Election-Related Violence and Peacebuilding in Nigeria: Implications for Democratic Stability and Conflict Management

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https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.12.no11.2026.pg19.30

Abstract
Electoral violence, peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria were investigated in this study with special reference to the nature of electoral violence in Nigeria and the effectiveness of the available peacebuilding and conflict-management processes. This study was informed by Relative Deprivation Theory that holds that "violent behaviour develops when citizens perceive that the expectations of what they believe they deserve and what they are offered by the political, economic and social systems are out of balance" (Veuger et al., 2008). Qualitative Approach was utilized and it was a complete secondary data. Peer reviewed Journal articles, books, government publications, reports of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), civil society organisations, international organisations and other relevant documentary sources were used as sources of data. Analyses of the data were done with documentary analysis using a theme. Electoral violence in Nigeria was found to have different forms such as intimidation of voters, assault, vandalism of electoral materials and facilities as well as making threats and killing people and disrupting electoral processes. Such violence stifles peacebuilding efforts, while increasing mistrust, political grievances, social polarization, and reconciliation challenges. The study also observed that electoral reforms, security deployment, voter education, inter-party dialogue, peace accord, early-warning system, mediation, dispute resolution and electoral technology have helped to decrease electoral violence but are only moderately effective due to lack of integrity, political interference, insufficient resources, poor coordination and limited accountability. The study proposes the strengthening of electoral institutions, implementation of electoral laws, enhance early-warning systems, foster inclusive dialogue and professional election security to ensure sustainable electoral peace and democratic stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Election, Violence, Peacebuilding, Democracy, Conflict Management*

Introduction

Background to the Study

Elections are central elements of democratic governance by giving people the chance to elect leaders, engage in the political process and influence public policies. But in Nigeria, elections have predispositions to violence as manifested in ballot snatching, destruction of electoral materials, political thuggery, intimidation, physical attack and other forms of coercive actions. One of the critical challenges confronting democratic consolidation in Africa is electoral violence which can have a significant effect on decreasing citizen engagement in elections, eroding confidence in electoral institutions and undermining the legitimacy of electoral results (Ameh-Ogigo, 2024; Onukwube & Chukwuemeka, 2026). Electoral violence in Nigeria stems from numerous causes, such as the exclusion of elections from law enforcement, politicization and viral political intolerance, corruption, wide-spread unemployment, poverty, ethnic mobilisation and weak institutions coupled with intense competition for political power. Recent research suggests that these structural and institutional sets of conditions afford opportunities to political actors and the supporters of such actors to use violence to gain an electoral advantage (Oyoro et al., 2025). The fallout is not only during election, but electoral violence can cause political instability, decline in social cohesion, voter apathy and even pogroms, which can lead to problems with the stability of a democratic society. As a result, peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms have emerged as a key element of Nigeria's responses to electoral violence. They are electoral reforms, voters and civic education, dialogue between political parties, early-warning systems, security measures, mediation, civil society interventions and judicial electoral dispute resolution. Nevertheless, electoral violence still takes place in spite of these measures, and it's not clear how effective they are. The general elections held in 2023 show that some technological innovations and security interventions helped manage the elections; but values like intimidation, political interference, and institutional weaknesses remained (Asangausung et al., 2025; Mbah et al., 2025). Given this background, this paper focused on the implications of election violence on peacebuilding and democratic stability, the efficiency and effectiveness of existing mechanisms for an election-related conflict is undeniably important to Nigeria's democratic development.

Statement of the Problem

But Nigeria has since had long history of democratic governance from 1999 and many electoral reform efforts have still been unable to eradicate election-related violence. Intimidation, political thuggery, violence, destruction of electoral materials and other instances of violence still occur before, during and after elections. This form of violence poses a threat to citizens' freedom of voting in elections, and can erode trust in the election and in democratic governance (Ameh-Ogigo, 2024; Onukwube & Chukwuemeka, 2026).

The root of the problem is the recurring nature of electoral violence in Nigeria as the country has put in place a set of mechanisms that are supposed to prevent and manage electoral conflicts. These are electoral reforms, securing, voter education, peace initiatives, stakeholder dialogue, early-warning systems, civil society interventions, and judicial mechanisms. But the fact that there still is violence around elections indicates that these instruments are not always effective at dealing with the root causes of election disagreements. For instance, the 2023 elections revealed voter intimidation, political interference, and institutional weakness despite the initiatives of the BVAS and Security Agencies, with their efforts being undermined by regular scheduled maintenance of polling stations by political party agents and party Goods Officer/Party Campaign Agents (NAC, 2023; Asangausung et al., 2025; Udochukwu et al., 2024).

The situation is exacerbated by the impact of electoral violence. Chronic violence may deter people from voting, exacerbate political polarization, erode social cohesion, and lead people to distrust governmental institutions. It can also erode peacebuilding interventions as well to enable the politicking to extend to all other social related conflicts (Oyoru et al., 2025). So it is crucial to critically look at the effectiveness of the available peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms in effectively handling electoral violence in Nigeria. The implications of electoral violence on peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria, as well as the effectiveness of existing mechanisms of responding to election-related violence is therefore the focus point in this study. Thus, the central issue is that despite the availability of electoral, security, peacebuilding, dialogue, civic education and litigation options for handling potential election-related violence, the phenomenon persists as part of Nigeria's elections. This thus raises doubts as to how effective current institutions have been, and if they can advance sustainable peace and democratic stability. Against this backdrop, this study looks at the relevance of electoral violence to peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria and analyzes the effectiveness of existing peacebuilding and conflict-management tools in combating election-related violence in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

1. assess the implications of election violence for peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria.
2. examine the effectiveness of existing peacebuilding and conflict management mechanisms in addressing election-related violence in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. what are the implications of election violence for peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria?
2. How effective are the existing peacebuilding and conflict management mechanisms in addressing election-related violence in Nigeria?

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

This research concentrates on 4 key themes, electoral violence, peacebuilding, conflict-management mechanisms and democratic stability. These concepts are only briefly discussed below.

2.1.1 Concept of Electoral Violence

Electoral violence: Any physical violence and/or destruction, intimidation, coercion or threat of such acts, committed or used by political actors, their supporters or by other groups that have used, or threatened to use, violence and/or destruction in order to influence electoral processes and/or outcomes. It can manifest itself before, during or after election and may involve election thuggery, assassination, voter intimidation, snatching of ballot papers, destruction of ballot papers and shooting at election officials. Highlighted common features of electoral violence are high stakes in relation to political power, political intolerance, poor socioeconomic conditions, poor institutionalization and lack of law enforcement. Electoral violence in Nigeria affects citizens' freedom to vote and vote in poll, as well as the confidence in democratic elections and institutions. Recent research has pointed out that electoral violence represents a persistent threat to democratic consolidation and political stability in Nigeria (Ameh-Ogigo, 2024; Oyoro et al., 2025).

2.1.2 Concept of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding encompasses conscious actions to stop a recurrence of violence through deliberate action to tackle the root causes of conflict and enhance the institutions, social structures and relationships that support peaceful relationships. Peacebuilding includes a range of activities in the electoral context, including political dialogue, civic and voter education, mediation, reconciliation, early-warning systems, inclusive political participation and institutional reforms. Electoral peacebuilding is more than just preventing election-related violence; it also helps to ensure that electoral conflicts can be settled peacefully and democratically. Therefore, peacebuilding, as part of electoral security, becomes prominent in regaining peace and fostering sustainable democratic growth within Nigeria (Udochukwu et al., 2024).

2.1.3 Concept of Conflict-Management Mechanisms

Conflict-management mechanisms include any style, institution, and process that prevent, control, mitigate, and/or resolve conflicts without violence. In electoral politics, these refer to electoral legislation and reforms, security forces, electoral courts and tribunals, mediation, negotiation, inter-party dialogue, early-warning and early-response procedures and civil society initiatives. However, these mechanisms are only effective if they are independent, impartial, easily accessible, capable of fulfilling their institutional role and willing to be respected by political actors while playing such a role. The fact that electoral violence still occurs in the country despite these mechanisms, has made people doubt whether the yellow flag still performs its mandate of managing election-related conflicts as they are expected to do, especially in Nigeria.

2.1.4 Concept of Democratic Stability

Democratic stability, the capacity of a democratic political system to establish constitutional order, legitimate institutions, peaceful political competition, citizen's participation, and orderly transfer of political power without recurring political violence and institutional collapse. A credible democracy involves a credible process of elections, rule of law, citizens' rights protection, accountable leadership and effective institutions. Electoral violence can undermine democratic stability as it affects voters' turnout, undermines electoral legitimacy, breeds lack of trust in politics and opens the way to political instability. It is therefore of critical importance that electoral violence is curtailed and there is strengthening of effective peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms, for a democratic stability for Nigeria.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Anchored on Relative Deprivation Theory as its theoretical base, the study analyzes whether and why members of ethnic minority group feel relatively deprived in the context of an ethnic majority group. Ted Robert Gurr's influential book Why Men Rebel (1970) is linked to the theory of relative deprivation. It states that both individuals and groups can feel frustrated if there is a big discrepancy between what they feel they deserve and what they get. Relative deprivation does not correspond with absolute poverty, but is a sense of the gap between what is expected and what is socially, economically and politically the case. Frustration and a sense of injustice can emerge when they or their group feels deprived of opportunities, resources, political participation or decision-making, and can result in collective action or violence.

Taken from the context of Nigeria's electoral culture, it posits that electoral violence could arise from the impression of unfairness/distributive injustice of the political frameworks and electoral procedures among individuals/groups. Citizens, especially the youth, may accumulate grievances

when they are marginalized, unequal access to political opportunities, political exclusion, high rates of unemployment, poverty and inequality prevail. Political players can use these grievances to mobilise frustrated citizens to engage in intimidation, thuggery, attack or other electoral violence. Electoral violence, therefore, may be viewed, at least in part, as a manifestation of pent-up resentments felt among the electorate as a result of perceived political and socio-economic deprivation. The peacebuilding component of this study also fits in with Relative Deprivation Theory. Partly because electoral violence is engendered by a sense of exclusion and injustice, effective peacebuilding is required to consider what can generate these feelings. That might include facilitating more open political engagement, reducing the unevenness of parts of the voting process, expanding civil education, providing opportunities for marginalized communities and guaranteeing fair and equal treatment in the laws. Peacebuilding processes that don't deal with the grievances can end up "dealing only with low-level violence - not addressing the deeper problems in the elections" and consequently low-level violence can be "controlled without inducing peace" (166–167).The theory can also be applied to the explanation of democratic stability. Elevated levels of political disempowerment, electoral manipulation and political exclusion can erode confidence in democratic institutions. In contrast, credible elections, inclusive governance, effective conflict-management mechanisms, and the respect for citizens' political rights can mitigate and weaken perceptions of deprivation and the democratic legitimacy. Recent studies also highlight the need for socioeconomic and institutional factors to explain political and electoral violence in Nigeria (Oyoro et al., 2025; Onukwube & Chukwuemeka, 2026).

Relevance of Relative Deprivation Theory to the Study

Relative Deprivation Theory is applicable in this study on several basis. Firstly, it sheds light on the underlying drivers of electoral violence on how remedied inequalities in the political, economic, and social spheres can become a source of frustration and drive toward violence. Second, it offers an explanation as to why youth that are unemployed and politically excluded could be targeted by political players when recruiting during election time. Third, the theory addresses the fact that peacebuilding needs to focus not only on the actual violence but on the grievances that could create the violence. Fourth, there is a theory to measure the effectiveness of conflict-management mechanisms. Dialogue, mediation, civic education, electoral reform, and inclusive political participation, among others, can help to mitigate the sense of exclusion and injustice if used effectively. Finally, there is theory that explains the connection between electoral violence and democratic stability. Democratic legitimacy can be undermined when citizens feel that elections are unfair and institutions are unresponsive to their needs; democratic stability can be enhanced by experiences of inclusion and by feeling election results are fair, and that citizens enjoy equal political opportunities. Hence, the theoretical basis of Relative Deprivation Theory gives a good background and theoretical analytical framework for discussing further the implication of electoral violence on peacebuilding and its affect on Democratic stability in Nigeria and the effectiveness of the available peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms in managing electoral violence.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study was done with only secondary source of data and adopted a qualitative approach. It was felt that the design would be apt as the study aims to analyse systematically existing information on electoral violence and its implications in peacebuilding and democratic stability in Nigeria as

well as effectiveness of existing mechanisms for peacebuilding and conflict management in Nigeria. The sources of this information were secondary sources of data such as reports, institutional reports, scholarly publications, official documents and other reliable sources of documentary information.

3.2 Sources of Data

In this study only secondary sources were used for this. Secondary data are data that have already been gathered, recorded, analyzed or reported by others for research, policy making, management, or public information.

Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, edited books, theses and dissertations, government publications, reports by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), reports by election-monitoring organisations, publications by civil society organisations, policy documents, electoral laws, reports from international organisations and credible online academic databases were the main sources of data for the study. Of interest were papers published recently on Electoral violence, peacebuilding, conflict management, electoral reforms and democratic stability in Nigeria. Where works served as a foundation for the theoretical and/or conceptual explanations underpinning the study, important prior academic literature was also examined.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

Documentary research was used for collecting the data. The researcher utilized academic databases, institutional repositories, official websites, library and other credible sources to systematically search for relevant materials. The documents identified were analyzed, and information was drawn from these that would further the research objectives. The researcher coded the data into the following themes: definition and nature of electoral violence, causes of electoral violence, impact of electoral violence on peacebuilding, impact of electoral violence on democratic stability and the effectiveness of existing institutional mechanisms to manage conflict. Interviews with various sources were used to compare and determine for convergence and divergence.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis method was used in analysing the secondary data. The researcher deeply read the documents selected, compare and contrast to find the repeating ideas, discussions, results, and patterns which apply to the research questions. The same was done for the coded information, which was then arranged in the larger themes. Major themes covered electoral violence and its manifestations, root causes of electoral violence, implications for peacebuilding, impact on democratic stability, current peacebuilding mechanisms, conflict-management options, and the difficulties encountered in the above. There was no separate presentation of findings from different sources, but comparison and synthesis instead of different presentations. The type of the study was interpretive and descriptive. The researcher scrutinized the arguments and evidence presented in the literature and documents selected, and based on these determined a rationale, articulation, and entailed a coherent explanation of electoral violence and peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Analysis and Discussion

The Implications of Election Violence for Peacebuilding and Democratic Stability in Nigeria

Table 4.1: Documented Instances of Electoral Violence and Their Implications for Peacebuilding and Democratic Stability in Nigeria

S/N	Election/Period	Documented Instance of Electoral Violence	Implications for Peacebuilding	Implications for Democratic Stability
1	2011 General Elections	Post-election violence, particularly in northern Nigeria, resulted in widespread deaths, destruction and displacement.	Created deep grievances and strained relationships between political, ethnic and religious groups, making reconciliation more difficult.	Reduced confidence in democratic institutions and demonstrated the vulnerability of Nigeria's democratic transition to violent conflict.
2	2015 General Elections	Although violence was lower than in 2011, incidents of political intimidation, clashes and attacks occurred during the electoral process.	Demonstrated the continuing need for political dialogue and preventive peacebuilding mechanisms.	Continued electoral insecurity weakened citizens' confidence in the ability of institutions to guarantee peaceful political competition.
3	2019 General Elections	Political clashes, attacks on voters and party supporters, and violence affecting electoral processes were reported in several parts of the country.	Reinforced political and communal divisions and complicated efforts to build trust among competing groups.	Threatened electoral participation and democratic consolidation by making political competition more coercive.
4	2023 General Elections	Candidates, party supporters, electoral officials and INEC facilities were targeted by violence, including attacks, assassinations, intimidation and disruption of electoral activities.	Limited the effectiveness of peace accords and increased the difficulty of sustaining peaceful electoral relationships.	Undermined confidence in electoral institutions and raised concerns about the credibility and legitimacy of electoral outcomes.
5	2023 General Elections	Violent disruptions of electoral processes were reported across numerous states, including attacks on polling activities and electoral personnel.	Created fear among communities and electoral stakeholders and restricted opportunities for peaceful participation.	Restricted citizens' ability to participate freely and contributed to concerns about democratic legitimacy.
6	2021–2023	Repeated attacks on INEC offices and personnel occurred before the 2023 elections, particularly in parts of southeastern Nigeria.	Weakened trust between electoral institutions and affected communities and complicated preparations for peaceful elections.	Attacks on electoral institutions weakened the capacity of the electoral management system and threatened the continuity of credible elections.

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from ACLED (2023), INEC (2024), Onukwube and Chukwuemeka (2026).

Table 4.1 reveals that electoral violence in Nigeria has been recurrent even in the country's democratic journey and therefore the implications of which could not be unimportant when it comes to peacebuilding and democratic stability. One of the most serious is the 2011 general elections. The evidence suggests that there was a significant loss of life and displacement due to PEV, especially in northern Nigeria. The 2011 election period saw the largest scale of electoral unrest of the ones examined by ACLED, estimated at 800 deaths after the presidential election. Kinds of violence which give rise to grievances and mistrust can extend beyond the electoral period and make reconciliation and peacebuilding more complicated.

The number of incidents of electoral violence in the 2015 elections was lower than in 2011, but there was still electoral violence in the form of political intimidation, clashes and other electoral forms of violence. The experience showed that a decrease of the scale of violence does not mean that the structural factors that produce electoral conflict are removed. It also brought into focus the need for preventive tools, political dialogue and institutional readiness in ensuring electoral peace. But the 2019 elections also highlighted how electoral violence is linked to democratic consolidation. A study by Oyewole et al. (2023) on the 2019 and 2023 elections, concluded that ethnic and religious tension continued to be a determiner of political violence and a hindrance to democratic consolidation. The peacebuilding lesson is that elections themselves are a potential to exacerbate deeper social divides when political competition is organized along ethnic, religious and/or section lines. Another significant example is the planning and execution of the 2023 general elections. The IRI/NDI international election observation mission reported attacks on political parties' officials, political candidates, and political supporters, including assassinations and attempted assassinations, attacks on party facilities and INEC personnel. It also noted violent attacks on electoral processes in 22 states in the Presidential Election and 21 in the Governorship and State Assembly Elections in the Federal Capital Territory. These incidents directly impacted peacebuilding processes for they resulted in fear, lack of participation and loss of trust among political rivals. In the same vein, ACLED also reported violence between party supporters, candidates and electoral officials in the lead-up to the 2023 elections. In the 12 months leading up to the election, it documented over 200 instances of violence committed by party operatives and supporters and 44 incidents of violence against INEC offices and staff from January 2021 to February 2023. As seen in these incidents, electoral violence does not only occur just on election day but can build up during the electoral cycle.

The result also corroborates the recent work done by Onukwube and Chukwuemeka (2026) on the relationship between electoral violence and democratic stability in Nigeria which found a negative relationship between electoral violence and democratic stability. In their study, they found that there was an inverse relationship between the elector violence and higher voter turning out and political tension. Likewise, Nyeche and Azgin (2026) in the studies on 2019 and 2023 presidential elections in Ghana, articulate that electoral violence can be deployed to threaten the electoral space, spark resistance, silence oppositionists, resulting in difficulties for democratic competition.

Finally, the documented cases show how electoral violence impacts on peacebuilding in that it builds fear, contributes to grievances, undermines inter-group trust and makes reconciliation more challenging. Meanwhile, it harms the democratic stability by limiting political engagement, wrecking electoral credibility, eroding electoral institutions and complicating peaceful political competition. The paper thus provides evidence that tackling electoral violence requires peacebuilding efforts to be presented throughout electoral processes, and not only on the day of the elections.

The Effectiveness of Peacebuilding and Conflict-Management Mechanisms in Addressing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Table 4.2: Evidence on the Effectiveness of Peacebuilding and Conflict-Management Mechanisms in Addressing Electoral Violence in Nigeria

S/N	Peacebuilding/Conflict-Management Mechanism	Documented Evidence of Application	Assessment of Effectiveness	Major Limitations
1	Electoral reforms and legal frameworks	Electoral laws and successive reforms have been introduced to strengthen electoral administration and reduce malpractice and violence.	Partially effective	Weak implementation, political interference and inadequate enforcement of electoral offences.
2	Election security and deployment of security agencies	Security agencies have been deployed during elections to protect voters, electoral officials, materials and polling locations.	Moderately effective	Allegations of intimidation, partisanship, poor coordination and excessive militarisation in some locations.
3	Inter-party dialogue and peace accords	Political parties and candidates have participated in peace agreements and dialogue initiatives before elections.	Partially effective	Some political actors fail to comply fully with agreements, particularly where political interests are threatened.
4	Voter and civic education	INEC and civil society organisations have implemented voter education and awareness programmes to promote peaceful participation.	Moderately effective	Limited coverage, inadequate funding, misinformation and difficulty reaching some rural communities.
5	Early-warning and early-response mechanisms	Early-warning systems have been used to identify emerging electoral tensions and facilitate rapid intervention.	Effective in specific contexts	Limited resources, inadequate coordination and delayed responses can reduce effectiveness.
6	Mediation and community peacebuilding	Traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society groups and community organisations have participated in mediation and peace initiatives.	Partially effective	Limited institutionalisation, political influence and insufficient resources.
7	Electoral dispute-resolution mechanisms	Courts and election tribunals provide legal channels for challenging electoral results and resolving disputes.	Moderately effective	Lengthy litigation, cost, delayed justice and public concerns about confidence in institutions.
8	Electoral technology	BVAS and electronic transmission initiatives have been introduced to improve accreditation, transparency and electoral credibility.	Partially effective	Technical failures, network problems, logistics and continued violence can limit the benefits of technology.

Source: Compiled by the Researcher from ACLED (2023), INEC (2024), Onukwube and Chukwuemeka (2026).

Table 4.2 shows that Nigeria has put in place several measures to prevent and respond to electoral violence, though they have not been completely successful. Both improvements have been made to the institutional framework for elections, even if implementation continues to be a challenge.

Recent studies reveal that without proper enforcement, independent institutions and sanctions on electoral offenders, electoral reforms cannot enhance electoral credibility.

The deployment of security has also played a role in curbing electoral violence at a bigger scale. According to Mbah et al. (2025), the presence of security agencies during the 2023 presidential election contributed to order, thereby aiding to abate some of the violence. The study was, however, also identifying issues around intimidation, partisanship and over militarisation, indicating that security intervention needs to be professionally and impartially implemented.

Another way of preventing electoral violence is through inter-party dialogue and peace agreements. This type of action opens up the space for political actors to dedicate themselves to peaceful competition. But for these to be effective they need to be respected by political parties and candidates. Thus, without monitoring, public accountability or penalty for violations peace accords are less effective. Voter- and civic education also has an important preventive component. Udochukwu et al., (2024) identified poor voter education as one of the issues bedevilling the electoral process in 2023. However, this indicates that increasing voters' awareness in election matters through voter education, especially youths and rural areas, may enhance their knowledge about voters' politics and ensure peaceful political involvement.

There is particularly relevant evidence about the early-warning and the early-response mechanisms. An operational early-warning system, under its foresight in Kaduna and Katsina States, detected 126 incidents, out of which 53 cases were mediated in 3 months, with 89% of the cases resolved, supported by a United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPDF) project. This is evidence that community-based early-warning systems can help to avert escalating conflicts into violence, if the right reactions are put into action.

Electoral dispute-resolution mechanisms too are crucial for non-violent resolutions over contested electoral results. But their effectiveness can be limited by prolonged court hearings and problems of access and trust to the court. An effective dispute resolution mechanism is thus imperative to avoid disputes in elections escalating to prolonged political conflicts.

Lastly, some aspects of election administration such as voter accreditation and irregularities are made easier with the implementation of electoral technology like BVAS. But technology is not inherently able to end electoral violence on its own. Recent evidence emerging from the 2023 elections showed that technological innovation remained in tandem with insecurity, logistical issues and institutional weaknesses. So technology needs to be an aid and not a replacement for wider electoral reforms, peacebuilding, civic education and effective conflict-management institutions. Finally, the evidence indicated that Nigeria currently has peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms in place, although they are useful on their own, they are not effective enough. These can be strengthened by enhancing institutional independence, coordination, ongoing voter education, credible implementation of electoral laws, professional security operations, the inclusion of political dialogue and timely settlement of electoral rule of law issues.

Conclusion

The study analysed electoral violence, peacebuilding and electoral violence and peacebuilding in Nigeria, while asking the questions of what needs to be done to enhance the role of electoral violence to peacebuilding and democratic stability, and the effectiveness of the existing peacebuilding and conflict-management mechanisms. The study found that electoral violence is a big problem facing the democratic development of Nigeria based on the fact that both secondary sources indicated that it is this way. It takes various shapes such as political intimidation, violence,

boycott of electoral materials and facilities, assassination, interferences with elections, voter, party and electoral official targeting and harassment.

The study revealed that electoral violence has implications in terms of peacebuilding and democratic stability. It generates fear and insecurity, deters citizens to vote, erodes trust in electoral institutions, widens political and social polarization and makes electoral results illegitimate. The recurrence of electoral violence also complicates the reconciliation process, resulting in grievances and mistrust among political actors and (sub) groups. As a result, electoral violence cannot be addressed only as a day-of-elections security issue, but should be viewed as a larger issue related to peace, democratic participation and institutional stability.

The study also found that Nigeria has a number of instruments and processes for managing and preventing electoral violence such as electoral reform mechanism, security deployment, educating the electorate, intra-party dialogue, electoral peace accord, electoral early-warning system, electoral mediation, judicial electoral dispute resolution, and electoral technology. Their effectiveness, however, has been limited due to low level of implementation, political interference, low institutional capacity, poor coordination, limited resources and insufficient accountability of perpetrators. But the study underlies the importance of a comprehensive approach to electoral peace where credible electoral institutions work in conjunction with preventive peacebuilding, conflict management, political inclusion, civic education, and timely and stringent implementation of electoral laws.

Recommendations

1. Independence and institutional capacity of INEC and other relevant institutions need to be enhanced. Investigations into electoral offences should be timely and swift and perpetrators of electoral violence, without regard of political affiliation or political status, should be held accountable for electoral violence by suitable sanctions.
2. INEC, civil society organisations, and educational and traditional institutions, as well as other stakeholders, should continue to step up voter and civic education pre-, during, and post-elections. The programmes should focus especially on the youth and vulnerable communities, encourage political tolerance, peaceful participation, prevention of conflict and rejection of electoral violence.
3. Government/concerned authorities to create and provide robust early-warning and -response mechanisms during elections. The involvement of traditional and religious institutions and the strengthening of interparty dialogue, community mediation and peace committees to identify and address ‘electoral tension' before they turn into violent conflict should be supported.
4. Security agencies mobilized in support of elections need to be trained properly on elections’ security, human rights, conflict prevention and impartiality. Security staff should not be used for party or official political purposes and mechanisms should be in place to ensure accountability for misuse. Security should be deployed to ensure that voters, electoral officials and materials are safe and at the same time citizens are able to exercise their right to vote without intimidation.

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