1966 stemmed from the attempt by the NPC to muzzle UMBC support in Tiv areas of Benue province through repression and violence (Makar, 1975). Violent politics was not however, a monopoly of the Northern Region.

In the Eastern and the Western Regions the ruling parties, NCNC and AG respectively, set up their own thugs to intimidate political opponents, especially after independence. However, this violent politics in the South took a new character in the Western Region following the conflict between the president, Chief Awolowo and the Deputy President, Akintola of the ruling Action Group party in 1962. Chief Awolowo was also the Leader of opposition in the House of Representatives, while Chief Akintola was the premier of Western Region. The problem was further complicated when Chief Akintola broke away from the AG, established his own party and forged an alliance with the ruling NPC.

This resulted into bitter and violent conflicts between the factions of the Action Group, which eventually led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the Western Region. The attempt to conduct elections into the Western Region House of Assembly in 1965 in the midst of this violent power struggle between the two factions of the Action Group was like adding fuel to fire. It became worse when the newly formed party of premier Akintola, Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), was declared the winner of the election. Turmoil, arson and gangster politics became the order of the day (Ekeh, 1989). This violent politics facilitated the overthrow of the civilian government by the military on 15th January 1966. This

problem of violence continued in the Second Republic, even after 13 years of military rule. While the military conducted the 1979 elections to hand over power to elected civilians, the latter failed to conduct free and fair elections in 1983, to mark a transition from one civilian regime to another. Instead, the 1983 elections were marred by serious violence, primarily because the ruling party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was not willing to concede defeat (Abba, 2008). The violence in 1983 was particularly associated with the gubernatorial and presidential elections, which the NPN was not prepared to lose to any political party (Sunday Tribune, 14th August, 1983). This failure to conduct free and fair elections precipitated the 31st December, 1983 military coup (Dare, 2003). The primary objective of violent politics in Nigeria is for political parties, which did not have popular support, to climb to power and to continue to be in power without popular mandate (Abba, 2008). In other words, violent politics is designed to subvert democracy and the rule of law. It is organized and carried out by a powerful minority group.

This is why a democratic culture cannot be built with violence lurking around the corner. In Nigeria, those who got to power through violent politics had different goals. Since the colonial era, down to first Republic and to a certain extent up to the Second Republic, violence politics had some ideological basis. The British and the NPC politicians saw themselves as fighting radicalism and radical politics associated with NEPU and the NCNC in Nigeria, which threatened its interests. Even in the Western region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group saw itself as defending what it regarded as "Yoruba" interests against what they perceived as Chief Akintola's sell-out to the NPC. These political parties therefore, took over government to run it along their conservative ideological perspectives. This situation continued up to 1983. However, the 15 years period of military rule (1984-1999), changed the political landscape and the political personalities. The first effect of this period of prolonged military rule is the undermining of ideological politics. This was further strengthened with the marginalisation of the First and Second Republic Politicians, who had considerable experience in ideological politics (Abba, 2008).

The Second effect is that ethnicity, religion and money took the centre stage of politics in Nigeria. Thus, under military rule, Nigeria witnessed numerous violent conflicts associated with ethnicity and religion. The most important effects of these conflicts was the further undermining of ideological politics in Nigeria which has produced politicians whose mission in government is not to render service but to make money and use this money to perpetuate themselves in power in an endless process of primitive accumulation (Abba, 2008). This is in stark contrast with the case of the politicians of the colonial rule, the first and even the second republics. The big questions now are: In view of these problems of the persistence violence in Nigerian politics, can anything be done to end violent politics and violent elections? What role can Christian Religious Education play in eradicating violent politics and elections in Nigeria, especially Northern states?

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RESOLVING POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

Political violence in Nigeria, particularly Northern States has left a lot of people death. Northern opposition politicians run the risk of having majority of death casualties. This development in which party supporters are not tolerated by their fellow political opponents in the North is humiliating. The feeling that they are party opponents in the same Northern State made some of them to consider taking a violent posture to face the aggression from either side of the divide. Conceiving forming a militia by the Northern political parties during elections looks a beautiful idea because the possible chances of success are clearly visible. In the first place, the Northern geographical area offer a good breeding ground for marine, land and upland militias that can comfortably fight their party opponents in other parts of Nigeria as well as in the north. Secondly, the identities that constitute northern political gurus today have records of military and violent traditions right from the pre-colonial period that should still be maintained (Achi, 2008). The Northerners did not successfully resist the Islamic jihads but they posted a step resistance to the colonial invaders.

Thus, from 1900 to 1920s, the colonial government continued to battle with the Tiv, Yerghun Shiri, Marghi, Abuja, Genghi, Wako, Yandam, Okpoto, Semolika, Dakakkari, Ngell, Sura, Ziggam, Kagoro, Libu, Angas, Tangale-Waja, Chibuk and son (Ujo, 2000). They also started the anti-Igbo rebellions in the Northern army that gradually led to the counter coup of 1966 and constituted majority of the soldiers that fought the civil war from 1967 to 1970 (Achi, 2008). Thus, it is imagined that the blood of the gallant soldiers of yesteryears is still flowing in the veins of their progenies. However, no matter how promising the chances of success may be, political violence is never the peaceful means of democratic election in Nigeria. It should be bore in mind that the introduction of suicide mission sponsored by politicians in contemporary times makes political violence inclusive in Nigeria.

Anyaele (2003) asserts that several reasons account for political violence in Nigeria. These include (1) regionalization of political parties, especially in the first republic, (2) tribalization and politicalization of Nigerian army in the first republic, (3) large scale corruption and nepotism that pervaded the first and second republic, (4) the 1962 and 1963 census that nearly disintegrated the country as a result of the inflation of population of different areas by the politicians, (5) absence of free and fair election, (6) the desire to stay too long in power. Based on the above consideration politics till now is still begging for survival. Odunze (2008) opines that but as for political elections; we are yet to create a situation for peaceful democracy because, for now we are diametrically heading in the opposite direction. There are conditions for democracy to thrive in the country.

These according to Ogunkule (2007) include (a) peaceful elections (b) effective participation (c) equality in voting (d) free and fair elections that are devoid of tyranny, uphold essential rights, establish and sustain a feeling of general freedom, self-determination and autonomy of individuals. The crucial point for democracy to be sustained is anti-violence politics. The kind of politics that Nigeria is practising

since inception of democracy falls short of peaceful elections and this is why over the years we are yet to evolve a democratic culture that is enduring and sustaining. Ajibola (2006) argues that the true test of good democracy is the extent to which the quality of Christian religious education has contributed in the fair and free election of leaders. There is unfortunate decline in Christian religious education in Nigeria. This has aggravated to political violence and mal-elections as a result of moral degeneration, moral perversion and moral degeneration among others. Religious education is an instrument “per excellence” for effective democracy. F o r Nigeria to achieve effective political peace, she has to invest in the Christian religious education of her citizens towards the realization of peaceful elections of democratic leaders. Political game in Nigeria should be guided by moral principles that opposes violent politics and election in Nigeria. In this regards, the violent politics and elections that are exacting negative influence in the country will be eradicated. Today, more than ever, the citizens of Nigeria rightly look upon to Christian religious education in the struggle for eradication of violent politics and elections in the country. This is coming at a time that the political class seems to have a poverty of ideas and our political parties seem to have amnesia of ideology.

CONCLUSION

From the above stated facts, it is clearly seen that the prevalence of violence in Nigerian politics has a long history which dates back to the colonial period. Experience has shown that the three transition elections held in Nigeria were the least affected by violence. These are the 1959, 1979 and 1999 elections. They were conducted with minimal violence because under colonial and military governments’ supervision, the election officials in charge conducted themselves fairly towards the candidates and the political parties. But when election officials conduct themselves as if they were agents and supporters of certain candidates or political parties, election violence becomes inevitable. This was what happened in the 1964/1965, 1983 and 2003 elections. All of these happened to the election conducted under the auspices of election commissions set up and supervised by civilian elected governments, where the results favoured the ruling party. This is illustrated by comparing the results of the 1999 and 2003 elections conducted by the same body, INEC. In view of all the enumerated problems of the prevalence of political violence in Northern Nigerian the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need to apply the provisions of the law on rigging elections as provided in part VI, sections 114-130 of the 2002 Electoral Act.
2. Anyone who violated any election law, should be punished whether he or she is an INEC official, security officer, candidate or agent.
3. Election violence could end if public officials accept that their primary obligation in office is public service and nothing else.
4. Enforcing accountability is another important means of ending violent politics

and elections in Nigeria. What we have seen in Nigeria in the past few years is that politics is a lucrative business enterprise where people have invested money to reap massive profit. Therefore, so long as there is no accountability, people would struggle by all means to secure “elected” positions for the sole purpose of milking the resources of the country because they have either done it before, or they have seen others who have done it and have got away scot free.

5. There is need for Nigeria to develop political parties based on competitive ideology and programmes to campaign around and mobilize the electoral would assist in eliminating election violence. All the three political parties that dominate the politics and control the governments have neither ideology, nor programme to attract others. The PDP, ANPP and AD do not seem to disagree on any fundamental programme on the basis of which the electorate would decide who to vote for. Rather, we are left with personalities and money politics.
6. There is need to emphasized religious education which upholds the principles of peace, non-violence, justice and fair play in politics and elections into public offices. The reality of the Nigerian situation is that the political parties have been transformed into the tools of candidates, who use them to achieve their goals of climbing to power. And when they do so successfully, they subordinate and control the party, instead of the party controlling them. This is why politics has centred on individuals and their conscience.
7. Political parties and politicians must learn to accept that winning and loosing are two sides of the same coin in elections. Politicians need to recognize that people have the right to change the government periodically through elections. If they are not allowed to do so, they could start thinking about other means of changing other means of changing government.

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