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# Electoral Violence and Its Implications on Voters Participation in the 2019 Elections in Ogun State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

*Electoral security, peace, law and order are critical factors that facilitate effective voters' participation in elections in particular and meaningful engagement in democratic processes in general. Unfortunately, electoral processes in Nigeria are characterized by high level of violence, most times culminating in the loss of lives and destruction of property. In light of the foregoing, this paper interrogated the rising phenomenon of elections related violence and its implications on voters' participation in the 2019 elections in Ogun state, Nigeria. Our interrogation of the nation's politic clearly revealed that the rising level of violence before, during and after elections was largely due to the prebendal nature of the nation's politics. Predictably, the violence and high level of insecurity that characterized the 2019 political campaigns and elections in Ogun State, Nigeria negatively affected the level of voters' participation in the political process. This paper concluded that the essence of democratic governance is realizable largely within the context of popular political participation and thus recommended the need to rejig the nation's electoral system and politics towards promoting electoral security and good governance.*

**Keywords:** Electoral violence; Security; Voters' participation; Ogun State, Nigeria

## Introduction

Democracy as a people-oriented system of government allows the citizens a say in the management of public affairs either through direct involvement in the business of governance or through periodically elected representatives. The contemporary conception of democracy

as 'representative democracy' is due to the paradigm shift from the Athenian city-state direct democracy where every adult in the polity has a say in the management of public affairs to a model that is exemplified by election of representatives. The election of representatives to oversee the management of governance processes became inevitable following the large size of the polity and the sheer explosion of human population. Thus, periodic elections become one of the key pillars of democratic governance.

The success or otherwise of representative democracy is largely a function of the quality of elections in particular and the electoral system in general. Abada and Elijah (2009) reiterate this when they opine that the solidification and entrenchment of democratic process, norms and values largely depends on the credibility or otherwise of the electoral process. In other words, credible election is a *sine qua non* to democratic development and consolidation. Elections properly organized, devoid of rigging and all forms of electoral manipulations and maladministration do not only establish and entrench democracy, but confers legitimacy on the leadership that emerged from the process, the political institutions, policies and programs that accompany such administration. And more importantly, the people are motivated to vote and be voted for during elections.

It is important to state that peace, law and order are basic ingredients that confer credibility on an electoral process and promote popular participation in governance. In other words, peaceful environment is conducive for participatory democracy where the voice and thumbs of the electorates as against the instrument of naked force and bullets shape and determine those who lead the people. Oguntomisin (2004 cited in Adedoyin, 2015) emphasizes the relationship between peaceful environment and participatory democracy when he posits that development and consolidation of representative democracy requires peaceful, free-fair and credible elections. Peaceful environment is *iscondictio sine qua non* to election exercise in democratic settings. Democracy thrives in peaceful political

terrains where the people freely discuss issues of common interest, freely associate; freely vote and stand to be voted for and freely decide leadership of their political community without fear of coercion and suppression from a higher authority.

Unfortunately, the context in which elections take place in emerging democracies like Nigeria is violence-ridden. The 2019 elections in Ogun State, Nigeria, took place in an environment that was everything but peaceful as political thugs and state security agents acting the script of the government in power unleashed terror and mayhem on the voting public. The situation, undoubtedly, poses serious threat to the survival of democracy as would be voters distanced themselves from the electoral processes for fear of being victims of electoral violence. Thus, popular participation that nurtures democratic process is sacrificed at the altar of fear and violence. It is aptly stated that participation is the life of democracy; fear and apathy its demise (Nwolise, 1998; Appadorai, 2004; Kapur, 2011). To that extent, in most cases, ascendency to elective positions is largely secured through deployment of instrument of violence and manipulation of the electoral process.

The obvious implication of the lack of electoral security that characterized the 2019 elections in Ogun State, Nigeria is that the sovereign power of the people has been largely eroded and those that exercise power and make policies for the governance of the people are not strictly speaking the true representatives of the people. Indeed, what played out following the context in which elections were held was a repudiation of Section 14(2)a of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended): which states that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority. Writing on the character of the Nigerian politicians and the nation's electoral process, Onwudiwe & Berwind-Dart (2010) stated that "Nigerian politicians have become habituated to fraud, corruption, intimidation, and violence, as if they consider these the necessary weapons of

political winners.”Where there exist mockery and travesty of the sanctity of elections, the essence of democratic governance is thwarted. The spate of violence and fear that characterized the 2019 elections in Ogun State, Nigeria undermined the prospects for the realization of the essence of a democratic system and its consolidation.

It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to interrogate the factors responsible for electoral violence in Ogun State, its implications on voters’ participation and how to promote the security of the electoral system for free fair and violence free elections in Ogun State in particular and in Nigeria in general. This paper is segmented into six parts, namely, operational definition of key terms; review of relevant literature; factors responsible for electoral violence in Ogun State; electoral violence and its implications on voters’ participation in democratic process; summary/conclusion and recommendations.

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms**

The three key concepts that define this study are, namely, democracy, electoral violence and voters’ participation.

**Democracy:** In its classical sense democracy represents a governance system that is based on direct participation of the people in the management of the affairs of the state as it was the case in the Greek-city state. This explains why Abraham Lincoln has aptly defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people. However, because of the size of modern polity that made the practice of direct democracy impossible, the idea of the people exercising their power through their elected representatives became the hallmark of democratic governance system. Thus, democracy in the contemporary times is conceived as a system of government that enables the generality of the people to determine the direction of the state affairs through their elected representatives.

**Electoral Violence:** First and foremost, violence, is an orchestrated threat or actual moves, whether physical, psychological or/and structural with the underlying aim of gaining for either self or a group or both undue advantages at the expense of others. Electoral violence thus represents a series of activities that undermine the security of both the voters and the managers of elections in particular and the electoral system in general. Electoral violence, in essence, encapsulates all forms of harms, injuries, harassments, intimidation and assaults or such acts that may violate peaceful conduct of free and fair elections.

**Voters participation** This is the conscious and intelligent exercise of political rights of the qualified adult electorates to engage in the political life of their nations-state. It entails active engagement in discussion and management of public issues that shape governance processes, a critical aspect of which is voting during elections.

## **Literature Review**

### **Elections as Basic Democratic Ingredient**

The end of the Cold War and the third wave of democratisation of the early 1990s saw to the prevalence and domination of representative democracy as a favored system of government. According to Kapur (2011; 359) "The prevailing system of democracy is indirect or representative. Appadorai (2004: 178) expresses this when he says modern democracy is representative. Representative democracy is nurtured by the participation of the mass of the people in the political process. Thus, 'representative democracy' is used interchangeably with 'participatory democracy'. Let us at this juncture state that the hallmark of democracy, which clearly distinguishes it from other forms of government is that sovereignty rests with the people. Section 14(2)a of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria reiterates this when it states 'sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority'. In participatory



democracy, the electorates have sovereign power while the representatives exercise the power given to them by the electorates on behalf of the people. The representatives are expected to make laws, design policies and implement them to promote social order and the well-being of the generality of the people.

Election within democratic context is the mechanism for choosing the representatives of the people. Bratton (1998: 52) emphasizes the importance of elections to the democratic project when he states that “while elections and democracy are not synonymous, elections remain fundamental not only for installing democratic governments, but as a necessary requisite for broader democratic consolidation” It must however be observed that the emergence of the true representatives of the people is a function of the credibility of the elections in particular and the electoral process in general. Aiyede (2007) emphasises the importance of credible elections to the flourishing of democracy when he states that ‘credible, free and fair elections are a salient indicator of democratic consolidation and the principal institutionalized means of forming and changing democratic government’. Unarguably, election is a critical issue in democratic discourse. Indeed, one of the key features that define representative or participatory democracy is periodic elections. And, so, the character of election and the electoral system determine to a large extent the survival of democracy, its progress and consolidation. It has been clearly established that when elections are not free, fair and credible, it leads to serious political crisis as election results become subject of contestation in law courts and in some cases, especially in Africa, leading to violence, killings and destruction of property. This was the case in Ogun State following the 2019 governorship elections when the leading political parties in the elections, namely, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the Allied Peoples Movement (APM) engaged in accusation and counter-accusation of “votes stealing” which eventually degenerated to violence culminating in physical attacks on people and destruction of property.

## **Electoral Violence in Nigerian Politics**

Electoral violence is a concept that embodies two politically contested words, namely, election and violence. Having dwelled on the concept of 'election' in the earlier part of the literature review, let us briefly interrogate the concept of violence and thereafter focus on the idea of 'electoral violence'. According to Otite (1990) cited in Adams (2012: 37), 'violence is an act against an individual or group, with the intent to cause injury or death'. In light of the fact that there are variants of violence, namely, structural, cultural, psychological and physical, it must be observed that violence in the context of this study refers to physical violence. The point is that elections in Nigeria has been characterized by violence of the physical genre. Albert (2007) alluded to this when he states that electoral violence resulting from representational campaign, balloting, and result conflicts have been a terminal problem of Nigeria politics since the 1950's.

Here, it must be clearly stated that one of the major reasons why elections have been marred by violence in Nigeria is because the control of state resources has become one of the avenues to acquire wealth. Omoweh & Okanye (2005 cited in Ikyase & Egberi, 2015) reiterates this when they posit that 'political competition for the control of the State and its political power is now a bloody warfare as the State holds the key to wealth'. Politics is being seen as a means to advance self-interests and the modus operandi is to secure victory at elections by all means possible. Indeed, the report of a body set up by the Babangida administration to guide the nation's return to democracy established the fact that Nigerian politicians were desperate for power for selfish reasons. A segment of the Report states that politicians and political parties engaged in electoral dishonesty "in most blatant fashion ... violence, corruption, arson and brigandage were employed in the mad desire to win and retain power both in the region and at the centre" (Political Bureau report, 1987 cited in Steve et al. 2019).

Right from the First Republic, politics in Nigeria has been characterized by greed, love of power, violence, assassination, thuggery and election fraud (Falade 2014, Anifowose 2011). As correctly noted

by Ojo (2014) that indeed violence has become synonymous with Nigerian political culture; such that virtually all elections held so far in the country are violent-ridden. A cursory look into the historical timeline of elections in the past provided the basis for Ojo's position. The 1965/66 Western Region election resulted in a "Wild Wild West Riot", 1983 general elections under President Sheu Shagari was characterized by violence especially in the South-west. Since the return to democracy in Nigeria in May 29,1999, all the general elections, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 had witnessed violence in diverse proportions. (Nwolise 2007, Anifowose 2011, Falade 2014, European Union Election Observer Mission 2019).

The nature and character of elections in Nigeria and its implications on voter's participation has been extensively written on by scholars, they include; Adeleke, 2013; Igiebor, 2013; Falade, 2014. The consensus among these scholars is that the nation's electoral process is infested with malady of fraud, violence, bloodbath and insecurity and that this had hampered voters' participation in the democratic process. Aside the challenge posed by electoral violence to popular participation in the nation's democratic process, there is also the issue of the lack of integrity of the electoral process. The European Union Election Observer Mission for the 2019 general elections in Nigeria stated in very clear terms that the elections were characterized by misuse of State resources and vote-buying and that these corrupt practices culminated in undermining the voters' free choice and the distortion of the playing field" (EU EOM, 2019). The situation in Ogun State was expressed by an active participant in the State's electoral process, Dr. Reuben Abati, Abati, a deputy governorship candidate on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2019 election reflecting on his experience had this to say "this thing called politics should not be turned into warfare. There should be life after elections" (Reuben Abati, 2019). Indeed, the 2019 elections in Ogun State, especially the governorship, exhibited the features of a warfare.

## **Voters' Participation in Democratic Governance in Nigeria**

Democratic governance is essentially defined by the participation of the people. Robert Dahl (1989 cited in Amanye et al. 2015) opines that effective participation of the people is a criterion for the flourishing of democratic governance. To that extent, a socio-political context that is characterized by violence, which ultimately, makes individual to withdraw from participation in voting, political dialogue and discussion threaten survival of a democratic process. A statistic provided by the EU Election Observer Mission will give us an insight into the negative effect of violence on voters' participation in democratic process. According to the Mission, the March 9 2015 governorship election in Ogun State recorded 32.7% of voters' turnout as against 25.5% in the February 23, 2019 governorship election in the State (EU EOM 2019). On investigation, it was discovered that the drop in voters' participation is as a result of the magnitude of the violence that occurred in the 2019 elections in the State. Evidently, there is a nexus between level of electoral violence and voters' participation.

It must be observed that while there are various ways by which people can participate in democratic politics, voting is the most visible and widespread form of citizens engagement in electoral politics. Thus, the most commonly reported indicator of the level of participation in democratic politics is voters' turnout (Begu, 2007; Pinto et al., 2001 cited in Nwanko et al., 2017: 251). However, in the Nigerian democratic political context, electorates are less inclined to or non-committed to political participation as popular votes counted for nothing but naked force guarantees electoral victory (Falade, 2014; Nwolise, 2007; Nwankwo, et al., 2017). This growing culture of apathy among the electorates in Ogun State and Nigeria as a whole cannot be disassociated from the high level of violence that has come to define electoral process at all levels in the nation's politics. In addition to the prevalence of violence as a force limiting peoples' participation in electoral process is the fact that election outcomes hardly reflect

the preferences of the people as election results are manipulated to favour, most times, the candidates of the party in power. In fact, not a few politicians are of the view that elections are won not on the strength of the votes of the people but on the number of political thugs, cultists, political god-fathers and mothers at the disposal of public office contestants (Amanyie, et al. 2015),

Voters' participation in the political process in a participatory democratic system comes in different and complimentary pattern. This includes but not limited to intelligent discussion of party manifestos and electoral reforms, joining political party, voting during election, participating in the electoral campaigns ... (Falade 2014: 17). Thus, the survival of democracy is chiefly determined by or a function of citizens consciousness and positive engagement in democratic affairs of a country. 'The level and pattern 'of political participation of the citizens determine, to some extent, the success of the political system. The truth of the matter is that the interest of the voters in elections in the country is seriously waning. Professor Attahiru Jega, the former Chief Returning Officer, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) expressed this when he states: 'that there exists voters' apathy in Nigeria is no longer contentious. Voters turnout ... had provided a scientific and empirical evidence of the existence of voters' apathy and disinterestedness of sections of the electorates in elections ... This ugly scenario has implication on popular participation and governance (Odebode, 2011 cited in Falade, 2014). A major factor responsible for the dwindling level of voters' participation in the 2019 general elections in Ogun State and many other parts of the country is violence that has become hallmark of elections in particular and politics in general.

### **Factors Responsible for Electoral Violence in Ogun State, Nigeria**

Without mincing words, electoral violence is an affront to the realization of the essence of democratic governance. Some of the causes of the disabling phenomenon in Ogun State, especially with

respect to the 2019 general elections, which to a large extent are responsible for violence before, during and after elections in other parts of the country, include but not limited to the following.

### **Bad Governance and Corruption**

The nature and character of governance and the level of corruption in a polity determine to a large extent the nature and character of elections and the electoral processes. A society with a history of bad governance and endemic corruption is more susceptible to experiencing electoral violence than in a clime where there is a measure of good governance and low level of corruption. The point is that bad governance and the high level of corruption of the political elite is one of the drivers of electoral violence in Nigeria's democratic process. Obviously where there is so much of corruption and state resources are employed to serve the interest of those in power and their cronies, those who wield state power use state coercive instrument to manipulate results of elections with a view to remaining in power while the opposition on the other hand engage the services of thugs to confront the state security personnel who characteristically work for the government in power. "The people excluded from governance (especially in a society where politics is a license to oppress other citizens and to rob the public treasury with impunity) will resort to violence in their quest for office" (Muhammed, 2016). The point is that the twin evil of bad governance and corruption that make it possible for those in power to appropriate so much of the resources of the state to themselves undergird the penchant to employ all means however unscrupulous to retain or obtain power in an electoral process. This partly explains why violence characterise elections into political offices in Nigeria.

### **Poverty and Unemployment**

As a corollary to bad governance and high level of corruption in Ogun State in particular and Nigeria in general, is the twin phenomena of poverty and unemployment. The reality is that the bulk of the youth

in Ogun State that are supposed to be gainfully employed are roaming the streets in search of non-existent jobs and so they are routinely engaged as thugs during political campaigns and elections for peanuts from the politicians. According to a recent report, 2018, by the World Poverty Clock, Nigeria is described as the poverty capital of the world with more than 87million of the population living below \$1.90/day. Also, unemployment, as contained in the Labour Force Statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), rose to 23.1% in 2018. The presence of these social phenomena unarguably led to the availability of pool of able-bodied men for thuggery and violence for a little fee, especially during political campaigns and elections. Danjibo and Oladeji (2007, cited in Olayiwola, 2014) reiterate this when they observe that the high spate of deprivation and human hopelessness of the Nigerian youths force them to take the readily available “job opportunity” –implementers of electoral violence. Indeed, a young man who resides in Abeokuta, Ogun State, stated clearly that he became one of the boys (political thug) of a particular politician to keep soul and body together. The reality of the situation is that the twin evil of poverty and unemployment contribute significantly to the rising level of electoral violence in all parts of the Nigerian state. Maria Mauro, the Programme Director of the European Centre for Electoral Support, alluded to this when she posits that “it is very difficult to limit some of the electoral crimes when the socioeconomic situation of the people is poor” (Punch, December 5, 2019).

### **Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Unarguably, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) has had a profound negative effect on peace and security across the length and breadth of the country. Specifically, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons is one of the factors fueling electoral violence in Ogun state in particular and Nigeria in general. There is a claim that 75% of violent conflicts occurring in Africa particularly West Africa are as a result of proliferation of the Small Arms and light Weapons; that about 10 million of these arms

and weapons find home in and circulate in, Nigeria (Yorom Gani, 2019). The quantum of SALW available in the hands of non-state actors such as members of Nigerian Road Transport Workers Union (NRTWU) especially in the South-west geo-political part of the country is huge. Indeed, these weapons were deployed by the various factions of the union in support of their candidates and political parties. The 2019 election witnessed assassination attempts on both Prince Dapo Abiodun and Prince Buruji Kashamu the Ogun state governorship candidates of the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) respectively.

### **Lack of Internal Democracy within the Political Parties**

The fact that the political parties in the country lack internal democracy is a contributory factor to the high level of violence that characterize elections generally in Nigeria. In Ogun State, the primaries of the major political parties, the All Progressive Party (APC) and the People Democratic Party (PDP) were characterized by a series of irregularity and even illegality. The constitution of the parties, with respect to elections of party's flag-bearers for various elective positions was violated. Consequent to this, two or more candidates from the same political party were laying claim to being the party's candidate for an elective office. This led to emergence of factions within each of the major parties, which ultimately led to the employment of violence to assert superiority especially during political campaigns and the entire electoral process. The violent nature of politics and elections in Nigeria is aptly encapsulated in the Political Bureau Report of 1987 (cited in Adole Raphael, 2013) which states that:

Party politics is poisonous. It is the politics of war, not of peace, of acrimony and hatred and mud-sliding; not of love and brotherhood, of anarchy and discord; not of orderliness and concord; of cleavages, divisions and disunity; it is politics of rascality; not of maturity; of blackmail and near gangsterism; not of constructive, honest contribution.



## **Election Rigging and Manipulation of Electoral Processes**

Over the years, relevant studies on electoral violence (Falade, 2014; Igiebor, 2016; Adelekan, 2013; Nwolise, 2007) identified election rigging and manipulation of electoral processes, among other things, as a cause of electoral violence in Nigeria. Outcomes of elections since independence sparingly reflected the people's choice. Predictably, in many instances, the electorates had reacted violently culminating in the destruction of properties and loss of lives. This was the case in Ogun state when the governorship candidate of the Allied Peoples Movement (APM), Hon. Abiodun Akinlade rejected the outcome of the 2019 governorship election following the declaration of the governorship candidate of the All Progressive Congress, Prince Dapo Abiodun, as the winner of the governorship election in the state. Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun state became a theater of war as the political thugs of the two political parties engaged themselves destroying valuable properties and attacking everything within their vicinity including innocent people.

## **Electoral Violence and its Implications on Voters Participation in Democratic Process**

Let us at this point reiterate that electoral violence, on the one hand, represents dysfunctional and destructive social behavior thrown up as a result of contestation for political offices. It encapsulates all forms of harms, injuries, harassments, intimidation and assaults or such acts that may violate peaceful conduct of free and fair elections (Adams, 2012: 37). Essential, electoral violence depicts a series of destabilizing and socially dysfunction actions, which are outside the provisions of the electoral laws and the Constitution, targeted at securing victory at the poll (Fisher, 2002). While voters' participation in democratic process refers to citizens engagement whether directly or indirectly in the public space for the promotion of the realization of the values, virtues and essence of democratic governance.

Broadly speaking, electoral violence is an affront to the establishment of peace and security in a polity. Specifically, it threatens the realization of the essence of democratic process as it affects voters' psychology and dampen their enthusiasm to engage in democratic process. Electoral violence hampers the growth and development of the democratic process in a variety of ways. These include:

First, electoral violence hinders free flow of information and thus diminishes the chances of voters' accessing the information required for constructive and impactful participation in the democratic process. The point is that in a violence ridden environment, people are afraid of sharing information that may be necessary for the voters to make informed decisions. Democracy is about popular participation of the citizens in governance. Unarguably, robust participation in governance is possible only when the citizenry is well informed. It must be observed that the level of dialogue and deliberation that take place in a polity go a long way to shape the thinking and political behavior of the people. Wherever the dysfunctional phenomenon of electoral violence rears its head, the participation of the people in democratic process is hindered as a result lack of relevant information.

Second, electoral violence characteristically shut out those who are averse to violence from coming out to exercise their voting right. The unfortunate aspect is that the bulk of those that do stay away from polling booths due to fear of violence are the informed and the elite. Thus, leaving the public space and decision as to who and who are elected to political offices in the hands of the barely informed and the illiterates. The truth of the matter is that when electoral process becomes violent, some class of people naturally draw back, become onlookers and/or consumers leaving ruffians, thugs and hooligans to have a field day (Howell, 2004; Omotola, 2011, Badmus, 2017). This perhaps accounts for the popular saying in Nigeria that 'politics is dirty'. Indeed because of the violence that has come to characterize elections and politics in Nigeria, not a few people hold the believe that politicking and seeking of elective offices is not meant for gentlemen and Godly people.

Third, electoral violence has serious negative implication on the legitimacy of power. The point is that violence in the course of elections diminishes voters' turnout and ultimately puts into question the legitimacy of the power secured via an electoral process that is characterized by fear, burning of properties, killing and maiming of people. It is very unlikely that power secured on the wings of elections characterized by violence will be legitimate. In Ogun state, many of the results declared by the electoral body, Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) in the 2019 general elections were challenged at both the Election Petition Tribunal and the courts. Even months after the 2019 general elections, outcomes of the exercise are still contested. For instance, on January 25, 2020, the Election Petition Tribunal saddled with the mandate of hearing petitions arising from the elections ordered a rerun of the election exercise of Ijebu-Central Federal Constituency between Honourable Barrister Taiwo Shote (PDP) and Honourable Kolawole K. Osunsanya (APC). It must be observed that one of the reasons adduced by the petitioner for challenging the outcome of the exercise is that it was an exercise that was marred by violence and so it was difficult for his teaming supporters to exercise their voting rights. And, if that was what happened, then it becomes extremely to establish the legitimacy of the power that the current occupant of the seat is exercising. In other words, electoral violence, except in very rare cases, culminate in the enthronement of unpopular candidates as the representatives of the people and ultimately threaten democratic progress and development.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

The paper, taking its bearing from the centrality of elections to the proper functioning of representative/participatory democracy, interrogated the challenge posed by electoral violence to voters' participation in the 2019 elections in Ogun state, Nigeria. Having established that electoral violence is an affront to the realization of the essence of democracy, which is power in the hands of the people,

the paper underscores the need for peaceful environment for democracy to thrive and the danger the violent context in which 2019 elections in Ogun State was conducted posed to voters' participation in the democratic process in particular and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria in general.

Guided by the factors discovered to have been responsible for electoral violence in the 2019 elections in Ogun State, the study emphasizes that there is the need for a complete overhaul of the nation's politics in general and the electoral system in particular to one that engender peaceful atmosphere required for effective voters' participation in democratic process not only in Ogun State but in all parts of the country. The imperativeness of peaceful and orderly electoral process that engender effective voters' participation in the nation's democratic process in particular and the development of the nation in general cannot be over-emphasised.

### **Recommendations**

Flowing from the interrogation of the factors responsible for electoral violence in the 2019 elections in Ogun State and the importance of peace to effective voters' participation in elections and democratic governance process, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. That there should be a review of the Act that established INEC to make it truly independent of the executive arm of government, especially, in terms of selection of its chairman and board members and improving its capacity to conduct and deliver free-fair and credible elections.
2. That INEC should consolidate on the Permanent-Voters-Card and Smart-Card-Reader by introducing on a gradual basis proper secure e-voting and transmission system.
3. That the state should be more committed to addressing the deepening structural violence that largely undergird the growing level of physical violence in the country. In addition, there is the need for institutional reforms to make government capable, accountable, responsible and responsive.

4. That INEC should cooperate with civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders on voters' education to promote electoral integrity and respect for democratic principles and values.
5. That there should be an Act of Parliament establishing and empowering an Electoral Offences Commission to investigate and try electoral offenders
6. That there should be a special court to speedily handle all electoral offences considering the tight schedule and slow progression of electoral offence litigations in the convectional court system in Nigeria.
7. And that, political parties should strengthen their intra-party democracy and conflict management mechanisms.

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