

ELECTION VIOLENCE AND VOTERS' BEHAVIOUR IN UGANDA: "SUCCESS OF DECENTRALIZATION STRATEGY"

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this survey was to appraise election violence and voter behaviour in Uganda. The rule of the thumb was used to draw the sample for the study. Copies of structured questionnaire were administered on the respondents using purposive sampling technique to study two urban centers in Uganda - Hoima and Kigoroby. Using the analysis of variance and Bonferroni tests as instruments of data analysis, findings indicated among others that voter motivation, political parties, voter perceptions and civic education have a strong contribution towards election violence among voters in Uganda. Forms of election violence could easily be as a result of voters perception, voter motivation, civic education and political organizations or parties. The mode of elections organized by governments presents a closer relationship between election violence and voter behaviour characterised by perceptions, motivation, civic education and political party activities. There was a significant positive relation between election violence and voter behaviour. If factors promoting election violence are to be dealt with so as to have a peaceful political system, the study submitted that political big wigs should embrace the culture of attitudinal change and see politics or elections as a game that there must always be a winner and a loser.

Keywords: *Election, violence, Voter behaviour, Uganda*

INTRODUCTION

Many African countries including those in the East-African region have in recent past been engaged in the implementation of democratic Reforms as an effort to better the socio-economic and political climate. In this respect, most countries in the region including Uganda, have thus, been regularly under-going national elections (Cowen and Lakso 2002, Brennan 1982, Hague 1998, Hillman and Hendel 1970, Janda 2001, Lowi 1976). An election is believed to be one of the democratic paths towards realizing "good" governance.

In some former British colonies (such as Uganda), local elections are held based on universal franchise since 1920s. Uganda's case reflects that, there were not any universal countrywide elections from 1900 until 1958 when LegCo elections were held. These were followed by the 1961 direct/ popular elections when the colonial administrators demanded so (Gingyera-Pinyewa, 2006 and the Movement Secretariat, 2000). Although elections cannot be equated with democracy, it is a fundamental principle of a liberal democratic theory and practice (Cowen and Laakso, 2002). This is so especially if it is a free and fair electoral competition, which includes

the possibility of criticizing government's decision-making and of offering alternatives. Once an election meets the above criteria, then voters are able to choose between one set of decisions and another and more generally, hold the elected accountable for their actions. In spite of the fact that, the 1961 elections were largely boycotted by the Buganda Lukiiko, the Democratic Party won 19 seats in Buganda and a further 24 seats outside Buganda. In April 1962, indirect national elections were conducted and UPC won 37 seats (The Movement Secretariat, 2000). A similar development took shape in Kenya and Tanganyika (now Tanzania). In Tanganyika, elections were not held until 1960 October when the Tanzania African National Union (TANU) under Mwalimu Nyerere, demanded so following a nation-wide mobilization from all masses calling for a national government.

The above struggles were all intended to realize "good governance" which has been defined as "less government that concentrates its efforts less on direct interventions and more on enabling people to be productive". It has also been contended that, in a liberal democracy, good governance entails such institutionalized democratic values such as: openness, popular participation (Kabwegyere, 2000; Rondinelli and Cheema, 1983; Barkan and Chege, 1989), accountability (Olum, 2003), decentralized authority, the rule of law, fairness, equity and a sense of duty.

On the contrary, Marxist scholars argue that, the notion 'good governance' should be perceived within the framework of social movements. To them, any meaningful good governance must start from the bottom rather than from above. The idea of regular elections therefore, should be conceptualized as a revolutionary concept of democracy that is participatory (Government of Uganda, 1995; The United Nations, 1979; and Mwesigwa, 2007). This is alluded to by the disciples of the bottom up theory who emphasize the extent to which competitive elections render governments accountable to the governed (Hague, 1998). While the procedural democratic theorists describe specific principles about how government should make decisions on the grounds of universal participation, political equality and majority rule (Janda, 2004). These postulations point to the guise that prepossess that an election should be grass-root and popular, as opposed to representative, elitist and parliamentary, as one of the means towards good governance.

It seems therefore, that elections in eastern Africa have not received the necessary attention it deserves albeit its contribution to good governance. The modern political path solely agrees that democratic governance and elections are inseparable in contemporary society. Considering the above, it would appear that new Paradigms are required. The aim of this study therefore is to identify what might be considered the most plausible of such Paradigms, hence, it presents this tentative study.

THE PROBLEM OF ELECTION VIOLENCE

Election violence remains a popular ingredient of both national and local elections in eastern Africa generally and Uganda in particular. The previous presidential and parliamentary elections in Uganda (2001 and 2006) bear testimony to this effect. The consequent election petitions both for presidential and parliamentary hopefuls cannot be under-estimated. The 2010 National Resistance Movement (NRM) party primaries have reportedly painted a gloomy picture on the quality of national elections Uganda expects to conduct. The 2007 national elections in Kenya that was marred by bloodshed is no exception either and even the recent Kenyan referendum on the national Constitution left little to be admired. Zanzibar islands in Tanzania have never had any peaceful election either.

Self-seeking politicians in the region have continued to shatter the voting power (disfranchise) among voters in eastern Africa. This is presented, as it seems more prevalent, through rejecting some voters by not counting their votes, counting the favoured votes several times, creating ghost voters/ polling stations, loss of lives among voters, unwarranted imprisonments, voter intimidation (by heavy politicians and/or the security agencies), manipulation of constitutional arrangements (plus deliberate delays in passing the electoral bills by parliament) and outright electoral rigging manifesting through varied dimensions. According to Mkandawire (2008a), the summation of this classic approach is that, leaders choose voters not the opposite (notably coined as choice-less democracy). That is probably why; defeated incumbents reject (or denounce the projected) election outcomes as flawed, a connotation the opposition uses to castigate the same elections as not free and fair. Although in some cases the opposition fails to reject the electoral results while their (opposition) senior politicians accept cabinet posts (in the supposedly illegitimate government).

The genesis of such election malaise stems from the unlevelled ground on which different political parties/players are placed giving an upper hand to the proposition incumbents against the opposition. Consequently, the electoral power and the type of relationship the electors have with the people they elect remain absurd; voter turnout, especially in areas dominated by the opposition, remains low compared to the eligible electorate (Flanigan and Zingale, 1991), something which is unnatural. Different countries have often been using secret ballots, improved civic education and ensuring relative political stability (security-wise) and assuring transparency during elections. External observers are oftentimes invited to ensure that voters are assured of free and fair election result as well as painting confidence to the donor-driven elections at the international spectrum.

It however, remains a controversy since direct elections are amiable to manipulation by incumbent political parties and/or leaders. On the other hand, indirect elections would be unacceptable in our modern times, considering that they are less participatory in nature. Secondly, a direct election in the First-Past-The-Post system is too easily manipulable in favour of a solitary victor. In contrast, elections based

on Proportional Representation may not easily work in the developing countries like those in eastern Africa given the essential niceties involved.

If the concern of Election Violence is not comprehensively dealt with, realizing a peaceful post-election climate may remain hypothetical. Consequently, the vacuum of an efficacious legal avenue for voters to voice out their views could spark a terrible toll. The above observations provoked the question of the effect of voter behaviour on election violence in Uganda. That is why this study aims at ascertaining the consequence of voter behaviour on electoral violence in Uganda. Given that purpose, the following hypotheses were generated and tested.

Ho₁: There is no significant variation in voters' perceptions on electoral violence.

Ho₂: Political Parties do not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda.

Ho₃: Voter Motivation does not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda.

Ho₄: Civic Education does not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

Respondents to the questionnaire were selected using purposive sampling. This technique is judgmental as samples were selected on the assumption that they would assist to satisfy the objectives of the study. In this study, attention was mainly put to voters because they are the beneficiaries and victims of all forms of election violence in Uganda. The study sample was composed of voters from two urban centers: Hoima and Kigorobyia as illustrated hereunder.

Table 1: Respondents by Councils

Local Council	No of Respondents			
	Males	%	Females	%
Hoima town council	33	50.8	32	49.2
Kigorobyia town council	28	50.0	28	50.0
Total	61	55.0	51	45.0

Source: Survey 2011

The samples presented on table 1 were determined using the rule of the thumb approach. It was thus resolute that at least 111 voters (respondents) would be used in the study. Data were collected using the questionnaire of 24 items which were on a five likert scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The items generated from the questionnaire were subjected to a content validity test and results revealed 0.7914. This result meant that the questions designed for the study were valid and hence, would produce the envisaged outcomes suitably. Further, a reliability test was held and outcomes reflected the following:

Table 2: Reliability test results

Characteristics	Reliability (Kuder-Richardson)
Demographic characteristics	0.6511
Political parties	0.7498
Voter motivation	0.7801
Civic education	0.6977
Election violence	0.9192

Source: Survey 2011

From the table 2, the Kuder-Richardson for the four main scales, minus demographic features, was above 0.6, implying that all the scales used in the study; political parties, voter motivation, civic education and election violence were coherent and dependable. Using the statistical package for social sciences software (SPSS; Version 11.0), descriptive statistics was generated. In addition, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was used in order to determine the degree of the correlation between election violence and political parties, voter motivation and civic education. Further, in a bid to establish the extent to which political parties, voter motivation and civic education contributed to election violence, a simple linear regression was used. Moreover, Factor analysis was used on election violence in order to divorce what actually mattered for the most part in this notion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the respondents for this study were ranging between 18 and 42 years. This exposed the fact that most of the people who engaged in active politics were young. The vindication here is that most of those voters had little or no interest of scrutinising candidates and parties in relation to the country's history or put different, little focus is vested to what some candidates may have contributed while holding other capacities rather than the ones they compete for. On the aspect of gender, most of the respondents were males. This figure reflects that elections are more appealing to the male gender/voters than their female counterparts. Analytically, this male dominance was mainly caused by tradition and awareness.

Among these voters, 25% had voted twice, 18% had voted thrice, 51% had voted once and the rest had never voted before. By implication therefore, 57% of the respondents had either voted once or never while only less than 50% voted more than once and have dependable voting experience. This justifies the fact that a greater percentage of the voters, were merely being driven by emotions rather than what ought to be. Hypothesis one which states that there is no significant variation in voters' perceptions on electoral violence was rejected. Voters merely sided with two arguments in respect of violence being stage-managed and voter's psychological inferiority being more responsible for election violence. For other aspects of election violence there were significant variations in voters' perceptions. Therefore, a post hoc Bonferroni test was conducted and results showed that voters differed considerably in their responses to opinion of election violence (table 4).

Table 3: Results of the Bonferroni test

Variables	Areas of variations in opinion	Mean diff.	Sig.
Level of election	Agree versus disagree	1.67	.000
Interest in election	Don't know versus Agree	1.56	.000
Political parties	Agree versus disagree	2.00	.000
Security agencies	Disagree versus agree	1.25	.000
Voter knowledge	Agree versus don't know	1.44	.002

Source: Survey 2011

Table 4 reveals that the significant distinctions were in the ways stakeholders perceived the association between election violence and the different factors as illustrated. By inference, in view of the analysis of variance and the Bonferroni test outcomes, it can be held that the null hypothesis was abandoned and thus upholding the alternate hypothesis.

In order to test hypothesis 2 which states that Political Parties do not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda, simple regression matrices were conducted. The outcomes revealed that voter behaviour did not necessarily translate into election violence in Uganda. The same end result was sustained on grounds that there was no linear relationship between voter behaviour and election violence. When a simple regression was performed in a bid to determine the magnitude to which voter behaviour envisaged election violence, it generated the following outcomes:

Table 4: The Contribution of Political Parties to Election Violence

Model	Unstd Coeff	Std Coeff		t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error		Beta	
1	(Constant)	2.587	.508		5.075	.000
	Election violence	.306	.152	.199	1.941	.048

Source: Survey 2011. Dependent Variable: Election violence

Table 5 presents a model summary of the regression. This outcome reveals that political parties discreetly explained 46% of the Election violence in Uganda. And therefore, political parties presented a strong forecaster towards election violence. The outcome was also validated by the fact that more people who are seriously inclined towards particular political parties and organizations were often having high hearted anger, especially the opposition. Therefore, the hypothesis that Political Parties do not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda was accepted.

Further, the result reveals that there was sharp convergence with political parties as a growing origin of election violence as portraying an upper value in electoral constituents and constituencies with deep-rooted political parties. It was thus only in constituencies that have strong political party roots where respondents were noncommittal. Various reasons can be put used to validate this result such as most constituencies are yet poverty stricken and so they could deem it hard to soberly get organized in order to mount calculated demands against political parties. Put different, voters are uptight about political parties.

This mayhem creates a lot of anxiety that immediately boils up into violence. We can also argue that even though voters are seemingly not aware of the consequences of election violence, some of them have opted to "play it cool" whenever such aggression tempers mount in area. Therefore, the tendency by some members to keep a low profile reflects that many voters in Uganda do not subscribe to election aggression. Even if they were to do so, violence remains one of the last resorts. The hypothesis 3 which states that Voter Motivation does not significantly contribute to

election violence in Uganda was rejected as the outcomes of the regression revealed that there was a linear relationship between voter motivation and election violence in Uganda (table 6).

Table 6: The Contribution of Voter Motivation to election violence

Model		Unstd		Std	t	Sig.
		Coeff.	Std. Error			
		B		Beta		
1	(constant)	1.577	.333		5.496	.000
	Voter motivation	.525	.075	.499	5.188	.000

Source: Survey 2011. Dependent variable: election violence

Examining the table 6, one realizes that voter motivation was a very important contributor to election violence in Uganda. The same table shows that by implication, voter motivation contributed at least 21% to the election violence in the country. It can thus be argued that if voters are to be politically vigilant and less violent, they ought to be provided with not only fair infrastructure and services but also timely information about why the ruling party at a particular time has not been able to do what it ought to have done during their tenure.

Hypothesis 4 stated that Civic Education does not significantly contribute to election violence in Uganda. The role of civic education on election violence was considered. It was indeed found that the way civic education was conducted did not affect the voters' behaviour. The correlation results p is more than 0.05. This implies that there was no significant relationship between civic education and election violence. Moreover, the regression test showed that there was no contribution of the civic education to election violence. These revelations vindicate that civic education among voters has no significant contribution on election violence. The above results were incompetence among civic educators; lack of clear sensitisation of the voters about the implications and dangers of lack/absence of civic education; politicization of the civic education curriculum by those who conduct it; continued use of English language on civic education materials among even illiterate communities; gross ignorance among voters; and poor mobilization by civic educators.

In this study, it has been exposed through the different hypotheses tested that political parties do not contribute much to the election violence. In spite of that, every voter requires to remain vigilant in order to keep the state machinery at work. This study investigated what were the most fundamental aspects of election violence as far as voters in Uganda were concerned. The election violence variable had 18 items. However, these items were several, to detach the factors that voters associated more strongly with election violence, thus, a factor analysis was conducted. Out of 18 items, only 5 factors were segregated. These were: knowledge about election violence; the consequences related to election violence; competence of civic educators; credibility of political parties; and, the core objectives driving voters in an election. The summation of the above factors yielded a total of 74% of the election violence. In this study, it was noted that voter motivation is thought of in terms of awakening as well as sustaining the voters to have an inner positive feeling to

participate in all national and local elections. This implies that voter motivation does not automatically convert into election violence since election violence does not equal to voter motivation. Election violence which is also known as election aggression depends on the human violence which is acquired from society as noted by Daniels and Gilula, (1970) cited in Mpaata (2009). Aggression is a consequence of frustration (Dollard et al., 1939 cited in Mpaata, 2009) although not all frustration can lead to aggression. Mpaata notes that, a frustrated person must have been expecting the attainment of a goal (2009). He points out several promoters of aggression including the mass media.

Although Mpaata was mainly concerned with aggressive behaviour in schools, the same ideas seem to be relevant to voters and election violence. For example, whether we castigate the violent voters during electoral periods, they may not necessarily change since the cause of their violence is not just controlled by the environmental factors but a host of other significant factors in them. From this illustration, one may argue that even if the security agencies continue to apply tear-gas among violent voters, the solution is far from reach using such an approach. By implication, violent voters have already had a cumulative frustration, anger and build-up which burst up incidentally during election seasons. Therefore, voter motivation does not actually tally with election violence (Voter Motivation is not equal to Election Violence).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has established that election violence among voters in Uganda has a normal relationship. However, a number of factors contribute significantly towards the same voter violence such as anger, frustration, civic education, credibility of political parties, voter perceptions, and intrinsic voter motivation. These factors cannot be stamped out where political godfatherism is the order of the day. In a situation where every political candidate wants to emerge as a winner even when such candidate does not gain popularity and acceptance of the electorates, there is bound to be continued election violence. If these factors are to be dealt with so as to have a peaceful political system, political big wigs should embrace the culture of attitudinal change and see politics or elections as a game that there must always be a winner and a loser. No two political candidates can emerge a winner simultaneously in any election. Also, if really the interest of the masses is the driving force for contesting in any election, motivating election violence by politicians should be jettisoned completely.

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