Addressing the Ways for Sustaining Peace after Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract

The thrust of the paper is on addressing the ways for sustaining peace after Elections in Nigeria. There is no denying the fact that Nigeria's elections are characterised by violence before, during and after the elections. This is no surprising because of the apparent failure of the country's electoral body to conduct free, fair, transparent and credible elections. The end result of this is agitation by some segments of the country who feel cheated by the outcome of elections. Those who perpetrate this seem to be enjoying these anomalies because it gives them the avenue to continue to loot the nation's treasury and use same to by the conscience of the poor during elections (vote buying). This high level of anomalies has made the masses to be disillusioned and disenchanted. The negative effect of this is the truncating off the country's peace before, during and after elections. This has led to the formation of groups such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) Yoruba Nation Agitation and Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) among others. The paper used the qualitative research method. As a way forward of these challenges, the paper suggests among others that there should be free, fair and credible elections, as well as reconciling of winners and losers in elections.

Keywords: Election, Sustainability, Peace, Complementary Peacebuilding School of Thought, Nigeria

Introduction

Elections are essential components of the democratic system used to run contemporary political systems. They act as a tool for political responsibility, choice, and mobilization. Elections are held in the setting of liberal democracy, which has emerged as the most popular type of democracy in a unipolar world, in order to ease the transition from one civilian administration to the next and to assist establish the legitimacy of incumbent governments.

Long-standing disagreements or political violence are peacefully addressed in a democratic society where elections are free from crises. A structure like this increases the likelihood of political stability, peace, progress, and continuity in governing. But, when elections are marred by violence, intimidation, rigging, stealing and stuffing vote boxes, and other electoral malpractices, they call into question the very foundations of democracy and endanger the stability of the nation.

The maintenance of a lasting peace through a variety of means, such as improving the lot of its residents, is one of the main duties of a democratic institution. Ighodalo (2011) asserts that fostering good living conditions for residents of a nation is essential to achieving peace. Peace is greatly enhanced before, during, and after elections when free, fair, and credible elections are held. As a result, a nation that pays close attention to voter sentiment and wishes during electioneering may not need to exert as much effort to stop post-election violence, political assassination, politics of religion, politics of tribe, sectionalism, regionalism, etc.

The political elites have not entirely accepted elections as the benchmark for enduring peace, as evidenced by Nigeria's experience with municipal, state, assembly, and presidential elections. The elites have frequently broken the rules of political politics that are competitive and encourage tolerance, controversy, and consensus as well as negotiation and compromise. They see elections as warfare, characterized by gangsterism and political disorder. According to Dewan and Lucas (2020), Nigerian politics is very much like Thai wrestling: you kick your opponent with your foot, hit him with your hand on the teeth, and even below the belt. Therefore, elections in Nigeria have been murky and often a do-or-die-affair. Blair's remarks, for example, regarding politics in the United Kingdom sums up the nature of politics in Nigeria. By and large politicians are an odd mix of rhino hide and super soft tissue. They need the hide just to get through the day, since slings and arrows are constant (Blair, 2010). Ighodalo (2011) corroborates that in Nigeria, elections have always been hotly contested under party politics that is intemperate and violence rite-large.

Political parties which organise for elections are also, like armband of men and women going to war, where there must be victors and the vanquished. Elections have become warfare, where it is a sin to lose. This dominant pattern of elections and electioneering threatens to tear the nation Nigeria apart and put its tenuous peace at great risks. For instance, a report by Tony Blair Institute (2022) claims that no fewer than 1, 525 people were killed in election-related violence across Nigeria in the last five election cycles. The report which was published by *Daily Trust* on 1st December, 2022, indicates that the highest number of lives lost during elections was in 20111, in which 800 people were killed. This was closely followed by the 2007 elections, which claimed 300 lives while those of 2019, 2015 and 1999 led to the killing of 145, 100 and 80 people in that order. The just concluded general elections in the country are not an exception as a total of 109 deaths were recorded across the country in the build-up to the 2023 general elections (*Premium Times,* 2023). Leadership newspaper (2023) states thus: Families of no fewer than 39 Nigerians are mourning at least one member killed during the 2023 general elections, just as a few politicians are celebrating victories at the polls. The dead in the presidential and governorship elections held on February 25 and March 18, 2023 include policemen, politicians, hired thugs, members of the electorate and eve a yet to be identified ad-hoc staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission who was reportedly struck by a stray bullet. Nwafor (2023) corroborates that, the 2023 general elections in Nigeria is one of the worst in recent times as over 130 election-related deaths were recorded across the country before, during and after the polls.

The 2023 general elections in Nigeria have come and gone but its aftermath threatens the peace of the country. The candidates of the Labour Party and Peoples Democratic Party in the presidential election have rejected the outcome of the election. The same is also said of various candidates who lost the election in their states either as governors, senators, house of representative members and state houses of assembly alleging that the elections were not the true reflection of the will of the people. While they have taken their case to courts, their supporters have continued to protests across the length and breadth of the country. This kind of political scenario gives room aggrieved groups to revive their hitherto latent agitations for all manner of things, thereby truncating the peace of the country. In other words, the nature and pattern of politics played to a very large extent would determine the existence of peace or otherwise. In the words of Aja (2007, p.2), "sustainable peace includes good politics. According to the University for Peace, cited in Ibeanu (2006) peace is a political condition that makes justice possible. Ibeanu (2006) further opines that to have peace, politics must be conducted according to international standard. This makes the citizens to participant more and political values like tolerance, bargaining and negotiation are made the norm.

Citizens also become more rational and evaluative when dealing with political issues (p. 8). These positions show that there is a link exists between good politics and peace.

Therefore, the thrust of this paper is on achieving sustainable peace beyond elections in Nigeria.

Methodology

Essentially, this is a conceptual work, which provided an overview addressing the ways for sustaining peace after elections in Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper adopted the qualitative approach whereby it interrogated concepts and issues related to crux of the paper. The paper obtained data from secondary sources such as from books, related studies done on the field, and online materials. The paper made calculated propositions from the work that provided a fulcrum for other scholars and students interested in this field to work from.

Conceptual Clarifications
Election

Elections are a method of choosing candidates to serve as the people's representatives in various public posts within the polity. Elections constitute a highly organized avenue of popular expression, claims Aderibigbe (2006). Elections give citizens a voice in determining policy (Powell Jr., 2000). Similar to this, Olisa (2015) notes that electing someone to public office through an election is a formal decision-making process. Since the 17th century, elections have been the primary method used to carry out representative democracy in modern times.

The liberal version of democracy cannot survive without competitive political elections. In Schumpeter's (1942) description of this arrangement as the: Institutional framework for arriving at political, legislative, and administrative decisions, this democratic approach of selecting palatable political leaders is fully elaborated. It is a process by which a person gains the authority to influence decisions through a contest for the support of the populace.

Elections are similarly described as the modern and internationally accepted process by which by voting, persons and groups are openly and methodologically chosen to represent a body or community in a bigger entity or government by Nnadozie (2004). Elections may serve a ratificatory purpose if they encourage public participation in development while also giving the current administration the illusion of popularity. But, in a liberal democracy, elections serve a larger range of purposes, including promoting legitimacy, mobilizing the populace, and serving as instruments of accountability. In light of this, Momoh and Adejumobi (1999), referenced in Olisa (2015), claim that elections play a crucial role in the democratic process by serving as a catalyst for representative government. They guarantee political accountability to the public while also acting as a means of legitimization for the state and those in charge of exercising state authority.

It is useful to notice that in liberal democracies, the emphasis on concepts like "competitive battle" tends to outweigh that of a consensus-based political process. Playing by the rules is therefore essential to the continuation of this democratic process. Compliance with this declared necessity is what enables a seamless transition of power from one administration to the next. Secondly, the procedure of picking political leaders should cohere with the cultural values of the people which should preserve the exercise. In other words, elections have to be compatible with the form of democracy that exists in a particular nation. For election to make meaning to a democratic system, it must go beyond a ritualistic exercise carried out periodically. Elections involve the participation

of the people in the process of electing their leaders and their own participation in governance, as Okoye observes that elections are a complex set of activities with different variables that act and feed the other. Election Day activities are a significant part of elections, but they are not always the focus. It encompasses activities before, during and after elections... it includes the liberation or otherwise of the political process in the country and the independence of adjudicating bodies of elections (Iyayi, 2005).

Peace/Sustainable Peace

The term "peace" has multiple different meanings. It appears that the word "peace" might mean many things depending on the situation.

The Latin term "pax," from which the English word "peace" is derived, literally denotes a contract, arrangement, or agreement to put a stop to war or any dispute or conflict between two people, two nations, or two antagonistic groups of people. The absence of fighting is what the word peace really denotes, according to American military history. Because of this, in the eyes of the military, they either start wars to establish peace or use force to maintain it. In military perspectives, peace is not seen as a means to an end but as the ultimate or ideal goal.

If American military history is viewed chronologically and politically, it is obvious why peace is often defined as the absence of conflict. This is a result of the innumerable wars that have been fought throughout the development of human civilisation. Every time a battle begins, people call for and crave peace. The peace that people wished and demanded is defined by the absence of wars and conflicts.

Yet, many peace researchers disagree with the idea of focusing on peace as just the absence of violence. They consider peace to be something more significant, valuable, and meaningful than that.

Without a doubt, one of the most significant and common human ambitions is peace. According to Raimon Panikkar, it is "one of the few positive symbols having meaning for the entire mankind." Conflicts must be managed with care and, whenever possible, prevented or altered in order to bring about peace (Funk, n.d). Albert Einstein claimed that in addition to the absence of conflict, peace also includes or requires the presence of justice, law, and order.

Martin Luther King, Jr., a well-known advocate for human rights, was dissatisfied with the idea of peace that just focused on the absence of unpleasant conditions. He believed that true peace must encompass justice in society, as expressed in his comment, "Real peace is not only the absence of tension: It is the presence of justice."

According to a Norwegian peace specialist Johan Gultung, the concepts of "peace" and "violence" are interconnected. The goal of society should be the absence of violence, which is what peace is. The ability of man to realize his potential for a fulfilling existence in society can be viewed as being enabled by and facilitated by peace. "Peace is often characterized as the absence of war, fear, conflict, worry, pain, and violence, as well as about peaceful coexistence," writes Francis (2006). Its principal goals are the establishment and upkeep of a just social order and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Francis continued by stating that many peace researchers generally concur on six definitions of peace, including: peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence); peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence); peace as respect and tolerance

between people; peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere); inner peace (spiritual peace); and peace as "wholeness and making whole."

Galtung, cited in Egugbo (2016) describes two aspects of peace: "positive peace," or the absence of unfair structures, unequal relationships, justice, and inner peace at the individual level, and "negative peace," or the absence of direct violence, war, fear, and conflict at individual, national, regional, and international levels. The type and pattern of peace in a society are greatly influenced by the manner that society is governed. Because of its intrinsic inclinations to cause major threats to peace, Galtung's definition of a negative peace state is one that is neither sustainable nor acceptable for man. Positive peace, on the other hand, is a long-lasting and desired state that is advantageous and favourable for man to be able to function and live a meaningful life. Only under favourable political conditions can this kind of peace be attained**.**

Encarta, cited in Adebayo (2007) gave the following important meanings of peace, these are:

a. Freedom from war
b. The end state of war
c. Tranquillity; a calm quiet state free from disturbance
d. A state of mental calm, serenity, devoid of anxiety
e. A state of harmony, free from conflict or disagreement
f. A treaty agreeing to end hostility
g. Law and order; a state devoid of violence, crime and other forms of disturbance.

According to Aja (2006) peace is a relative situation of a security-friendly environment that permits individual and group relations to progress order and stability. Aja said, "Peace is the human ideal situation and order of existence that permits the ruling and the ruled to fulfill life commitments with little fear of losing their lives, their liberties, or their possessions.

United Nations (2012) defines sustainable peace as equal participation of all citizens (men and women) in all spheres of public life in their nation and community. This calls for promoting tolerance, appreciating diversity, and changing behaviours that encourage discrimination and violence. It also calls for political and social justice. According to Caparini and Milante (2017), achieving a durable peace requires that actors turn away from structural violence and toward cooperative approaches.

According to Aja (2006) concurs as he sums up the meaning of sustainable peace thus:
 a. Good governance
b. Good followership
c. Non-violent value system
d. Preservation of human rights, including the prime sacredness of life and liberty
e. Fear of sovereign creator and respect for man
f. Security measures to guarantee the absence of fear or threat to the subjects and core values of a society
g. Mutual commitment between actor in support of free flow of communication (dialogue) as the supreme strategy of conflict transformation and conflict resolution
h. Sensitiveness to the early conflict signals and a pragmatic response to forestall their graduation into conflict scenario (proper)

i. Religious tolerance that guarantees to each the "natural" liberty to any form of worships (in spiritual terms)

j. Creating an institutional mechanism for the promotion of more collaborative activities than discord

k. Introducing appropriate remedies timely, where applicable.

From the foregoing, sustaining peace is basically aimed at reducing the risk of lapse or relapse into violent conflict. It is equally the aspirational goal, with the focus of fostering the ability and capacity to look beyond crisis management and the immediate resolution of conflict.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is situated within the framework of the Complementary Peacebuilding School of thought. This school focuses on the possible congruence between the conflict management and resolution schools. By putting the strength of these two schools together, it is a somehow logical step that peace building is needed from the top and from below. In the early to mid 1990s, different approaches developed that sought to overcome the dichotomy between conflict management and resolution. The first was Ronald Fisher and Loraleigh Keashly's (1991) "Contingency model for third party intervention in conflicts." This aimed at identifying the appropriate third party method and the timing of interventions. Based on Friedrich Glasl's (1982 and 1990) conflict escalation model, the approach is to de-escalate the conflict from phase to phase. According to Glasl, when a conflict is in the early escalation phase, it is the appropriate time for resolution-oriented approaches, while conflict management approaches, like official mediation, should be used when the conflict is already on a high escalation level. After a peace accord has been reached, it is time to revert to resolution-oriented approaches. Based on quantitative empirical research Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin developed an approach similar to the contingency model, but shifting the perspective from approaches to actors. In this approach it is not important which mediators are the most effective, but who is more effective at different stages of the conflict. The results are similar to those of Fisher and Keashly in that the more the conflict escalates, the more powerful the third party should become.

The third strand of this school is the Multi-Track Diplomacy approach by Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1996). This while recognizing that different approaches and actors are needed to reach peace, seeks to make a clearer distinction between the different approaches and actors by adopting a "track" concept. Track one involves diplomatic peace building initiatives by governments and is in line with the Conflict Management School. Track two represents the original conflict resolution school, while the other tracks try to cluster other relevant actors. Complementary School received widespread attention in scholarly circles for overcoming the conflict management/resolution dichotomy.

Constraints to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria Due to Election

The high level of disruption of peace before, during and after elections in Nigeria today has made it so important to interrogate the factors acting as catalysts. Some of these constraints are discussed below:

Politics of Gadfatherism

The godfather is typically the "big boss," and he surrounds himself with a wide range of violent and criminal clients. In politics, they make significant financial investments in individuals, most notably in the media, to promote their candidates' reputations while simultaneously working to undermine those of rivals. All of the aforementioned godfather types exist in Nigeria, particularly those that devote their time to charitable causes, demand the support of society, and even invest their money in illegal ventures.

In an interview with the BBC on November 10, 2003, Ibrahim (2003), who was cited by Olawale (2005), described this group of Nigerians as "men who have the power personally to determine who gets nominated and who wins an election in a state."Former Governor of Enugu State, Chimaroke Nnamani, who had a running battle with his godfather, Senator Jim Nwobo, for over two years, defined godfather from his own personal experience as follows:

> ... an impervious guardian figure who provided the lifeline and direction to the godson, perceived to live a life of total submission, subservience and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of opulence, affluence and decisiveness, that is, if not ruthless ... strictly, the godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purposes.'

Electoral Irregularities

Another factor that contributes to disruption of peace before, during and after elections in Nigeria is electoral irregularities. The characteristics of Nigeria's election are often that of winning at all cost. In other words, it is usually characterised with Do or Die game and this leads to rigging and other forms of malpractices. Dudley (1973) paints this picture succinctly thus "instability is the inevitable consequence of the failure of political actors to play the game of politics according to constitutive and regulative rules of the game. People are bound to react violently when their wishes and will are subverted. Use citations without pages

Bad Conduct of Party Primaries

One thing that is undeniable in the political party structures in Nigeria is the fact that internal democracy has always not been allowed to flourish in the process of selecting candidates for general elections or positions within the party itself. This is evident in the manner political gladiators tend to struggle at whatever cost for positions within the party all in a bid to exert some level of influence in the decision-making process of the party. The 2023 general elections give a lot of insight into this. The APC's success at the polls may be a result of the cracks in the wall of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Prominent members of the PDP, including governors (G5), senators and members of the House of Representatives left the party for other political parties, shortly after the primaries that produced former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, alleging irregularities in the conduct of the primaries (Abba & Babalola, 2017).

Another example is that of the House of Representatives election of Ado/Ogbadibo/Okupokwu constituency of Benue state in 2015, where a PDP sole candidate was declared winner by INEC, but was later disqualified by the court, soon after the inauguration of the National Assembly. Also, the party's screening panel in Bayelsa state disqualified Senator Emmanuel Paulker, the sole aspirant challenging Governor Sariake Dickson for the PDP governorship ticket in the state in

2015. Although reasons for his disqualification were shrouded in secrecy, there are indications that the panel took the decision over alleged "inconsistent tax clearance". Another example is the case of APC in 2015 under the Bisi Akande interim leadership organised two national conventions, including the one that produced the incumbent national chairman of the party, John Oyegun. But the outcome of the convention led to the defection of Ali Modu Sheriff, the former governor of Borno State, and Tom Ikimi, from APC to PDP (Abba & Babalola, 2017). These kinds of situations usually lead to truncating the nation's peace during, before and after elections.

Disregard for the Rule of Law

One other fundamental factor that threatens Nigeria peace before, during and after election is lack of respect for the rule of law. Rule of law is the political philosophy that all citizens and institutions within a country, state, or community are accountable to the same laws, including lawmakers and leaders. In the view of Alonge (2005) cited in Egugbo (2016) "the doctrine of rule of law is about the recognition of legal equality, impartiality and individual liberty" (p. 48). It ensures the enjoyment of human right and the prevention of arbitrary power. It is an essential ingredient for attainment of an orderly society. Therefore, for the promotion of good life and harmony, the rule of law should be allowed to govern human society. The law is expected to guide the government and the governed and as such the actions and inactions of all and sundry should be in accordance with the law.

But in Nigeria, some people (especially politicians) are seen as above the law. They make threatening statements and they are not punished. This type of situation was witnessed in Lagos state during the 2023 general elections where traditional rulers and one MC Oluomo were threatening the Igbos to leave their state. This affirms Enugbo (2016) statement that a society not regulated by law is prone to confusion, crisis and possible collapse.

Tribal, Religious, Sectional and Ethnic Politics

Nigeria is a multi-lingual and multi-religious entity having 374 ethnic groups that speak 348 languages (Dioka, 1997). Each cultural religious community in Nigeria has a set of values that differentiates one cultural and religious community from the other, and no community is ready to compromise its cultural or religious identity in the interest of the other communities. Omu (2008) opines that ethnicity usually undergoes an evolutionary process whereby it starts as a latent and accommodating feeling, and later become instigated or propelled as a weapon of hostility, conflict and bitter tensions.

The major problem confronting the country today is the inability of the government to confront ethnic, religious and sectional politics head-on. A good reference point is the political crisis that was witnessed in 2011 in the Northern part of the country when the candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari lost the election to Ebele Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) who was from the Southern part of the country.

Bad Use of the Mass Media

In Nigeria, the media has been used to fight and discredit political opponents such as the one witnessed during the 2023 general elections, where *The Nation* newspaper was accused of unethical practices by paining the candidate of the Labour Party in the Lagos State governorship election as not a Yoruba person. The pluralistic theory believes that society comprises many

interacting groups having individual interests to accomplish. This is based on the assumption that the various groups in the society have more or less equal access to public resources and influence. It is upon this premise that some people sometimes wonder at the complaints of the seemingly very poor members of the society on the erroneous assumption that everyone has equal opportunity and access to succeed in life. So the media being a creation of the society function mainly to represent the different segments of the society. However, most media practitioners do not make any conscious to evaluate the likely implications of such reportage on the peace of the country (Oboh, 2017).

Ways for Sustaining Peace After Elections in Nigeria

It is a fact that good political terrain cannot thrive in an atmosphere of absence of peace. This calls for peace in our electoral system so that the country Nigeria can enjoy development in all ramifications. Therefore, if the following factors are given the needed attention, sustainable peace would be attained in Nigeria beyond elections:

Eschewing Politics of Godfatherism

In the words of former Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, dealing with godfatherism politics in Nigeria entails going directly to the people by aspiring politicians and that good and competent people should not distance themselves from the politics of the country. Further, to deal with this kind of political atmosphere in the country, there is need to enact law that abolish godfatherism in the nation's political journey. Equally important is for the electorate to be adequately enlightened so that these godfathers will that power does not reside in the hand of an individual or family or group. Significantly is for the government at all levels to minimise the influence of money in politics by controlling individuals or groups contributions to political activities in the country. Also, through voting of people who are considered to be 'nobody' without knowing where they come from, as well as refusing to be a godson to a political godfather can eliminate this godfather practice in the Nigerian electoral system.

Regard for the Rule of Law

The complex character of man and its society makes it imperative to establish a framework that would serve as a guide to both the governed and the government and as well as limit their excesses, claims Egugbo (2016). This system could be seen as the rule of law. The United Nations Security Council, which Bjornlund (2014) cited, described the rule of law as the situation in which all individuals, institutions, and organizations, both public and private, including the state itself, are held accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated, and which are in accordance with international human rights norms and standards. There is a strong likelihood that peace would rule the day if those in positions of power in Nigeria and the governed behave in accordance with the rules of the Nigeria. This is not to say that all lawbreakers would not break the law, but if they did, the law would be followed to deal with them, and this would act as a warning to others who will always want to bend the rules of elections in Nigeria.

Discouraging Tribal, Religious, Sectional and Ethnic Politics

Dealing with this requires a holistic approach such as identifying ourselves as Nigerian first, before identifying with our ethnic, religious or sectional groups. According to Chilee (2013), a deep

understanding of the principles of citizenship must be shown by Nigerians; Power must also be decentralised rather than be concentrated in the hands of unproductive and clustered centre headed by the president. If regions are self-financing and self-governing, they will have themselves, instead of other regions, to blame if things eventually go wrong. This will assist in curbing the high rate of tribalism and sectionalism in our body polity.

Transparency, Free, Fair and Credible Elections

Free, fair, and credible election is a panacea for peace because the parties engaged would be happy with the process given that no one was taken advantage of in a free, fair, and legitimate election. A transparent, unbiased, and equitable conduct of the elections by the agencies concerned will result in a free, fair, and credible election. The Voter Education Handbook (2005, p. 41) lists four fundamental prerequisites for fostering an atmosphere that will allow for the staging of free and fair elections.

These are:

i.   A trustworthy, knowledgeable, and impartial body to oversee the election (often known as the electoral commission);

ii.   the political community's awareness of and readiness to embrace the fundamental laws and rules underlying the struggle for power;

iii.   political parties, customs, and candidate teams that have been developed and offered to the electorate as alternatives; and

iv. To interpret electoral rules and resolve election-related disputes, an impartial judiciary is needed. Everyone is responsible for making sure that elections are free, fair, and credible, and this may be done if the organizations in charge of holding the elections establish an environment that is favourable and fair to all the political participants.

Reconciling Winners and Losers in Election

The standard expectation is that in any election, a winner and a loser must emerge. But Nigeria's politicians hardly go to elections with the mindset that the tide might swing against them. It is a fact that in Nigeria politicians go to contest with only one thing at the back of their mind, to emerge victorious. This attests to the reason the outcome of the elections are followed by barrage of court cases, sometimes leading to crisis.

However, the reconciliation of winners and losers is imperative for achieving sustainable peace before, during and after elections in Nigeria. This can be done through roundtable discussion, and appointment of those who lose elections if they have the credentials to drive Nigeria's development goal and objectives.

Good Use of the Mass Media

Media can be defined broadly as a channel of communication. It is used to describe every mode or method of disseminating information, or every mode of communication to a wide range of people, cuttingacross regions and boundaries (Ayodele, 2022). Therefore, effective use of the mass media is critical for achieving sustainable peace before, during and after elections in Nigeria. In doing

this, the mass media in Nigeria should continue to provide equal avenue for all and sundry to present their manifestoes to the would-be electorate. They should disassociate themselves from regional, ethnic, sectional religious reportage, as this will go a long way in bringing sustainable peace beyond elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Sustainable peace cannot occur in an atmosphere where elections are characterised by tribalism, sectionalism, misuse of the media and marginalisation of some ethnic groups. Also, sustainable peace remains a mirage where there is high level of godfatherism in politics, disrespect for the rule of law, electoral malpractice and bad conduct of party primaries. These kinds of activities have made the Nigeria's elections a do or die affair. It drives away good and competent people. This scourge is a great danger to sustainable peace in the nation's electoral processes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

    i.   The ugly trend of godfatherism and marginalisation should be seriously dealt with in our body polity. In the final analysis, a lot depends on the re-establishment of trust between citizens and their elected representatives, after emerging from a traumatic and conflict-ridden past, where trust was betrayed and the people were violated.

    ii.   Evolving a new culture of democracy in Nigeria that can guarantee a radical shift from the present pattern of zero-sum politics to new forms of politics that emphasise inclusiveness, social equity and the opening up of the political space for equal participation, representation and choice-making.

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