THE NATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF ELECTORAL TENSIONS IN NIGERIA'S 2015–2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Keywords

Electoral violence; National Peace Committee; Infrastructures for Peace; Electoral governance; Nigeria.

Abstract

Research Problem: *Electoral processes in Nigeria have been persistently marked by political tension and episodic violence, undermining democratic stability and public confidence. Established after the 2011 post-election crisis, the National Peace Committee (NPC) seeks to promote peaceful electoral conduct through elite mediation, yet its sustained effectiveness across election cycles remains underexamined.*
Methods/theory: *Anchored in the Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) framework, the study adopted a qualitative longitudinal design based on documentary analysis of peace accords, election observation reports, media records, and secondary sources covering the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections.*
Results: *The findings show that the NPC contributed to de-escalation in the 2015 elections by facilitating peace accords and encouraging political restraint. However, the 2019 and 2023 elections were characterised by voter intimidation, hate speech, vote suppression, and electoral violence, indicating that elite peace accords alone cannot address entrenched structural challenges such as zero-sum political competition, weak enforcement of electoral laws, and declining institutional trust.*
Conclusion: *The study concludes that while the NPC remains a vital component of Nigeria's electoral peace architecture, its impact is constrained by weak institutional anchoring and limited integration with*

broader electoral governance reforms.
Key Contribution to Knowledge: *The study provides a rare longitudinal assessment of elite-mediated electoral peacebuilding across three election cycles, advancing understanding of preventive diplomacy in fragile democratic contexts.*
Recommendation: *The study recommends strengthening the NPC's legal mandate, improving coordination with sub-national peace mechanisms, and aligning peace initiatives with electoral accountability reforms.*

Introduction

Nigeria's reestablishment of multiparty electoral politics in 1999 was considered a major advancement toward democratic consolidation following an extended period of military governance. However, comparative analyses of elections in transitional democracies warn that competitive elections frequently exacerbate political tensions in contexts where institutions are fragile and political rivalry is framed by zero-sum dynamics (Schedler, 2013; Norris, 2014). Elections in these situations often transform from mere instruments of democratic choice into catalysts for contestation, mobilisation, and violence.

Nigeria's electoral history since 1999 exemplifies this overarching trend. Incidents of voter intimidation, hate speech, electoral malpractice, and violence have accompanied consecutive election cycles, eliciting ongoing apprehensions regarding the ability of democratic institutions to manage conflict efficiently. The difficulties reached a peak following the 2011 general elections, during which extensive post-election violence in northern Nigeria led to considerable fatalities and displacement. Human rights organisations have associated the violence with incendiary language from elites, inadequate institutional constraints, and the lack of effective conflict prevention tools to temper political conduct during very competitive elections (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

In reaction to these persistent crises, both policy implementation and scholarly investigation have progressively transitioned towards preventive strategies for electoral conflict. In peace and conflict studies, this transition is reflected in the literature on Infrastructures for Peace, which underscores the importance of institutionalised mechanisms that promote dialogue, resolve disputes, and mitigate tensions prior to their escalation into violence (Lederach, 1997; van Tongeren, 2013). Instead of supplanting official legal or security institutions, such mechanisms are envisioned as supplementary frameworks that function through moral authority, mediation, and trust-based interactions.

The National Peace Committee (NPC) was founded in the context of this changing policy and intellectual landscape prior to Nigeria's 2015 general elections. The NPC, consisting of past heads of state, prominent religious leaders, and esteemed civic figures, aimed to advance issue-oriented campaigns, mitigate incendiary rhetoric, and obtain public pledges from political actors to uphold non-violence and adhere to legal dispute resolution. Post-election evaluations attributed to the NPC a role in fostering elite restraint during the 2015 elections, notably regarding presidential concession and the prevention of extensive post-

election violence (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2016; European Union Election Observation Mission, 2015). Nevertheless, the course of next elections complicated this story. Notwithstanding the renewed peace accords and ongoing NPC involvement during the 2019 elections, observer missions recorded enduring operational deficiencies, misuse of incumbency, and localised violence (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2019; International Republican Institute & National Democratic Institute, 2019).

Comparable patterns emerged in the 2023 elections, as reports from human rights organisations and election monitors underscored occurrences of voter intimidation, suppression, disinformation, and assaults on electoral staff, despite the signing of peace accords at both national and sub-national levels (Amnesty International, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023; INEC, 2024).
Current scholarship has addressed these advances in significant yet constrained manners. Certain studies highlight the NPC's role as a pioneering elite-level action that enhances formal institutions via preventative diplomacy (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2016; Lewis, 2021). Some individuals take a more critical perspective, contending that peace accords may devolve into mere symbolic gestures when violations incur no penalties and when underlying structural factors of electoral conflict are left unexamined, such as inadequate enforcement of electoral laws and diminishing public confidence in institutions (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020).
The literature inadequately addresses not merely whether the National Peace Committee "succeeded" or "failed," but rather how its role, significance, and efficacy have transformed over successive electoral cycles within the context of Nigeria's overarching peace infrastructure. Most current research examines the NPC in an episodic manner, concentrating on individual elections or evaluating peace deals as discrete occurrences. Limited research employs a longitudinal approach that systematically contrasts the NPC's actions over various elections or contextualises its activities within evolving political, institutional, and conflict dynamics over time.
This study examines the topic from a unique analytical perspective. The study conceptualises the National Peace Committee not merely as a mediation entity or evaluates peace accords in isolation, but as a dynamic national infrastructure for peace, whose efficacy is contingent upon its engagement with electoral institutions, security agencies, and overarching governance frameworks throughout various electoral cycles. This study analyses the NPC's role in the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections, transcending event-specific evaluations to explore patterns of continuity, adaptation, and constraints in elite-driven peacebuilding throughout time.

This paper enhances current research on electoral peacebuilding in Nigeria by using a longitudinal and infrastructure viewpoint. It provides a more refined comprehension of why elite-level peace mechanisms may facilitate de-escalation in certain electoral situations while proving inadequate in others. This study aims to analyse the National Peace Committee's role in mitigating electoral tensions during Nigeria's 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections, focusing on the interplay between its interventions and other state and non-state mechanisms, as well as the implications for the effective functioning of peace infrastructures in transitional democracies.

Research Problem

This study examines the central research problem that, despite the establishment of elite-mediated peace mechanisms like the National Peace Committee (NPC), electoral tensions and violence have continued in Nigeria's recent elections, prompting enquiries into the depth, consistency, and evolving efficacy of these mechanisms in managing electoral conflict. Since Nigeria's reestablishment of multiparty democracy in 1999, elections have consistently been marred by intimidation, hate speech, voter suppression, and intermittent violence, which have eroded democratic consolidation and public confidence in electoral results (Schedler, 2013; Norris, 2014).

The post-election violence subsequent to the 2011 general elections, which led to significant fatalities and displacements, represented a pivotal moment in Nigeria's electoral history and highlighted the lack of effective preventive mechanisms to regulate elite conduct during intensely competitive elections (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The National Peace Committee was founded prior to the 2015 general elections as a high-level platform aimed at promoting issue-based campaigning, facilitating communication among political elites, and securing public commitments to non-violence through peace treaties. Policy evaluations and observer reports subsequently attributed to the NPC a role in fostering elite restraint and de-escalation during the 2015 elections, especially regarding presidential concession and post-election stability (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2016; European Union Election Observation Mission, 2015).

The ongoing prevalence of electoral malpractices and violence in the 2019 and 2023 general elections, despite numerous peace agreements and sustained NPC involvement, presents a fundamental enigma. Domestic and international observers recorded instances of voter intimidation, disinformation, suppression in opposition strongholds, and assaults on electoral personnel, indicating that elite-level peace commitments failed to result in consistent behavioural change on the ground (European Union Election Observation Mission, 2019; Amnesty International, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023; INEC, 2024). These findings prompt apprehensions over the potential decline in the effectiveness of the NPC's interventions over time, the possibility that their focus remains excessively elite-centric, or the extent to which broader structural and institutional constraints impede their capacity for conflict mitigation.

Current scholarship has not sufficiently addressed this issue. A significant portion of the literature analyses the NPC episodically, concentrating on specific elections or regarding peace accords as mere symbolic occurrences, rather than evaluating the Committee as a dynamic institutional element within Nigeria's comprehensive peace framework (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020; Lewis, 2021). Adequate comprehensive, longitudinal analysis comparing the NPC's function across various electoral cycles is deficient, particularly in examining how its methods, institutional positioning, and relationships with electoral and security institutions influence outcomes over time. As a result, the conceptual framework of electoral peacebuilding in Nigeria is inadequately developed about the conditions that enable national peace infrastructures to effectively manage, contain, or fail to change electoral tensions. This study addresses the unresolved issue by analysing the National Peace Committee as a developing peace infrastructure during the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections, thereby aligning the research problem with the identified gap in the literature and the conceptual framework of the study.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to examine the role of the National Peace Committee in the management of electoral tensions during Nigeria's 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Analyse how the interventions of the National Peace Committee contributed to the mitigation or de-escalation of electoral tensions across the 2015, 2019, and 2023 general elections; and
2. Examinehow the effectiveness of the National Peace Committee's peacebuilding interventions evolved across successive electoral cycles in relation to changing political, institutional, and conflict dynamics.

Electoral Violence and Political Conflict in Nigeria

Electoral violence in Nigeria has been thoroughly examined, with numerous researchers contending that elections in the nation frequently intensify political tensions instead of functioning as tranquil instruments for democratic representation. Birch et al. (2020) defines electoral violence as a subtype of political violence characterised by coercion, intimidation, and assaults occurring before, during, or after elections. This context is especially pertinent to Nigeria, where political rivalry is defined by winner-takes-all dynamics, frequently resulting in violence as factions compete for dominance over state resources and authority. Alao (2021) delineates patterns of pre-election, election-day, and post-election violence, highlighting that thuggery, armed assaults, and ballot-box theft are persistent characteristics of Nigerian elections. The continued occurrence of these violent crimes, notwithstanding reform initiatives, underscores the inadequate implementation of election legislation and the lack of accountability. Nonetheless, although Alao's work illuminates the institutional shortcomings of electoral organisations, it neglects to examine the fundamental reasons of electoral violence arising from Nigeria's historically ingrained political clientelism and ethnic mobilisation. This indicates that improvements focused solely on technical elements of elections, such as voter registration and computerised voting, will not resolve the underlying structural reasons of violence.

Moliki (2021) examines the involvement of political party elites in instigating electoral violence via proxies, frequently motivated by zero-sum competition and the absence of repercussions for electoral misconduct. This assertion corresponds with Birch et al. (2020), who argue that electoral violence is frequently intensified by informal political activities, like clientelism and ethnic mobilisation, which weaken formal legal structures. While Molikiemphasises the influence of elites, the literature on electoral corruption usually neglects the substantial role of military and security forces in electoral violence, especially in regional conflict zones. This gap indicates the necessity for research that extends beyond elites to encompass the wider political and security framework that underpins election violence.

Elite Mediation and Peacebuilding Mechanisms

The significance of elite-level mediation in alleviating election tensions has received considerable attention in the literature, with numerous studies examining peace deals as effective mechanisms for averting electoral violence. Election peace pacts have been

implemented worldwide in nations such as Kenya, Ghana, and Sierra Leone to ensure promises to non-violence, acceptance of electoral outcomes, and dependence on legal recourse for resolving disputes (Birch et al., 2020; Aning& Lartey, 2013). These studies demonstrate that when political leaders endorse peace deals, they can establish a moral consensus that promotes non-violent conduct. The efficacy of these agreements mostly hinges on the political resolve of the parties and the institutional capability to implement the conditions.

The National Peace Committee (NPC) has been pivotal to this strategy in Nigeria. Founded in 2014, the NPC facilitated peace settlements during the elections of 2015, 2019, and 2023, with the objective of mitigating electoral violence and advancing democratic norms. Researchers such as Birch et al. (2020) and Alao (2021) contend that the 2015 agreement between Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari was essential in facilitating a peaceful transfer of power, representing a pivotal point in Nigerian political history. Nonetheless, these studies primarily concentrate on the symbolic significance of peace treaties, without a thorough examination of the reasons these agreements fail to completely address the root causes of electoral violence. According to Moliki (2021), peace treaties may offer temporary respite but might become ineffectual if they lack legal binding or if elite interests perpetuate violent competition locally. The literature indicates that although the NPC is pivotal in facilitating peace dialogues, its efficacy is frequently compromised by structural political challenges, including inadequate enforcement mechanisms, regional power dynamics, and ethnic conflicts (Birch et al., 2020; Nigeria's Pursuit of Electoral Compliance, 2023). This necessitates a thorough examination of the intersection between the NPC's moral authority and Nigeria's political reality, especially concerning its capacity to impact local and state-level actors.

Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) and the NPC

The notion of Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) offers a crucial perspective for analysing the function of the NPC in Nigeria's electoral peacebuilding initiatives. Van Tongeren (2011, 2013) and the United Nations (2013) define I4P as a network of institutions and mechanisms aimed at preventing and resolving conflict, especially during high-risk periods like elections. This viewpoint emphasises the significance of multi-tiered peacebuilding that integrates national, regional, and local stakeholders in a collective endeavour to avert violence.

Ayika and Onwurah (2024) contend that the NPC serves as the principal federal peace entity in Nigeria, owing to its elite convening authority and its capacity to facilitate conversations among pivotal players, including INEC, political parties, and security services. Nonetheless, they observe that the NPC's absence of a legislative mandate constrains its efficacy. In contrast to statutory peace commissions in nations such as Ghana and Kenya, where national peace councils had explicit, legally delineated functions, the NPC's authority is solely moral.

The absence of institutionalisation results in the NPC's interventions being significantly dependent on the individual characteristics of its members and the prevailing political environment.Comparative analyses of Ghana's National Peace Council and Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission (Aning& Lartey, 2013; Odendaal, 2013) underscore the benefits of statutory peace mechanisms, which

typically exhibit greater decisiveness and possess more enduring frameworks for early warning, mediation, and conflict resolution. These examples indicate that for the NPC to enhance its efficacy, it must evolve from a moral entity into a more structured organization, connected to a comprehensive national peace framework that encompasses state-level institutions and community peace committees.

Theoretical Framework

The Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) hypothesis, formulated by Van Tongeren (2011) and endorsed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2013), characterises peacebuilding as a dynamic, multi-tiered system that encompasses both formal and informal methods for conflict prevention and resolution. The I4P framework, in contrast to conventional models centred on post-conflict recovery, prioritises the establishment of enduring peace structures that use proactive strategies, including early warning systems, mediation, and discussion, to tackle the fundamental causes of conflict. The theory asserts that peace is not simply the absence of violence, but rather the existence of cohesive mechanisms that reduce violence, especially during high-stakes political events like elections.

The I4P framework is especially pertinent in Nigeria due to the nation's history of electoral violence and political instability. The National Peace Committee (NPC), functioning as an informal peace infrastructure, is essential in settling electoral tensions and urging political actors to adhere to non-violence. In contrast to the statutory peace institutions in countries like Ghana and Kenya, the NPC does not possess a legal mission, so constraining its capacity to enforce peace agreements and hold violators accountable. This critique highlights a deficiency in the I4P framework: the necessity for formal institutional backing for informal procedures such as the NPC in unstable democracies, when the political system is susceptible to manipulation and violence. This paper expands the I4P theory by incorporating informal mechanisms, such as the NPC, into the overarching framework, positing that these mechanisms, albeit lacking formal authority, can effectively complement formal systems. In Nigeria, the NPC's ethical authority and its function in fostering discourse render it an essential intermediary between elite political figures and formal electoral institutions. To optimise the efficacy of informal peace methods, they must be systematically incorporated into the broader peacebuilding framework.

This theoretical extension is especially significant when analysing the NPC's involvement across many electoral cycles (2015, 2019, 2023). The study assesses the NPC's capacity to adapt and respond to election violence, taking into account its mandate, clarity of duty, collaboration with official peacebuilding entities (e.g., INEC, security agencies), and sustainability. The expanded I4P paradigm provides a thorough comprehension of how informal peace processes can enhance formal institutions, resulting in a more resilient and sustainable peace system within Nigeria's precarious democratic environment.

An incisive examination of the literature uncovers multiple deficiencies. Despite the abundance of research on electoral violence and technical innovations for enhancing election management, there is a deficiency of comprehensive, longitudinal analysis regarding the NPC's participation over various election cycles. Limited research has examined the evolution of the NPC's interventions across the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections, as well as the influence of alterations in political, institutional, and conflict dynamics on its efficacy. Moreover,

a significant portion of the existing literature is predominantly descriptive or advocacy-focused, exhibiting a rather constrained theoretical engagement with concepts such as Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) or preventive diplomacy. This paper fills these gaps by offering a longitudinal analysis of the NPC's role within the framework of I4P theory, emphasising its evolution, limitations, and possibilities for formalisation.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative desktop research methodology centred on secondary data to analyse the function of the National Peace Committee (NPC) in mitigating electoral tensions during Nigeria's general elections in 2015, 2019, and 2023. The research employs purposive sampling, choosing pertinent documents according to established inclusion criteria. The materials comprise NPC reports, post-election evaluations by INEC, international and local election observation reports, human rights records, and peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The sample comprises 20 NPC reports, 15 election observation reports, 10 human rights publications, and 25 scholarly works pertaining to electoral violence and peacebuilding. These sources were located through focused searches employing keywords such as “National Peace Committee Nigeria,” “electoral violence,” and “peace accord 2015/2019/2023” on institutional websites and scholarly databases.

The chosen documents underwent thematic analysis, utilising the Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) framework, with coding categories established both deductively and inductively from the content, concentrating on themes including mandate, coordination, and pressures on the NPC. Document analysis was selected because of the extensive available literature on the NPC's interventions and election violence, which can be systematically examined to address the study concerns (Bowen, 2009). The study's methodology is constrained by the lack of primary interviews with NPC members, political elites, or people, indicating that the results depend on pre-existing representations that may include institutional or political biases. The study establishes credibility by triangulating data from many sources, including NPC self-reports, observer data, and human rights reports, so augmenting the validity and reliability of the conclusions (Nowell et al., 2017). The selection and coding procedures are clearly delineated to guarantee a thorough and methodical investigation of the NPC's function in electoral dispute management over time.

Findings and Discussion

The study indicates that the National Peace Committee (NPC) was established as a vital reaction to the deadly post-election violence of 2011, which resulted in considerable fatalities and displacement in northern Nigeria, highlighting the severe repercussions of disputed elections and heightened political discourse (Human Rights Watch, 2011). In response, the NPC was established in 2014 as a distinguished forum of prominent elder statesmen to advocate for free and fair elections, supervise peace agreements, and mediate conflicts (National Peace Committee, 2020). This was a deliberate attempt to alleviate the escalating threats of election violence and to establish a moral framework for conflict settlement.

The 2015 election cycle marked the inaugural implementation of the NPC's peace accords, establishing its function in mitigating violence during elections times. The 2019 report emphasised the NPC's augmentation of peace accords and the broadening of their reach to encompass both campaigning and post-election

results. The NPC's intervention served as a confidence-building measure, as seen by the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM, 2019), which identified the NPC's role in orchestrating peace negotiations as a crucial advancement in promoting political stability. Nonetheless, the continued occurrence of vote-buying, intimidation, and intermittent violence indicated that these agreements, although beneficial, were inadequate in tackling the underlying causes of electoral discord (Angerbrandt, 2018; EU EOM, 2019). This conclusion indicates that the NPC's function, albeit essential, could not alter established political traditions, a constraint also observed in previous studies (Alao, 2021).

The theoretical implication is substantial: although the NPC's function corresponds with the Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) model, which conceptualises peacebuilding as a multi-tiered network (Van Tongeren, 2011), its failure to effectuate larger structural changes undermines the presumption that elite mediation can solely resolve systemic violence. The study emphasises that I4P theory must consider the limitations of informal peace institutions such as the NPC, especially in circumstances where electoral violence is entrenched and supported by political impunity.

The research indicates that the NPC's interventions progressed during the electoral cycles of 2015, 2019, and 2023. The 2015 intervention was predominantly based on a singular peace agreement among presidential contenders, emphasising non-violence and the acceptance of electoral outcomes. By 2019, the NPC's policy had developed to encompass two distinct accords: one prioritising peaceful campaigning and non-incitement, and the other underscoring legal recourse and respect for outcomes (National Peace Committee, 2020). This modification illustrates the NPC's educational evolution and its growing acknowledgement that electoral tranquillity necessitates a multifaceted strategy, involving local stakeholders and formal entities such as INEC and security organisations.

Notwithstanding this evolution, the 2019 elections continued to experience enduring electoral malfeasance, encompassing vote-buying, intimidation, and localised violence. The EU EOM (2019) emphasised that although the NPC's initiatives were beneficial, they failed to tackle the entrenched issues inside Nigeria's election system. This research emphasises that elite-level actions can alleviate acute tensions but are inadequate for resolving fundamental concerns, like weak electoral enforcement and political corruption. The results align with prior research regarding the constraints of elite-driven peace initiatives (Birch et al., 2020).

The 2023 elections challenged the NPC's moral authority due to extensive violence, including assaults on voters and media in critical states (Amnesty International, 2023). Notwithstanding its role in forging peace accords, the NPC encountered heightened pressure to engage directly in coalition and result-management disputes, despite its mission being primarily moral and advisory. The 2023 findings demonstrate a further constraint of the NPC: as an informal entity, its capacity for systemic intervention is restricted, despite its significant role in elite-level peacebuilding. The escalating public demand on the NPC to exceed its mandate underscores a structural deficiency in Nigeria's peacebuilding framework, a deficiency that I4P theory must rectify by integrating more institutionalised mechanisms of peace administration. The essential inquiry persists: can the NPC, notwithstanding its growth and moral legitimacy, genuinely alter electoral practices in Nigeria absent legislative

support or institutional enforcement capabilities? Evidence from 2015 to 2023 demonstrates that although the NPC serves a crucial intermediary function among political elites, it is incapable of independently addressing systemic electoral violence.

This study's findings enhance current research on elite peacebuilding and election violence, particularly in weak democracies such as Nigeria. Prior research, including Alao (2021) and Birch et al. (2020), underscores the significance of elite-level peace agreements in resolving election disputes. Nevertheless, these studies frequently neglect the constraints of such agreements in the context of deeply rooted electoral violence. This study's critical analysis reveals that although the NPC's actions, especially the peace accords, offer essential short-term relief, they do not address the underlying reasons of election violence, including clientelism, ethnic mobilisation, and institutional impunity.

This research, in contrast to other studies that emphasise the symbolic aspects of peace treaties (Alao, 2021), underscores the unfinished nature of the NPC's efforts and asserts that structural reforms are essential to enhance elite-driven peace initiatives. This position contests the hopeful perspective of elite peace treaties as the principal means for addressing political violence and advocates for a more comprehensive approach that incorporates formal peacebuilding entities, institutional reforms, and grassroots peace channels. This paper critically examines the NPC's participation in the 2015, 2019, and 2023 electoral cycles, offering a nuanced view of how elite-driven peace institutions, such as the NPC, might mitigate electoral violence but are insufficient to substitute for systemic reforms. The I4P framework is augmented to address the shortcomings of informal peace processes and underscores the necessity for institutional backing to reform the electoral system.

Conclusion

This study's findings affirm that the National Peace Committee (NPC) has become an essential element of Nigeria's informal peace framework, specifically aimed at tackling the entrenched problems of electoral violence that have afflicted the nation, especially following the post-election violence of 2011. The NPC has significantly contributed to moderating elite behaviour and facilitating peace agreements; however, it is clear that an informal entity, motivated by moral authority and devoid of formal enforcement capabilities, is inadequate for altering the institutional and political factors that fuel electoral conflict.

The research contests the prevailing notion in current literature that elite peace mechanisms, like the NPC, can independently mitigate electoral violence. Notwithstanding the peace accords and shuttle diplomacy orchestrated by the NPC, the ongoing prevalence of electoral malfeasance, such as vote-buying, intimidation, and hate speech, especially during the 2019 and 2023 elections, highlights the inadequacies of morality-based peacebuilding efforts in fragile democracies. The analysis indicates that the NPC's function should not be exaggerated as a replacement for comprehensive electoral reforms and must be institutionally grounded to successfully tackle the underlying causes of election violence.

The results offer conceptual and theoretical insights into the Infrastructures for Peace (I4P) framework, especially concerning the function of informal peace mechanisms in addressing electoral conflicts. The study enhances I4P theory by illustrating that although informal peace mechanisms such as the NPC are

essential, their absence of legislative authority and legal mandate renders them inadequate in tackling systematic electoral violence. This finding enhances the knowledge of how hybrid peace regimes, which combine elite-level peace channels with formal statutory frameworks, can significantly influence electoral politics in unstable states such as Nigeria.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, several recommendations are put forward to enhance the NPC's effectiveness in managing electoral tensions:

1. Strengthen Institutional Anchoring and Multi-Level Linkages: There is a need to formalize the NPC's advisory role and clarify its relationship with INEC, security agencies, and state-level peacebuilding structures. This could be achieved through legislation or formal agreements that give the NPC a more defined mandate while maintaining its moral authority. Drawing from experiences in countries like Ghana and Kenya, where peace councils are legally mandated and have multi-level linkages, Nigeria could build a more coherent peace infrastructure that integrates elite and grassroots mechanisms (Aning & Lartey, 2013; Odendaal, 2013).
2. Embed Peace Accords within a Broader Enforcement Framework: Peace accords should be more than symbolic gestures. They need to be linked to formal enforcement mechanisms, such as the strict application of electoral law and credible sanctions for violations. This would prevent repeated breaches of peace accords and ensure that violations carry visible consequences, reinforcing the NPC's moral authority and increasing the credibility of its interventions (Angerbrandt, 2018; National Peace Committee, 2024).
3. Deepen Engagement with Local Actors: The NPC should expand its engagement beyond national elites by working more closely with youth, women, grassroots peace activists, and local media to enhance its outreach in high-risk constituencies. This could involve supporting state-level peace committees, integrating community-based early warning systems, and promoting local peace narratives to counter divisive rhetoric. Such efforts would strengthen the multi-level nature of the peacebuilding process, which aligns with the I4P framework's vision of networked peace systems (Ayika&Onwurah, 2024; Van Tongeren, 2013).
4. Further Research: To complement this documentary-based study, field-based research is necessary, including interviews and focus groups with party agents, voters, victims of electoral violence, and local peacebuilders. This would provide a more grounded understanding of how the NPC's interventions are perceived at the community level and clarify the conditions under which it can most effectively contribute to the mitigation, containment, or transformation of electoral tensions.

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