CODESRIA

13 ème
Assemblée générale
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الجمع العام الثالث عشر

L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**VERSION PROVISOIRE
NE PAS CITER**

Explaining Post-Election Violence in Contemporary Africa

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5 - 9 / 12 / 2011

Rabat Maroc / Morocco

Introduction

Electoral violence has dominated Africa's transition to democracy in the past two decades or thereabout. This problem, which has led many observers of the African scene to tend to demonize the "third wave of democratization" in Africa, has been blamed in the relevant literature on the rules governing elections during the election cycle. But the post-election violence associated with the presidential elections in Kenya in December 2007, Zimbabwe in 2008, Cote d'Ivoire in early 2011 and Nigeria in April 2011 suggests that there are some deeper systemic and structural factors embedded within the political economy and social environment of each African state that must be carefully interrogated in order to gain a better understanding of what is happening.

My paper takes a critical look at the contexts and contents of the problem of post-election violence in the countries and try to account for the situation on the basis of four related factors: (1) politicians' perception of politics as a zero-sum game, (2) severe social cleavages that lend themselves to exploitation by non-altruistic politicians, (3) politicians' unholy alliance with militant youth groups and (4) the fragile institutional framework for democratic transition/consolidation and law enforcement. As an analytical framework, the paper will identify three types of electoral violence: (i) psychological (ii) structural and (iii) physical. The (physical) post-election violence witnessed in the four countries under review will be shown to have been founded on the psychological and structural violence experienced by the people before and during the elections. The possible impacts of electoral violence on the future of democratization in Africa will be discussed and recommendations made on how to surmount this problem in African politics and ensure that the lessons learnt from them are such as would strengthen democratic culture on the continent.

This kind of analysis is important as we begin to look for ways to prevent and eradicate incidents of electoral violence which usually leave in their wake deaths and human displacements, to say nothing of the economic loss and the social disharmony and retardation that are the longer-lasting outcomes of such violence in the political system.

The Nature of Electoral Violence

From the perspective of the discipline of peace studies the electoral season should properly be a period when the conflicts of interest within the polity become a bit more pronounced than in ordinary times. We are talking about the contest for power and how it will be apportioned among different contenders and blocs in the polity. But then we need

not paint a too gory picture of electioneering. For in the electoral season, parties and actors also strike alliances and forge partnerships based on real or imagined common grounds the better to capture power from others or consolidate themselves in power against other parties. It is only the naive that imagines that in a democracy there shall be no quarrels, no clashes. The truth of the matter is that democracy is a political crisis management arrangement; it is a system of organizing the contest of power which realizes that people will always have conflicts of interests and values in relation to how they want to see their society run. It is possible to cast all what I am saying differently, and instead of referring to democracy as a contest, we could call it a competition—but the semantic play does not disguise the point I am trying to make here. Let us look at one example of this semantic play, useful because of the way it sets out its analogies. Dixon and Senese[1] argue that

Despite wide variation in the procedures and institutional arrangements of democratic systems, all share certain norms for reconciling competing values and interests by nonviolent means. It is often said that democracy is less a battleground than a playing field, a juxtaposition of images that nicely illustrates the circumscribed nature of democratic competition. Democracy is feasible only so long as politicians and citizens implicitly agree on the delineation of these boundaries and constrain their actions accordingly.

On this basis, it becomes a matter of definitional insight to state that the kind and degree of violence that attends the functioning of the democratic process, especially during elections when the contest for power becomes explicit and full-blown, is a measure of how close to the ideal our polities stand. Electoral violence therefore has an inverse relationship with level of democratization, and if we can work a model that would objectively define and assign weight to parameters and indices for calculating how electoral violence retards the process of democratic consolidation on the African continent. What I am trying to say in essence is that the nature of electoral violence the true measure of our democracies, and one may even add the more violent electoral disputes are the less genuine is the democracy we have in place. Of course, violence is just the salient manifestation of undemocratic potentials within the polity. By the time we fasten on electoral violence and try to map out its trajectory and trace its roots, we would find that our elections may just be the period when social disharmonies and disgruntlement, feelings of marginalization and the sense of entitlement, autocratic tendencies, lack of tolerance and a zero-sum mentality to politics all come to a

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[1] William Dixon and Paul D. Senese, "Democracy, Disputes, and Negotiated Settlements." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, 2002 p. 548

head. The burning and looting and killings and maiming that are witnessed in the post-election periods will then have to be explained in terms of deeper-lying conditions which make our polities vulnerable to such relapses every voting season.

Electoral violence, therefore, takes three forms. The salient one is the physical violence that makes world headline news. But its deeper roots lie in less visible, but quite palpable, psychological and structural violence.

Structural Violence: Structural violence in relation to elections takes a number of instantiations. In immediate terms, it relates to how the structure of electoral institutions and agencies are deployed to ensure that certain people and formations in society are disadvantaged in the contest for power, if not disenfranchised outright, while certain other formations and individuals are supplied with undue advantage and are, in point of fact, perpetuated in power even beyond the limit of being able to perform in political office. In Nigeria, it was common practice for the personnel of the election management body to be card-carrying members of the ruling party. This is structural violence. It can also take the form of recruiting only members of one's tribe into the EMB. At the level of, say, voter registration, structural violence could be deployed by not sending electoral officials to certain districts or apportioning insufficient materials for the exercise. The same gimmicks could be replicated on voting day itself and the electorate in some voting districts would find themselves waiting in vain for the electoral Godot.

Psychological Violence: It is clear how the structural violence of keeping the electorate waiting can inflict deep psychological injuries on them, especially when the electorate in question is from an opposition area that has waited patiently for voting day in order to get their candidate elected into office. Acts of physical violence and the threat of physical violence also contribute to the scale of psychological violence that may be inflicted on the electorate, electoral officials, observers and monitors, and even those whose job it is to consider petitions and suits arising from disputed results. Indeed, it may not seem to helpful to think of these aspects of electoral violence, for they are intertwined in very complex ways. It is not unknown for institutions of the state apparatus, say, the police or even the army, to be co-opted into acts of assaults against citizens, election monitors and judges. It is not unknown for people who find themselves so psychologically abused by the physical actions of others to resort to violence themselves in self-defence or as pre-emptive measure before the event of attack. In some situations, the structural violence of one party may be replied by the physical violence of the marginalized. At the end of it all, it is the collective psyche that

suffers the most brutal injuries, and often when all dies down one gets the premonition that the fire next time will consume all of us.

Physical Violence: The incidence of physical violence is the most immediate measure of the kind of democracy we have in place in a given polity. There is nothing spontaneous about physical violence in the electoral season. It is something that accumulates over time. We have noted how some contenders and spoilers in the power game use physical violence or the threat of such violence to negotiate a comfortable position for themselves whether or not they record a good outing at the polls. They prepare their armies and arsenals long before election day. Whenever, it seems that the electorate are protesting violently against the structural violence of the incumbency one only need a little closer and a pattern appears in the method of mobilization and deployment. The saliency of physical violence should not blind us to the other forms of violence which bedevil electoral democracy in Africa. It is quite a pity that the conditions that make for physical violence are not discussed and addressed in our social forums and popular media until such violence becomes imminent or even sometimes until such violence has occurred. There is a certain 'CNN effect' that has gripped us in this regard. We wait for these acts of destruction to take place before we begin the exercise of accounting for them in order to understand them and, indeed, prevent them. The physical violence which we see in the post-election period has its roots in other events and factors which most times are operant long before the electoral season kicks in. As such, in spite of the time and place of enactment, physical violence during and after elections is not merely electoral violence; rather such acts are ultimately forms of political violence that mark the culmination of the tensions in many African countries.

Electoral Violence in Africa: An Overview

The case studies in this paper are the post election violence in Kenya in December 2007, Zimbabwe in 2008, Cote d'Ivoire in early 2011 and Nigeria in April 2011. Before coming to these specifics, it is necessary to call attention to a few other cases across the African continent. The first point to make here is that electoral violence is not a recent experience in Africa; it is the intensity of the problem that is phenomenal. As early as the 1960s in the history of the continent, there were several cases of the inability of the post independence African states to conduct violence-free elections. For example, the election violence witnessed by Nigeria in 1964 paved the way for the civil war that the country

fought from 1967 to 1971[2]. Since then, every election conducted in the country is worse than the last.

In 1991 and 2004, over 100,000 deaths resulted from the elections conducted in Algeria. This is probably the worst case scenario in the history of elections in Africa and the level of deaths here resulted from the fact that elections in the country was always hijacked by Islamists having religious and political issues with the Algerian state. The 1991 violence arose from the decision of the Algerian State to deny the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) of the victory that it recorded at the December 11991 elections. The party won the largest votes in the elections but the army quickly stepped in by annulling the election and banning the group (FIS). This plunged the country into an orgy of violence that has proven very difficult to permanently stop. The Algerian government that is obviously unwilling to relinquish power claimed that FIS would turn Algeria into a terror-sponsoring State if allowed to gain political power.[3]

The 2005 presidential elections in Gabon resulted in several deaths when members of the opposition accused President Bongo who had ruled his country for thirty-eight years of stage managing the election that saw him getting another seven-year mandate. The President, who claimed to have won 79 per cent of the vote while his nearest rival got only 14 per cent, intimidated the opposition with heavy security presence during the elections and ordered dissatisfied voters arrested. The April 2005 election in Togo, to find a successor to Gnassingbe Eyadema was equally contested and several people were killed in the process. Several supporters of the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) in Zanzibar were wounded during the 2005 elections in the country.[4] The 2003 and 2007 elections in Nigeria equally resulted in several deaths.

Case Study 1: Kenya

From December 2007 to February 2008, Kenya was engulfed by an unprecedented scale of electoral violence as a result of which over one thousand people were killed. It all started with the presidential election conducted on December 27, 2007, which the incumbent

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[2]   Richard L. Sklar and C.S. Whitaker, "The Federal Republic of Nigeria", in Gwendolen M. Carter (ed.), *National unity and regionalism in eight African states*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1966 pp. 7-137.

[3]   Ulla Holm, "Violence in Algeria: A question of securitization of state-regime, nation and Islam", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations,* 2(2), pp. 1-10; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Violence affects Algeria-France ties", *New York Times*, March 12, 1995.

[4]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 18

president, Mwai Kibaki, was announced to have won. The supporters of Kibaki's opponent, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) alleged that the election was manipulated in favour of the incumbent president. This allegation was actually confirmed by international observers but the malpractices were said to have been perpetrated by both sides in the election.[i] The violent protests of the supporters of Odinga took place in several parts of the country, most especially in Odinga's homeland of Nyanza Province and the slums of Nairobi, part of his Langata constituency, and it was ethnic in nature.

The report of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights identifies three "distinct but sometimes concurrent patterns of violence – spontaneous, organised and retaliatory." The first phase began immediately after the announcement of the contested election results, when opposition supporters took to the streets in protest, especially in Kisumu and the Nairobi slum areas; the second wave consisted of organised attacks in the Rift Valley which appear to have targeted non-Kalenjin communities and those perceived as opponents of the opposition ODM party, including the Kikuyu, Kisii and Luyha communities. In retaliation, gangs of Kikuyu youths subsequently attacked non-Kikuyu groups in Naivasha, Nakuru and Mathare.[5]

Case Study 2: Zimbabwe

Since the country gained independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe has been at the helm of affairs. In 2008, for the first time in the history of the country, Mugabe was beaten at the polls by the leader of the opposition party even though the atmosphere during and before the vote was tense with rampant reports of intimidation and torture of the opposition and its supporters. Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a party founded in 1999, won a higher percentage of the vote in the elections conducted in March, 2008. Mugabe's ZANU-PF lost its majority in the parliament. Of 210 seats, Mugabe's party secured 97, the MDC 99, another party that splintered from the MDC got ten seats, and the remainder of seats were won by independent candidates. In the senate, ZANU-PF took 30 of the seats while the remaining 30 seats were won by the opposition parties in combination. Supporters of the MDC, however, claimed that their candidate had taken more than fifty percent of the vote, and that there was no need for a run-off to decide presidential election.

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[5] UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, Report from OHCHR Fact-finding Mission to Kenya, 6-28 February 2008, Geneva, http://blog.ushahidi.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/final-ohchr-kenya-report-19-march2008.pdf

Meanwhile the electoral commission would not announce the result of the presidential polls according to schedule, and later declared that Morgan Tsvangirai did not garner as many of the votes as would have made conducting a run-off unnecessary.

'The intimidation which MDC supporters suffered increased exponentially in the period leading up to the June 2008 run-off elections. MDC officials said that security forces had told them not to hold any more rallies'[6]. It must be said in the case of Zimbabwe that there was a near monopoly of the instruments of violence in the hands of the ZANU-PF with its cohorts of fighters left over from the days when Mugabe was a Marxist revolutionary fighting against white supremacist rule. Those battle-starved ZANU-PF stalwarts gave the impression of being all too happy to have something to fight for—and live for—once more. Mugabe's government showed also itself to be a genius in the art of structural violence. First, it suspended all aid from the West. This was an ostensible show of African independence. Then ZANU-PF put in place machinery to ensure that the channels for distributing resources, especially food, did not supply people who were affiliated with the opposition. 'The government ensured that the little food coming in did not go to people who supported the opposition by checking political party identity cards when handing out food aid'[7]. And we have seen something similar to this kind of structural violence being replicated in a place like Somalia. The full brunt of violence was brought by ZANU-PF to bear on the opposition. Killings and brutal assaults became the order of the day. Many MDC politicians were detained and tortured by the police. At this point it would serve to highlight how all the forms of violence coalesced into a complex of terror in Zimbabwe. Again, we cite Bamfo:

Teachers have been the backbone of the Zimbabwean electoral system, with their schools doubling as polling stations and teachers serving as polling officers. Teachers, however, became the scapegoats for the defeat ZANU-PF candidates suffered and the failure of its presidential candidate, President Mugabe, to defeat Tsvangirai outright. Teachers whose schools recorded a high number of opposition votes became instant targets. According to the Zimbabwean Teachers Union, a few weeks after the March 2008 elections several rural schools were shut down, more than 5,000 teachers were beaten, 600 were sent to hospitals, 251 houses were burned—and these attacks on teachers grew daily.[8]

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[6]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 21

[7]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 21

[8]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 21

One point that must be strongly made here is that the eruption of violence after the 2008 general election in Zimbabwe reflected the erosion of one-party rule by President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Popular Front (ZANU-PF) that began with separate elections in 2000 in which it lost a constitutional referendum and lost parliamentary constituencies to candidates of Morgan Tsvangerai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Since then the MDC has gained popular support because of deteriorating economic conditions and perceptions of official corruption and lawlessness. This attempt of the opposition to replace Mugabe was halted by the ZANU-PF leadership and the violence that ensued was to protest this injustice.

Case Study 3: Cote d'Ivoire

The election dispute in Cote d'Ivoire was equally interesting. The Independent Electoral Commission of Cote d'Ivoire declared Ouattara the winner of the presidential election in the country on 28 November 2010. President Gbagbo equally claimed to have won the election. Ouattara based his victory claim on the U.N.-certified runoff results announced by the Ivoirian Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) which showed that he won the election with a 54.1% share of votes, against 45.9% for President Laurent Gbagbo. The Constitutional Court of the country later declared Gbagbo as the winner of same election.[9] The international community recognized the first result and declared Ouattara as the winner of the election and this led to a protracted dispute. It is unfortunate the Gbagbo refused to accept defeat and all entreaties from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UN and other members of the international community to give peace a chance. Ouattara tried to negotiate with Gbagbo by offering his men top government posts if he could peacefully step down; he refused to leave. As the crisis deepened, ethnic and religious factors further divided the nation. With time the Ivorian military (working for Gbagbo) and Ouattara's Republican Forces (FRCI) clashed with devastating humanitarian consequences. Foreign forces, namely the French troops and the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI got involved in the military operations as a measure of protecting civilians.

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[9]   Nicolas Cook, "Cote d'Ivoire's Post-Election Crisis", March 9, 2011, Congressional Research Service, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/159353.pdf

Case Study 4: Nigeria

Immediately after the casting of votes at the April 26 2011 presidential election in Nigeria was completed, and before the time schedule for final announcement of the results, serious violence broke up in several states in the northern part of Nigeria. There was apparently a lot of expectation by certain formations in the north that General Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of the Congress for Political Change (CPC), would triumph in the election against President Goodluck Jonathan, the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The post election violence that occurred is considered by many Nigerians to have been premeditated as the total results were yet to be declared. The targets of attacks in these Muslim-dominated northern Nigerian communities were Christians and some prominent northern Nigerian politicians who were believed to be working for President Goodluck Jonathan. Buhari had twice failed to get into the highest office in the country in 2003 and 2007 successively, and his supporters were quite anxious to see him make it the third time. In both 2003 and 2007 Buhari had sought redress from the courts, pursuing his case to the highest possible level, but to no avail.

His last speech before the 2011 vote was quite emotional, with the retired general, known for being unsentimental, wiping tears from his eyes before a large rally. Earlier in his election campaigns round the northern parts of Nigeria, he indirectly told his followers that the 2011 election, like the previous ones, would be rigged. He advised them and those who listened to the live coverage of his campaign on the television: "Ku kasa, ku tsare, ku raka; duk wanda ya taba muku kuri'a, ku gama da shi".[10] He was merely telling his supporters to cast their votes and protect their mandate by lynching those who attempt to tamper with the electoral process. He made a related statement in January 2011: "…the fate of this country will be decided by the people in April…Anybody who stands in the way of the people will be crushed by the people".[11] It was statements like this from General Buhari that incited his followers to violence for three consecutive days (April 17, 18, and 19) after the conduct of presidential election on April 16, 2011.[12] Several hundreds of people lost their life. Several southern Nigerians had to flee northern Nigeria most especially when President Goodluck Jonathan was officially declared the winner of the election. Members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) who were engaged to serve as election officers became prime targets

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[10]   *The Nation*, March 7, 2011 p. A3
[11]   "Buhari – Country's fate will be decided in April", *ThisDay*, 31 January 2011.
[12]   See Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Post election violence killed 800", http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800

of attacks and a number of them were killed and maimed. Churches also came under attack and many Christian homes as well. What was even more telling was that powerful traditional rulers in the north who were perceived to have been supporters of the ruling PDP were also targeted as the violence escalated.

Explaining the Problem

The foregoing is puzzling given the widespread belief that those who seek to manipulate elections do so before and during vote casts and not after the outcomes have been determined. The announcement of an election results suggests that the electoral process had been concluded. Those who have any objections are expected to go to court to seek redress. Why then do people resort to violence at this moment? These questions have to be answered against the background of the fact that post election violence do a lot of harm to electoral democracy. In addition to leading to loss of lives and property, it undermines the legitimacy of any administration emanating from such a violently contested election. It also deters voters' participation in future elections as many of them would fear being killed or maimed as witnessed during the last elections. The benefit of explaining the situation as we seek to do here is that it enables us to have a better understanding of the situation and what would be done to deal with the problems. All the explanations provided below suggest readily that Africans are probably not ready for electoral democracy; they are merely forcing the process on themselves. So long as the situation continues like this, elections in Africa would always be stained by violence. The issues are given better explanation below.

Democracy without democrats: The first noticeable problem is that what Africa has today is "democracy without democrats". In other words, the politicians in the continent seek to promote democracy without being democrats themselves. To this extent an average African politician finds it difficult to comply with simple electoral laws. This problem has both personal and institutional manifestation. Just as individuals are not willing to aibde by electoral rules, many African states conduct elections merely to "fulfil all righteousness"; they do it because the international community ask for it and not that they believe in democracy or think it is the best form of government for them. Here lies a major problem in contemporary African politics. In the case studies above, except Nigeria which seemed to have turned a new leave during the 2011 elections, political incumbents used their powers (most especially the coercive instruments of the state) towards ensuring that political power was not transferred to the "opposition". The worst case scenario in this case is Zimbabwe

where Robert Mugable has been ruling since 1980 and yet still has a deathly grip on his country.[13] Even in Nigeria, it is difficult to say the long-awaited process of political consolidation has started. How would President Jonathan have conducted himself if he were to have been confronted with the situations in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire where the opposition actually won the election? One is not too sure if the PDP administration would not have conducted itself the way its peers in the three other African countries did if the ruling party had lost the 2011 election.

Ethnicity and Religion: Ethnic and religious cleavages make elections to be conflitogenic in many African states. First and foremost, many of the political parties on the continent are ethnic based and in some cases ethnicity in these countries correlate with religious leanings. This problem results basically from the fact that many of the political parties on the continent lack organisational skills and manifestoes that would make them appeal to ethnically diverse people. Hence, the political parties focus largely on solidifying their support in the specific areas where their founders or leadership originate. Where such political parties eventually win national elections, state resources are monopolised by the people of his region and this tends to make future elections more contentious as the incumbents use all their resources to remain in power and the opposition also do all at their disposal to come to power. Violence easily erupt where the opposition consider themselves to have been cheated during elections, and by so doing, prevented from getting closer to the "national cake". Using Nigeria as an illustrative example of this kind of situation, the Human Rights Watch observed that:

...the Nigerian general election of 2003 and local elections of 2004 saw voters in several states engage in violent acts against their opponents. In the Niger and Plateau States, for example, the elections provided a focal point for long-standing intercommunal conflict over land and natural wealth. In November 2008, it was charges of rigging local government elections that sparked violence in Jos...At least 200 people were reported dead as homes were destroyed, mosques and churches burned, and as gangs of men from te Muslim Hausa community and the mainly Christian ethnic groups, armed with machetes, clashed... Police arrested over 500 people carrying all sorts of lethal weapons. Violent reprisals for the attacks

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[13]   See Isaac Olawale Albert, *Pinched, ditched or jinxed: The mantra of African solutions to African problems,* University of Ibadan Inagural Lecture delivered on February 3, 2011.

in Jos spread to several parts of Nigeria. To avoid similar clashes in Kano State (Nigeria), the governor ordered the police to roll out their tanks in the streets in readiness.[14]

Many of these ethnic or religious-based election violence are sometimes displaced aggressions resulting from some past problems in inter-group relations. People who consider themselves to have been subjected to much psychological and structural violence in a democratising society often seize the opportunity of elections to free themselves from "bondage" whether real or imaginary. This obtains for a developed society as a developing one. Even in the developed democracies around the world, election seasons provide the opportunity for citizens to right what is wrong with their society. Whereas in the developed parts of the world, economic issues (namely the ability of candidates to solve economic problems) determine who people would vote for. In Africa, many have given up on the ability of politicians to help in solving their economic problems. Hence, election periods in Africa provide the opportunity for people to express their anger either against the groups considered to be responsible for the problems they face or the larger society. The Kenyan situation is illustrative here. The post-election revolved largely around ethnic issues: voting in elections was done ethnic lines. It was widely thought by the other tribes that Kikuyu community in Kenya has dominated the country since independence and so the victory of Odinga's ODM was expected to enable other tribes to rule the country. But the matter went beyond that. The election was expected to deal with a dominant ethnic issue in Kenyan politics: that the Kikuyu people displaced during the colonial time from their fertile highlands and after independence were settled outside their traditional areas especially in the Rift Valley, where the ethnic Masai had populated originally before Kenya's colonization by the British. Odinga's victory was in this context expected to be the first step for those whose lands were "stolen" in the past to recover them. The expectations of all these people were frustrated Kibaki who was accused of manipulating the election in his favour.

Though theft of the December 2007 election was the central issue in the orgy of violence, the issues depended on region-specific dynamics. The first noticeable pattern of violence was the burning and looting of shops, houses, and commercial outlets in the slums of Nairobi and Kisumu by youth groups immediately the victory of Kibaki was announced. This spontaneous reaction to the outcome of the election resulted from the cumulative frustrations generated by the poor living conditions of these young people as well as their

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[14]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 10

historical disenfranchisement.[15] The second pattern of violence targeted small farmers and landowners perceived to be government supporters in the Rift Valley. The goal here was to drive them from the land they are believed to be occupying illegally in the region. The violence here is believed to have been organized by local politicians and traditional leaders seeking to seize the opportunity settle long-held grievances against the Kikuyu over land ownership and control. The third pattern of violence was reprisal in nature and it was perpetrated by government supporters (most especially the Kikuyu) against migrant workers in different parts of Kenya believed to be supporters of Odinga's ODM around Nakuru, Naivasha, Central Provinces, and in the slums of Nairobi (Kibera and Mathare).

The main issue in the 2011 post election violence in northern Nigeria was that Buhari a Muslim and Hausa/Fulani did not win the election. This made the southern Nigerians and Christians living in the North as well as the northerners that were perceived to have supported Jonathan the main objects of attack. The unsung reason for the youth-dominated violence however is that for too long, development has eluded many parts of northern Nigeria though the elite from this region have ruled Nigeria more than any other groups. But the governance system left many of the young people in the region behind. Therefore, some Nigerians considered the 2011 post election violence in northern Nigeria as a protest of the marginalized young people in northern Nigeria.

The problem in Cote d'Ivoire even before the putsch that led to the deposition of President Gbagbo from power in 2011 was also ethno-regional.[16] Elections in the country are usually a contest between the Muslim-dominated North and and Christian-dominated South. The post election violence recorded in the country in 2011 was preceded by the intransigence of the leading actors revolving especially around the return of xenophobic Ivorian nationalism (commonly known as "*Ivoirite*"), with its lexicon of "true Ivorians" and those of questionable citizenship.

However, the post election violence in Zimbabwe was intra-ethnic and not inter-ethnic. The political crisis in the country was once inter-ethnic between the Shona and the minority Ndebele. But by the 2008 election, the problem was within the Shona ethnic group

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[15] It is estimated that in 1992 around 1 million youth were disallowed to register to vote because they were denied the national identity cards needed to register (see Mutua, M. (2008). *Kenya's quest for democracy: taming the leviathan.* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; *Nairobi Chronicle*, July 28, 2009.

[16] Richard Crook, "Winning coalitions and ethno-regional politics: The failure of the opposition in the 1990 and 1995 elections in Cote d'Ivoire", *African Affairs*, 96, 1995 pp. 215-242.

and therefore confined to the provinces of Mashonaland, in the centre and east of the country, rather than in Matabeleland, in the west of the country.

Electoral administration: Extant literature has shown clearly that most cases of electoral violence in Africa are associated from poor electoral administration in the continent.[17] In one of their works on Nigeria, Sklar and Whitaker show that this problem predated African independence. They observed for example that the pre-independence elections in Nigeria that were conducted in 1959 were marred lack of willingness of election officials to guard against forged ballot papers, defective ballot boxes, impersonation, double voting, and illegal possession of ballot papers. All these problems heralded the electoral violence witnessed during the period.[18] Many of the cases of electoral violence witnessed in the modern times also revolve around these very factors. In fact, the situation is getting worse with what were once considered to be signs of state weakness in the past now turned into official policies of political parties and governments.

In most cases, the electoral bodies try to ensure political incumbents win the elections. The role of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) in the 2007 crisis in Kenya was profound. International observers observed that the elections went well at the initial stage and the results released on December 29 2007 (6am) showed that Odinga was leading. The results for half of Kenya's 210 constituencies show that Odinga had 2,755,111 votes against Kibaki's 2,172,440. Then the release of further results slowed down until in the afternoon, the ECK Chairman announced new results that automatically cancelled Odinga's earlier lead. On December 30, 2007, Kibaki was declared the winner of the election and hurriedly sworn in for the second term in office. Violence erupted immediately at two strongholds of the opposition: Nairobi's slum of Kibera and in Kisumu.

It is interesting to note that allegation that the results declared by the electoral body were not credible was confirmed by the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, Samuel Kivuitu, but he argued that the issues were beyond his control to manage. Odinga and his supporters were advised to take the matter to court. The latter refused to take the matter to court arguing that the judiciary in Kenya is controlled by Kibaki's men. On the other hand, the supporters of Kibaki also acknowledged the fact that the election was not transparent.

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[17]   Shaheen Mozaffar, "Patterns of electoral governance in Africa's emerging democracies", *International Political Science Review*, 2391, 2002 pp. 85-101.
[18]   Richard L. Sklar and C.S. Whitaker, "The Federal Republic of Nigeria", in Gwendolen M. Carter (ed.), *National unity and regionalism in eight African states*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1966.

But they argued that the observable discrepancies in the results declared had actually worked in Odinga's favour.[19.]

The role of the electoral commission in the post election violence in Kenya was not too different from what was experienced in Zimbabwe. Comparing the two, Bamfo observed that:

> The violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe seems to have begun when the electoral commission in both countries, the ECK and ZEC, respectively, withheld announcing the results, ostensibly under orders from the party in power. Events that unfolded in Kenya and Zimbabwe after the elections showed that the incumbent party can use the electoral commission to keep power through the back door even when the electorate had decided differently. In Zimbabwe, the ZEC missteps seemed glaring and eroded any trust the opposition MDP had for the commission. The counting of the presidential votes was moved to a "secret" location and despite seeking a court injunction to compel the ZEC to release the results it still took more than one month to do so. The ZEC apparently, was under duress t tow ZANU-PF's line since one of its officials, the director of training and development, who attempted to stop postal ballot rigging ahead of the June run-off elections was kidnapped and murdered , possibly by state security agents ("Body of Whistle blowing" 2008). Despite that, the ZEC's failure to announce the results of the March election fuelled speculation about vote rigging and elicited condemnation from human rights groups. In contrast to the wanton delay in March, the ZEC promptly released results of the June elections-which the opposition boycotted to allow President Mugabe to be sworn into office for another five-year term.[20]

In Cote d'Ivoire, the Ivorian electoral commission actually did the right thing by declaring a result that showed that the incumbent President, Laurent Gbagbo, lost the election and that the the opposition candidate, Quattara won. This kind of effrontery to pronounce a seating President losing an election is uncommon in African politics. As

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[19] Barney Jopson, "Kenyan police try to block opposition rally", Reuters (*Financial Times*), January 3, 2008.
[20]   Napoleon Bamfo, "Electoral violence in Africa: A continent's soft political underbelly", Georgia Political Science Association Conference Proceedings, 2008 p. 25

expected, Gbagbo failed to accept the result. He exploited a constitutional lacuna in the country to generate the issues leading to the post election violence. In addition to the powers granted the electoral commission, the Constitution of Cote d'Ivoire charges the Constitutional Council with judging the legality of national presidential and legislative nominations and elections and with determining the final results of the presidential elections, including deciding the outcome in cases of disputes pertaining to the outcome of such elections, among other duties. Gbagbo exploited this opportunity by alleging irregularities in the UN-supervised election. He then appealed to the Constitutional Court to review the results.

Gbagbo used a member of the Ivorian electoral commission to create the lacuna leading to the petition. One of his nominees on the Ivorian electoral commission, Damana Adia Pickass, seized and tore up the provisional IEC results on live television just as the commission's spokesman, Bamba Yacouba, was about to publicly announce them on December 1, 2010. This disrupted the workings of the IEC and reportedly caused it to miss its legal deadline for announcing the results. Gbagbo seized this "opportunity" to send his petition to the Côte d'Ivoire's Constitutional Council dominated by his nominees. The latter pronounced Gbagbo the winner of the election. The international community which had officially recognised the result declared by IEC earlier stuck to their guns and insisted that Gbagbo should transfer power to Quattara. Violence started thereafter.

Unlike what was witnessed during the 2003 and 2007 elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) played no significant role in the 2011 post election violence in Nigeria. The 2011 elections were relative free and fair and the post election violence experienced appeared to have been pre-meditated as it started in northern parts of the country even before the results were officially announced.

Politicians' Link with Violent Youth: Politicians are intransigent during elections because of the support they get from some violent youths. This problem is a continuation of the existing youth crisis and poverty of leadership problem on the continent. In various parts of the African continent, policy makers fail to address policies that could empower the young ones: so the youth vent their anger at the rest of the society at the least possible provocation. For example, it has been argued that the leadership role played by the youth in the 2007 and 2008 post election violence experienced in Kenya resulted from the failure by the society in general and leaders and successive Kenyan regimes in specific to implement poverty reduction and youth economic empowerment strategies. This led to the explosion of

such vigilant gangs as mungiki, sungu sungu , kamjeshthat re responsible for most of the terror experienced in the country. Most of the gang members are funded by politicians during elections and are usually under oaths administered by elders requiring them to kill their "enemies".

In Zimbabwe, the Zanu PF Youth Militia locally known as the "Green Bombers" were responsible for a great deal of the violence that took place during the 2008 elections. The other group that made itself to be used by Mugabe for electoral violence during the elections were the so called 'War Veterans'. These people are ostensibly people who fought during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The Zimbabwe Civic Action Support Group doubts if these people are actually what they are considered to be other than some agents of political violence that are now grown up. Hence it observed that "...a lot of the 'war veterans' are clearly far too young to have been active in the military at that time. The 'war veterans' became well known during the farm invasions when the Zanu PF government claimed they had spontaneously decided to take the land for themselves. In fact, most of those events were orchestrated by the government".[21]

The youths used for electoral violence in Nigeria cult groups in the Niger Delta, the Kalare in Gombe state, Yan Sara Suka in Bauchi, Yan daba and Yan tauri in Kano; Adedibu boys in Oyo State as well as members of road transport workers (NURTW, NARTO).[22] These young folks are available for violence largely because most of them are unemployable; politicians exploit this during election seasons.[23] Similarly, opposition youth groups fought the war in Cote d'Ivoire in 2011.

The indifference and complicity of African leaders: As evident above, most of the problems under review come from African leaders. Most of them are not willing to give the opposition any space for political participation in their countries. They use the security apparatuses of the state against the opposition and manipulate election commissions in a manner that ensure their victory at elections. They also make inflammatory ethnic and religious comments during their campaigns and by so doing incense the people into orgies of violence. It logically follows that if the present rate of post election violence in Africa

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[21] Zimbabwe Civic Participation Group, "Mapping Terror in Zimbabwe: Political Violence & Elections 2008", June 18 2008, http://www.sokwanele.com/map/electionviolence

[22] It would also be recalled that the gangsters that instigated the Odi crisis were the thugs used by Chief Depreye Alameshigha for winning the 1999 gubernatorial election in Bayelsa State. See I.O. Albert, *The Odi Massacre of 1999 in the Context of the Graffiti Left by the Invading Nigerian Army*, Ibadan: Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies, University of Ibadan, 2003.

[23] Isaac Olawale Albert, "Analysing electoral violence in Nigeria", in Linus N. Asiegbu (ed.), *Critical issues in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria*, Abuja: Institute for Security Studies, 2011 pp. 38-62.

would be reduced, the first step must be taken by African leaders themselves. They must be willing to show respect for laid-down electoral procedures. For now many of these African leaders are not ready for free and fair elections. In a paper focusing on Nigeria, I tried to reason around why an average African leader is not ready to leave power. The two most important factors that were identified are (i) to enable these leaders have free access to state resources which they covert to personal use and (ii) to use the public office that the occupy in perpetuity to protect themselves from prosecution against the economic, financial and political crimes they committed while in office.[24] A statement made by Colonel Muhammar Ghadafi of Libya about his status also reflects the mentality of some of these African leaders. He said: "I am an international leader, the dean of Arab rulers, the king of kings of Africa and the imam of Muslims, and *my international status does not allow me to descend to a lower level*".[ii] Many African leaders cannot imagine themselves being a citizen under any other leader.

All of the above explains why these leaders invest heavily on the use of violence against the opposition during elections. Things are getting worse for Africa in this respect as evident in the four case studies discussed above largely because of the indifference and complicity of African leaders. Though they have collective responsibility and obligations under different international laws, conventions and protocols to promote and support democratic governance, many of these African leaders protect themselves against the people and often find it difficult to call their erring colleagues to order. For example, even with his open disrespect for African institutions such as the Southern African Development Corporations (SADC), the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the Commonwealth, the G-8 and many others, only few African leaders have been able to boldly condemn Robert Mugabe's ignominious display of brutality in Zimbabwe. He brought the economy of his country to its knees in the process of protecting his grips on power. African leaders could not confront him first and foremost because they themselves lack the moral credentials to do so. Secondly, they too would not mind using Mugabe's strategies to remain in power.

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[24]   Isaac Olawale Albert, "Analysing electoral violence in Nigeria", in Linus N. Asiegbu (ed.), *Critical issues in the 2011 general elections in Nigeria*, Abuja: Institute for Security Studies, 2011 pp. 38-62.

Conclusion

This paper examined the post election violence in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria as a way of understanding the larger picture in Africa. What the 2007 Kenyan election reflected was decades of inter-ethnic political competition. The violence in Zimbabwe was simply to end one party rule in the country. In Cote d'Ivoire, what Gbagbo attempted to do was to repeat the Kenyan and Zimbabwean post election peace process that would have enabled him to remain in power even after losing an election. The 2011 post election violence in Nigeria was perpetrated by northern Nigerian youth that probably still finding it difficult to come to terms with a southerner ruling Nigeria which had for many years being under the control of northern leaders. Dealing with all of these problems would require that African leaders become more altruistic. First and foremost, they must recognise electoral democracy for what it is and be willing to abide by its rules. They must stop using ethnicity and religion to further divide the people into feuding camps. African leaders who seize the opportunity of high youth unemployment in Africa to get the youth into electoral violence must desist from this and instead invest more of their resources into generating more employment opportunities for these young people.

All of the issues discussed above have much given democracy a bad name in Africa. Yet, elections and the elective principle are integral to modern-day democracy. The thing to do is not to abandon electoral democracy; rather, we are called upon in our scholarship and in our contributions to lived experience in our societies to seek and propagate ways of ensuring that elections are made credible and that political actors do not resort to violence in the event of unfavourable outcomes at the polls. Indeed, the recognition is growing that 'Credible elections have become ... a necessary, albeit insufficient, source of behavioral, if not attitudinal, legitimacy in Africa's emerging democracies'[25].

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[25] Shaheen Mozaffar, "Patterns of electoral governance in Africa's emerging democracies", *International Political Science Review*, 2391, 2002 p. 86.