



Politics, Violence, and Historical Change in Ekiti: A Study of Aramoko-Ekiti from the First Republic to the Fourth

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Abstract. From time immemorial, violence has manifested in various ways and has had a severe impact on human existence. Several aspects of human life, such as economy, infrastructure, and migration, are accompanied by violence, and political activities are not exempt. The peaceful conduct of elections is an indispensable component of democratic governance. However, the Nigerian electoral process has been marred by recurring incidents of political violence. Ekiti State, in particular, and Aramoko-Ekiti by extension, has witnessed significant episodes of political violence during the 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections. This article, which is of significant importance, employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and secondary sources, to gather data and investigate the causes and consequences of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. The article provides an analysis of the deep-rootedness of political violence, its causes, such as Ethnic and religious tensions, use of inflammatory language, fierce competition for resources and power among political actors. As a unit and focus of analysis, the Aramoko area in Ekiti is examined in the context of the political violence that erupted following the 2007 general elections and continued up to the 2023 general election. The article presents practical recommendations, including strengthening traditional institutions, robust voter education, and scaling up community security to prevent the repetitive pattern of political violence, particularly during electioneering periods.

Keywords: Violence, Resolution, Politicians, Political Violence, Ekiti

1. Introduction

The Nigerian political landscape has long been marred by violence, a pattern that dates back to the pre-independence era and the early years after independence in 1960. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, political activities have been characterized by intense power struggles and violent

clashes. Available statistics show that between 1999 and February 2003, over 10,000 lives were lost due to violent conflicts, while the Nigerian Red Cross helped resettle over 250,000 individuals and 32,000 families in 2001 alone because of political violence in that election year (Olukorede, 2002).

The fight for political power in Nigeria is often driven by economic interests, as those in power control the distribution of scarce resources (Dudley, 1973). This has fostered a culture where politics is viewed as a way to amass wealth, and those seeking power are often willing to pay a high price, sometimes resorting to violence. As Adeyemo (2000) observed, using violence in the power struggle has negative effects on the well-being of individuals and society as a whole.

In Nigeria, like other climes, the incidence of political violence has caused a series of divisions within families and communities and led to antagonisms among and within social groups. The country has witnessed numerous cases of political violence, including assassinations, bomb blasts, intimidation, murders, and destruction of property. The first notable act of political violence after independence was the Western Region political crisis, which accompanied the post-election period of the 1963 federal election, the event that eventually resulted in the first Nigerian military coup of January 1966, an ugly event which resulted in the assassination of key political leaders (Diamond, 1995). Since then, political violence has continued to plague the country. In the years following 2003, political violence has persisted, with various incidents of electoral violence, thuggery, and intimidation.

The 2019 general elections were no exception, marked by reports of violence, ballot snatching, and arson in some parts of the country. Among such communities affected by political violence is Aramoko-Ekiti, a historic town in the present-day Ekiti West Local Government Area of Ekiti State. This paper situates Aramoko within the wider political evolution of Ekiti and Southwestern Nigeria, using its experiences to

illuminate how violence and change have shaped both local society and the Nigerian federation.

2. Politics, Violence, and Historical Change in Nigeria, 1999–2019

Nigeria's return to democracy in May 1999 was greeted with optimism and relief. After decades of military rule marked by coups, decrees, and repression, the Fourth Republic promised a new era of constitutional governance and civic participation. Yet the years between 1999 and 2019 reveal that politics, violence, and historical change remained tightly intertwined. Elections widened political participation, but violence repeatedly disrupted democratic practice. Social grievances found expression in militant movements and insurgencies, while historical change unfolded through both democratic resilience and deepening insecurity.

From the outset, politics was shaped by the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Between 1999 and 2015, the PDP controlled the presidency and most state governments, presenting itself as the party of stability. Yet its rule was marred by electoral malpractice, corruption scandals, and persistent violence. The 2003 elections, for example, were marked by widespread irregularities and were widely condemned as among the most violent and flawed in Nigeria's history. Ballot-box snatching, intimidation of voters, and killings underscored the extent to which elections were treated as contests to be won at all costs. Electoral violence was a symptom of a deeper political culture where access to office was linked to access to wealth. For many elites, politics was not primarily about public service but about controlling state resources. The stakes were high, and competition often spilled into thuggery and bloodshed. Historical change in this period was therefore contradictory: democratic forms existed, but the substance of free choice was repeatedly undermined by violence and manipulation.

The 2011 elections brought both progress and tragedy. On the one hand, the election was hailed as the most credible poll since 1999, thanks to reforms implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the leadership of Attahiru Jega. On the other hand, the announcement of Goodluck Jonathan's victory triggered post-election violence in Northern states, leaving over eight hundred (800) people dead and displacing thousands of people. This episode revealed both the potential of Nigeria's democracy to improve and the dangers of unresolved sectional tensions. By 2015, Nigeria reached a critical turning point. The election that year produced the first-ever defeat of an incumbent president, as Muhammadu

Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) triumphed over Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. The peaceful transfer of power was hailed as a democratic milestone, signalling that Nigeria's politics could allow genuine competition and change. Yet even this landmark was shaped by violence. Boko Haram's attacks had intensified under Jonathan's presidency, and insecurity was a key factor that swung voters toward Buhari, a former general perceived as capable of restoring order.

By 2015, the Buhari administration inherited a country burdened with insecurity, corruption, and economic challenges. While the military succeeded in reclaiming much of the territory seized by Boko Haram, sporadic attacks continued, and new security threats emerged. Banditry in the Northwest and farmer–herder clashes in the Middle Belt escalated. Electoral violence also persisted. At the time of the 2019 general elections, though resulting in Buhari's re-election, they were marred by ballot-box snatching, voter suppression, and deaths in several states. Violence remained a recurring feature of political competition, even after two decades of civilian rule. Between 1999 and 2019, therefore, Nigeria's experience demonstrates the entanglement of politics, violence, and historical change. Politics provided opportunities for participation but also became a source of division and conflict. Violence erupted in multiple forms, namely, electoral, communal, insurgent, and criminal, reflecting both state weakness and elite manipulation.

3. The Historical Roots of Political Violence in Ekiti Land

Ekiti State was created from Ondo State on October 1, 1996, with Ado-Ekiti as its capital. Ekiti State is fully located within the Tropics. It is positioned between Longitudes 40° 51' and 50° 45'1" East of the Greenwich meridian and between latitudes 70° 15'1" and 80° 51" North of the Equator. The state borders Kwara and Kogi States to the north, Osun State to the west, and Ondo State to the east and south. Ekiti State comprises 16 Local Government Councils. According to the 2006 Census, the population was 2,384,212, with 1,215,487 males and 1,183,470 females (NPC gazette 2006).

However, far from being a recent issue, the violent nature of electoral competition in Ekiti has deep roots in the region's colonial and postcolonial history, influenced by party rivalries, institutional weaknesses, and the manipulation of local identities for political purposes. This history shows ongoing use of violence as a political tool, which later reemerged in the Fourth Republic.

During the colonial period, the Ekiti people were integrated into the Western Region under the administration of the British colonial state. As with other Yoruba-speaking areas, Ekiti became deeply involved in the nationalist struggles that culminated in Nigeria's independence in 1960. The emergence of modern political parties in the 1940s and 1950s created avenues for Ekiti elites to participate in the broader Yoruba political project. The Action Group (AG), led by Obafemi Awolowo, found a strong base in Ekiti due to its emphasis on free education, infrastructural development, and Yoruba unity (Coleman, 1958). For a state long known as "the fountain of knowledge" due to its literacy and educational achievements, the AG's policies resonated powerfully with Ekiti's intellectual and political consciousness.

Yet even in this formative period, competition between parties often generated violence. The AG's dominance was contested by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which sought to attract Yoruba voters outside the AG stronghold. In Ekiti towns, these rivalries sometimes translated into violent confrontations at rallies, ballot-snatching during elections, and clashes between rival youth groups (Sklar, 1963). These early patterns laid the foundation for the intertwining of politics and violence in the region.

The most notorious episode of violence in Western Nigerian politics was the crisis of the early 1960s, popularly known as "*Operation Wetiee*". This crisis was triggered by a bitter split within the AG, which fractured into rival factions aligned with Awolowo and Samuel Akintola, respectively. The resulting political tension engulfed much of the Western Region, including Ekiti towns such as Ado-Ekiti, Ikere, Ijero, Ikole, and Aramoko. Violence became widespread: ballot boxes were seized and destroyed, houses of opponents were burned, and political assassinations took place. The phrase *Wetiee*, which literally means "drench it" in petrol and set it on fire, captured the intensity of this violence, as properties were destroyed to punish political opponents (Suberu, 2007).

For Ekiti communities, *Wetiee* was more than a passing episode; it was a formative trauma that entrenched violence as a normalized feature of political contestation. Families displaced by arson, communities polarized by partisanship, and youths mobilized as instruments of violence all contributed to a collective memory that would resurface decades later. The failure of state institutions to mediate the crisis effectively, coupled with the collapse of trust in the electoral process, reinforced the perception that

politics was a zero-sum game where survival required force.

The collapse of the First Republic in 1966, partly precipitated by the violence in the Western Region, ushered in a long era of military rule. For Ekiti people, this period brought both respite and repression. On the one hand, the suspension of competitive politics temporarily reduced the violent clashes between rival parties. On the other hand, military authoritarianism suppressed political participation and weakened civil institutions, leaving unresolved the structural drivers of violence.

When the Second Republic was inaugurated in 1979, Ekiti once again became deeply involved in competitive politics. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), widely seen as the successor to the AG, regained dominance in the region. However, the same patterns of contestation and manipulation re-emerged. Elections were marred with irregularities, thuggery, and intimidation. In 1983, the general elections in the Western Region were widely condemned as fraudulent, leading to widespread violence, destruction of property, and loss of lives (Joseph, 1987). Ekiti towns, like other Yoruba communities, were drawn into this cycle, which culminated in another military coup led by General Muhammadu Buhari, in December 1983. Once again, the collapse of the republic revealed the fragility of Nigeria's democratic institutions and the resilience of violence as a tool of political struggle.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election remains one of the most defining moments in Nigeria's democratic history. The election, widely regarded as free and fair, was won by Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (M.K.O.) Abiola, a Yoruba businessman and philanthropist with deep support across the country. For Ekiti and other Yoruba communities, Abiola's victory represented both a regional triumph and a national hope for democratic renewal. The annulment by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida was therefore experienced as a profound betrayal. Protests erupted across the Southwest, including in Ekiti towns, where civil society organizations, students, and professional groups mobilized for the validation of the election. Violence accompanied these protests as security forces clamped down on demonstrators, leading to deaths, injuries, and widespread repression (Osaghae, 1998). For many in Ekiti, the annulment reinforced cynicism about state institutions and deepened the belief that political rights could only be secured through struggle, sometimes violent struggle. The eventual death of Alhaji Moshood Abiola in detention in 1998

intensified these sentiments but also galvanized the democratic movement. By the time the Fourth Republic was inaugurated in 1999, it would have been thought that democratic governance would abate the spate of political violence in Ekiti State and Nigeria at large, but as would be seen, this persisted in repeated experiences of political intrigues and violent outbursts.

4. Political Contests and Violence in Ekiti State, 1999-2019

The re-democratization of Nigeria in 1999 ushered Ekiti State, created only three years earlier in 1996, into the national political arena as one of the newest sub-national units. With a relatively homogenous Yoruba-speaking population, high literacy levels, and a reputation for political consciousness, Ekiti quickly emerged as one of the most hotly contested political landscapes in the Southwest. Electoral competition, however, was rarely peaceful. From 1999 to 2019, nearly every electoral cycle in Ekiti was marred by irregularities, violence, and disputes that frequently escalated into protracted legal battles. These episodes underscored both the intensity of party competition and the fragility of Nigeria's democratic institutions at the subnational level. The 1999 elections had placed the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the Yoruba-dominated successor to the pro-democracy movement, in power across the Southwest, including Ekiti. Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo, son of the Second Republic governor of old Ondo State, became Ekiti's first elected governor. His administration, however, soon faced criticism for aloofness, lack of grassroots connection, and limited infrastructural achievements (Adebanwi, 2008).

In the 2003 elections, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), then dominant at the national level under President Olusegun Obasanjo, launched a coordinated strategy to capture the Southwest. Ayodele Fayose, a relatively unknown but charismatic businessman, emerged as the PDP's candidate in Ekiti. Campaigning with the populist slogan of being "the man of the people," Fayose mobilized artisans, market women, and unemployed youths with promises of empowerment and visibility (Adelakun, 2014). The election was fiercely contested. Reports of ballot-box snatching, intimidation of voters, and violent clashes between party supporters were widespread (Usukuma, 2014). PDP thugs allegedly disrupted voting in opposition strongholds, while AD accused security agencies of complicity. Despite these irregularities, Fayose was declared the winner. His victory marked the collapse of AD control in Ekiti and was emblematic of the broader "PDP sweep" of the Southwest in 2003, except Lagos. The violent and

controversial nature of the election, however, left deep scars, planting seeds of mistrust that would haunt subsequent cycles.

Yet, if the 2003 elections revealed the vulnerability of Ekiti's emerging democracy, the 2007 elections exposed its deep-rooted fragility. The governorship race was between Segun Oni of the PDP and Kayode Fayemi of the Action Congress (AC), the rebranded opposition party. Oni, a technocrat, was widely seen as the candidate of the PDP establishment, while Fayemi, a civil society activist and scholar, campaigned as a reformist alternative (Omotola, 2010). The elections were heavily condemned as fraudulent. Ballot boxes were hijacked in several local governments, votes were inflated, and security forces were accused of siding with the PDP (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In Ekiti towns such as Ido-Osi, Oye, and Aramoko, violent clashes erupted between rival supporters. Properties were destroyed, thugs wielded dangerous weapons, and voters were intimidated at polling stations. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Oni the winner of the highly contested election, but Fayemi rejected the results, filing petitions at the electoral tribunal. The post-election violence reflected a dangerous nexus: political actors mobilized unemployed youths, supplied them with weapons, and used them to enforce electoral dominance. During this period, a popular slogan, "Rig and Roast," became prominent among supporters of Kayode Fayemi of the ACN. For many in Ekiti, especially in rural towns like Aramoko, elections were no longer seen as civic exercises but as battles where survival and loyalty were tested through violence. The period was so intense with the slogan "Rig and Roast," which more or less became an addictive chant among the youth, especially the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) faction. In fact, Aramoko not only became an epicentre of violence during this time but also was driven by intense political rivalry between two siblings vying for both the National Assembly and State House of Assembly seats, each under opposing parties, each trying every means to control the community's political soul. These events, in turn, led to serious political turmoil that continues to influence the town's political landscape to this day.

The legal contest between Fayemi and Oni dragged on for over three years, turning Ekiti into one of the most litigated states in Nigeria's democratic history. The Court of Appeal eventually nullified Oni's election and ordered reruns in selected local governments in 2009. These rerun elections became some of the most violent in the state's history. In the Ido-Osi local government area, thugs invaded polling stations, seized ballot boxes, and assaulted voters. Journalists and election

observers were attacked, and several people were reported killed in violent confrontations (Ayobolu, 2015). Aramoko and its environs also witnessed outbreaks of violence, as party loyalists clashed in attempts to secure an advantage in rerun areas. The militarization of the process, marked by heavy deployment of soldiers and police, did little to stem the violence; in some instances, security operatives were accused of colluding with politicians.

After a prolonged legal battle, Fayemi was finally declared the rightful winner in October 2010, more than three years after the original 2007 election. By then, the protracted conflict had polarized communities, entrenched political bitterness, and claimed numerous lives. The episode reinforced the perception that in Ekiti, elections were not simply about democratic choice but about existential struggles that could justify violence.

The 2014 governorship election represented another dramatic turn in Ekiti's volatile political trajectory. Fayemi, having governed since 2010, sought re-election under the All Progressives Congress (APC). His administration was credited with infrastructural improvements and policy reforms, but was criticized for elitism and failure to connect with grassroots concerns (Omilusi, 2016). Fayose, the ousted former governor, returned as the PDP candidate with his trademark populist style, promising to "bring government back to the people." The campaigns were intense. Fayose deployed street-level mobilization, engaging directly with market women, commercial motorcycle riders, popularly known as *Okada*, and artisans, contrasting this with Fayemi's intellectual style. Yet the election environment was heavily militarized. Thousands of soldiers, police, and Department of State Services (DSS) operatives were deployed, creating what critics described as a siege atmosphere (Ayobolu, 2015). APC leaders alleged harassment and detention of their members, while reports of ballot snatching and voter intimidation surfaced in some areas. Despite these controversies, Fayose won convincingly, defeating Fayemi in all the sixteen local government areas that made up Ekiti state by a wide margin. And heavy defeat that is popularly referred to as sixteen zero (16-0) among politicians. His victory was celebrated by supporters as a triumph of grassroots politics over elitism but condemned by opponents as the product of intimidation and manipulation. The heavy use of security forces became a recurring feature of Ekiti elections, raising questions about the line between democratic protection and authoritarian coercion.

The 2018 election further entrenched the pattern of contentious and violent politics in Ekiti. With Fayose constitutionally barred from seeking re-election, the PDP fielded his deputy, Kolapo Olusola-Eleka, while the APC re-presented Fayemi, seeking a comeback. The stakes were high, not only for Ekiti but also for national politics, as the election was seen as a test run for the 2019 general elections. The campaign period was marred by violent clashes between party supporters. Rallies were disrupted, party offices attacked, and sporadic shootings reported in towns such as Ikere, Ado, and Aramoko. On the eve of the election, Fayose dramatically claimed he was teargassed and brutalized by police, an incident that further polarized the political climate. On election day, reports of vote-buying, intimidation, and ballot-box snatching surfaced. The heavy presence of security operatives once again created a militarized environment. While some observers argued that this prevented large-scale violence, others noted that it suppressed opposition mobilization and tilted the field in favour of the ruling APC at the federal level. Fayemi emerged victorious, returning as governor. However, the election left lingering bitterness, with PDP supporters alleging that state power and coercion had determined the outcome.

5. The Aramoko-Ekiti Experience

Politically, Aramoko has been highly competitive, reflecting the broader currents of Ekiti State politics. In 1999, the AD secured strong support in the town, benefiting from its pro-democracy credentials and Yoruba nationalist appeal. By 2003, however, the PDP made significant inroads, leveraging national resources and the populist charisma of Fayose to win support among market women and youths. This shift was not without tension. Campaigns frequently escalated into violent clashes, with Aramoko's major junctions and motor parks becoming battlegrounds for rival supporters. During the 2007 and 2009 rerun elections, Aramoko again became a flashpoint. Rival parties established strongholds in different quarters of the town, and confrontations often occurred as thugs attempted to secure polling units. Reports indicated that ballot boxes were seized in parts of Aramoko during the rerun, while opposing groups exchanged gunfire in nearby villages (Ayobolu, 2015). For many residents, the experience of voting became inseparable from the fear of violence. As mentioned earlier, one major reason for the ugly incidents in the Nodal community was presumed to be because, the duo of Hon. Kehinde Odeunmi a renowned politician with state and national influence within the PDP bloc both in Ekiti state and Nigeria at large and his First cousin, Hon. Gbenga Odeunmi, a deeply loaded grassroots

politician, two siblings from the two opposing parties contested to the national assembly and state house of assembly respectively, the scenario extremely put the town on the climax of the political map of Ekiti as the one time peaceful community with absolute calmness lost it completely, with people of the town now sleeping with only one eyes closed due to the fear of eventualities.

The 2014 and 2018 elections reinforced these dynamics. Fayose's populist style resonated with traders and artisans in Aramoko, who felt alienated by Fayemi's more elite approach. Campaign rallies in the town drew massive crowds but also witnessed violent disruptions. In 2018, clashes between PDP and APC supporters around Aramoko's motor park left several injured. The heavy presence of security forces, while aimed at preventing escalation, often created further tension, as residents perceived the militarization of the town as both intimidating and partisan. Thus, Aramoko's political alignments were not static but shifted across electoral cycles. These shifts were shaped by a combination of economic grievances, populist appeals, and elite patronage. Yet the constant factor was violence, sometimes latent, sometimes overt, that accompanied every major election.

At the heart of Aramoko's political violence is the mobilization of youths. The town, like much of Ekiti, has a vibrant youth population, historically organized through age-grade associations (*egbe*) and community development unions. These institutions once served constructive purposes: mobilizing labor for communal projects, enforcing norms, and fostering social solidarity. In the democratic era, however, many of these structures were co-opted into partisan politics. Politicians provided money, alcohol, motorcycles, and weapons to youths, transforming them into instruments of intimidation. During elections, these youths were deployed to disrupt polling units, chase away opposition supporters, or protect ballot boxes for their patrons. After elections, many were abandoned, deepening cycles of poverty and resentment. The contradiction was stark: while democracy promised empowerment, in practice it reduced youths to expendable tools in the violent struggles of elites.

At the same time, Aramoko's educated youth played different roles. As one of Ekiti's historically literate communities, Aramoko produced teachers, civil servants, and professionals who were vocal in political debates. Many returned home during the elections to cast votes and influence opinion. These educated voices often resisted political thuggery, calling for transparency and good governance. Yet their influence was limited by the material power of politicians who

controlled resources and could mobilize unemployed youths more effectively. This duality, between civic-minded educated youth and disenfranchised, mobilized youth, captures the contradictions of democracy in Aramoko. It highlights how structural inequalities create divergent experiences of political participation within the same community.

Aramoko's traditional institutions, especially the palace of the Alara of Aramoko, have historically played central roles in community governance. The oba (king) and chiefs functioned as custodians of culture, mediators of disputes, and symbols of unity. In the past, these institutions commanded authority that could deter violence. However, the democratization process complicated their role. Politicians increasingly courted traditional rulers for endorsements, often dividing royal councils along partisan lines. In some cases, the Obas and the chiefs were accused of openly supporting candidates, undermining their neutrality. One of the case studies to support this claim was a dramatic situation that occurred in the aftermath of Fayemi's defeat in 2014, when members of ACN, in large numbers, protested at the palace with branches of leaf in their hands, an act considered an abomination in the community. Their outburst was said to be on the premise that the palace was used to coordinate the directions in which the election went in the community, by maligning the Kayode Fayemi-led administration, which led to widespread hatred for the ACN faction. This politicisation eroded their capacity to mediate impartially during violent disputes. In Aramoko, palace grounds that once symbolised communal unity occasionally became sites of protest or contestation during election seasons.

6. Causes and Patterns of Political Violence in Ekiti State

Ekiti State, recognized by the 1999 constitution, has a population of approximately 2.4 million people as of 2006, with a land area of 6,353 square kilometres (Ajibade 2015). The state is divided into 16 local government areas and has a relatively homogenous population of Ekiti-speaking Yoruba people. With a voter registration count of 733,766 (INEC 2007), the state has experienced its fair share of political violence. Political violence is a recurring issue in Nigeria, particularly in developing countries, where it has become an essential characteristic of the political process. Election rigging is a significant contributor to this violence, often fuelled by primordial sentiments like ethnicity and religion rather than ideological differences. Those seeking power may employ

violence, assassination, intimidation, and corrupt practices to achieve their goals.

In Ekiti State, notable incidents of political violence include the disputed governorship election in 2007 between Segun Oni and Kayode Fayemi, which led to violence, re-run elections, and a prolonged legal battle, and in addition to the legal battle was the equal representation of both parties at the state house of assembly which was also considered as a battle ground all through the time frame. In February 2009, the Election Tribunal, sitting at Ado-Ekiti, agreed with Fayemi and ordered Segun Oni to vacate the office of Governor, while Olatunji Odeyemi (the then speaker of the House of Assembly) became the Acting Governor. Also, the Court ordered the Independent National Election Commission (INEC) to conduct a re-run election within 90 days. And, April 25 2009, was declared by INEC as the Election re-run day for the areas affected by the Court's ruling.

While the people of Ekiti State prepared for the re-run election on the scheduled day, Ekiti State became a battleground, such that violence was everywhere. In the long run, the declared election result was 109,000 votes cast for Oni and 106,000 for Fayemi. Fayemi and the ACN rejected the results. Fayemi commenced the next turn of legal protest against the election results, which the Tribunal declared Oni won. Fayemi and the ACN headed to the Court of Appeal, sitting in Ilorin, and, finally, the Court declared Kayode Fayemi the winner on October 15, 2010, with the majority lawful votes- 105,631 as against 95,176. In the course of the battle over winners in Ekiti State, which led to several cases of re-run elections, a lot of people were maimed and killed, while properties were destroyed, especially in Ido-Osi and Oye Local Government Area, but ripples also manifested in Aramoko-Ekiti among political "loyalists". Before the election results were declared in favour of Fayemi, a lot of political violence was perpetrated. The tensions remained high in subsequent elections, with allegations of violence and intimidation up to the 2019 elections.

7. Tackling Political Violence in Aramoko-Ekiti

The persistence of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, as in wider Ekiti State, is not inevitable. It is the product of historical legacies, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and institutional weaknesses. Addressing it requires both a historical understanding of how violence became normalized and deliberate policy interventions to rechannel political participation toward peaceful ends. A major pathway is to restore the neutrality and authority of traditional

institutions. In Aramoko, the Alara of Aramoko and chiefs retain symbolic power that can unite the community. To reclaim this role, traditional rulers must deliberately distance themselves from partisan endorsements. Policy frameworks could support this by legally prohibiting monarchs from overt political involvement while empowering them as mediators during elections.

Another critical intervention is civic education. The recurring violence in Aramoko reflects not only elite manipulation but also limited understanding among some citizens of their rights and responsibilities. Civil society organizations, religious institutions, and schools can play vital roles in fostering a culture of peaceful participation. Educational campaigns should emphasize that elections are not wars but opportunities to express collective will. They should also provide practical guidance on resisting vote-buying, rejecting thuggery, and reporting electoral malpractice. In Aramoko's markets and schools, such campaigns could be conducted through dramas, town hall meetings, and radio programs in Yoruba, making them accessible to all.

Alongside civic education, stronger voter protection is necessary. INEC, in collaboration with security agencies, must ensure that polling stations in Aramoko are safe without being militarized. Transparent protocols for security deployment, monitored by observers and civil society, would reduce perceptions of partisanship and intimidation.

Any serious attempt to tackle political violence in Aramoko must confront youth unemployment. As long as large numbers of young people remain jobless, they will remain vulnerable to recruitment by politicians. Policy responses should therefore combine immediate opportunities with long-term structural reforms. At the local level, initiatives such as vocational training centers, microcredit schemes, and cooperative societies could provide youths with economic alternatives. State-level policies could prioritize agro-industrial development in Ekiti West LGA, capitalizing on the town's agricultural heritage. By linking cocoa, cassava, and pepper farming to processing industries, more sustainable jobs could be created for Aramoko's youth.

Reforming security practices is also crucial. The heavy-handed militarization of Aramoko during elections, as seen in 2014 and 2018, undermines trust and sometimes fuels violence. Security agencies must be trained in impartial crowd control, human rights standards, and community engagement. Accountability mechanisms should be strengthened.

Citizens in Aramoko should have access to complaint channels when security operatives engage in harassment or collusion. Civil society observers could monitor deployments and publish independent reports on security conduct. Over time, this would help rebuild trust between the community and the state.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, political violence in Ekiti State is both a nexus of electoral competition and an expression of broader struggles over legitimacy, authority, and access to power. Elections provide the flashpoints, but the underlying issues, such as weak institutions, elite rivalries, and winner-takes-all politics, ensure that violence spills beyond the ballot box. Historically, this cycle has shaped the state's reputation, showing that in Ekiti, politics and violence are intertwined not only during elections but throughout the life of democratic governance. By and large, the study of Aramoko-Ekiti underscores the fact that political violence is not merely an abstract national issue but a lived reality across political entities and units in Nigeria.

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