

Mitigating Election Violence and Intimidation: A Political Stakeholder Engagement Approach

Abstract

Political parties and candidates are key stakeholders in the election process. They compete for public office using campaigns through party-based platforms to convince electorates for their votes. Thus, parties and candidates could potentially be destructive in the election process. Drawing on the stakeholder theory and stakeholder engagement literature, this paper develops a political stakeholder engagement framework to create, communicate, deliver and exchange sustainable political strategies to political stakeholders to mitigate election violence and intimidation. The paper outlines a definition, the process of political stakeholder engagement and the application of the developed framework to the fiercely contested US 2016 presidential election. The analysis and lessons from the US case suggests the importance of the political stakeholder engagement process as an integral part of sustainable election governance.

Highlights

- Political parties and their candidates could potentially be destructive during elections through strategic election violence
- Mitigating strategic election violence and intimidation through a political stakeholder engagement approach using the US presidential elections 2016
- Conceptualisation and definition of a political stakeholder engagement approach
- Development of a framework for political stakeholder engagement process

Key words: Stakeholder theory, strategic election violence, political stakeholder engagement

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to apply the stakeholder engagement framework focusing on political parties and their candidates to develop a political stakeholder engagement framework which will assist political parties and candidates to create, communicate, deliver and exchange sustainable political strategies and tactics to their different stakeholders and communities as part of the process to pursue violence free elections from 2016 and beyond. Globally, increasingly majority of elections are vulnerable to violence and intimidation; hence, the failure of elections to contribute to stability (Danida, 2009; Eisa, 2009). There are different motivations that lead to election violence. This stems partly from the motivation of political parties and candidates to hold on to power or win the elections at all cost (Muyomba-Tamale, 2015). Vulnerability to violence could also be linked to electoral corrupt practices, lack of appropriate constitutional legislative, technical problems, old intra and inter community tensions, acrimony amongst political stakeholders, lack of trust in institutions and electoral systems and constraints due to the adaptive capacity of poverty and socioeconomic development in some countries (Hafner-Buton et al, 2014; Mueller, 2011; Brancati and Snyder, 2011).

Although research has focused on election violence and intimidation, this is mostly based on post elections violence, during and after the elections on the general populace (Brancati and Snyder, 2013; Daxecker, 2012; Flores and Nooruddin, 2012; Tucker, 2007). The preventive actions for mitigating election are numerous which ranges from political and diplomatic, legal and constitutional, economic and social and military/security tools (Long et al, 2013; Cheeseman et al. 2014). Further, innovative electoral administration, such as the inclusive electoral governance structures in which the election management bodies consult and collaborate with political parties to provide incentives for peaceful elections are used (Orji, 2017). Most of these mitigation strategies of election violence include activities such as peace

agreements, internationally supervised or verified elections and NGOs engaging in election monitoring and supporting roles (Claes, 2015) with little focus on pre-election violence by political parties and candidates. However, there is limited research on the causes, outcome and mitigation strategies of pre-election violence even, though extant literature demonstrates that a majority of electoral violence emanates from pre-election violence (Daxecker, 2013).

Further, the majority of the intervention for mitigating election violence involves short term crisis management and a stakeholder management approach which is geared towards the general populace rather than the political parties and candidates who could be the real culprits to incite the general populace, especially in strategic election violence. Although some of these short term prevention approaches works, there is the need for long-term investments in sustainable preventative approaches in pre-election strategic violence to address the risk of violence across election cycles (Claes, 2016). In the light of this, sustainable mitigation of election violence is a key priority for the future of violence free elections. There is the need, therefore, to extend the limited present policies and research on mitigating election violence to developing sustainable interventions to reduce vulnerability and long-term mitigation (Orji, 2017).

Engaging stakeholders in the process of mitigation and implementing interventions is widely regarded a crucial factor for sustainable election mitigation (Muyomba-Tamale, 2015). It has been suggested that engaging political stakeholder leads to more effective, equitable, relevant, and credible violence reduction outcomes (Muyomba-Tamale, 2015; Orji, 2017). Stakeholder engagement is an emerging concept in CSR and Sustainability as a means to develop a broader inclusive public participation process. Governments and political parties and candidates have to engage with a wide range of stakeholder groups with their concerns, needs, conflicts, interest

and influence. Stakeholder engagement process has the potential to improve communication, obtain wider support, gather useful data and ideas, serve as a social learning to develop social capital, improve reputation and provide a sustainable decision making and effective implementation of political strategies (Mathur et al. 2008).

The importance of political stakeholder engagement, therefore, as the central principle of policy development, decision making, social learning and social capital development cannot be overemphasised. Working with stakeholders directly presents the opportunity to explore and demonstrate effective engagement with different stakeholder groups and to learn effective measures to strengthen the interface between political parties and candidates, their key stakeholders through educating, informing and communicating. In recent times, there are calls to engage stakeholders during the electoral process, for example, the UNDP work in Lesotho revealed that engaging stakeholders across a broad spectrum are critical to ensuring peaceful and credible elections (Muyomba –Tamale, 2015). On the issue of management of violence ahead of the 2016 election in Uganda, the electoral commission chairman Bradu Kiggundu identified stakeholder engagement as one of the ways the commission is trying to mitigate election violence (Ntambirweki & Jones, 2016).

The engagement of stakeholders in different forms has been effective in contributing to the mitigation of election violence in some countries. For example, in Lesotho, the continuous engagement and constructive dialogue by EU election observers/UNDP before and during the election process in 2012 contributed to a peaceful election. Sri Lanka emerged from 25 years of civil war into a fragile peace; however, political violence continued during the election process which is often exacerbated by unresolved post-war issues, ethnic tensions and intense political rivalry. Further, the clear absence of legitimate accountability for war time abuses and

the erosion of judicial independence contributes to the culture of violence (GNDERM, n.d.). Civil society actors such as the PAFFREL has employed stakeholder engagement as one of the broader impact mitigation of election violence since 2001 through the APOU (All parties' operations units) initiative. PAFFREL's APOU initiative has been adopted by the Election Commission to engage political parties to foster information sharing amongst parties, election commission, the police, civil society enabling coordinated rapid response to violence and other incidents. This has been successful to facilitate more inter-party open dialogue, direct communication, mediation and rapid incident response among political actors (GNDERM, n.d.).

Despite this, there is limited literature on how best to engage political parties and candidates stakeholders in the mitigation of election violence. This paper contributes through focusing on mitigating strategies in pre-election violence, focusing on political parties and candidates who are often neglected in the extant literature on violence mitigation as the first tier engagement to develop, consult, deliver and communicate strategies with other stakeholders in a second tier engagement process. This paper makes distinct contributions to the strategic electoral violence and political stakeholder engagement literature. First, I conceptualised the definition of political stakeholders and political stakeholder engagement. I then defined election violence, explored the types of election violence and identified strategic violence as the type of violence perpetuated by political party and candidates. Secondly, to mitigate strategic election violence, this paper adapted the stakeholder engagement approach and developed a framework for mitigating pre-election strategic violence focusing on political parties and candidates in pre elections. Using the stakeholder theory and analysis, I identified the type of stakeholders and level of expectation and influence in the election violence. The stakeholder analysis portrayed political parties and candidates as stakeholders with the most expectation and influence in pre-

election strategic violence which is often neglected in election mitigation strategies. Further, through the stakeholder engagement analysis, I identified the relevant stakeholder engagement approach of partnership shared accountability and responsibility involving learning, making decision making and drawing up actions with responsibility as the appropriate approach for mitigating pre strategic election violence. The stakeholder engagement framework was applied to the US 2016 to illustrate the benefits of the framework to mitigating election violence and intimidation.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows, the first part defines election violence and the types, followed by the definition of political stakeholder and stakeholder analysis. The second part focuses on the definition of political stakeholder engagement and the development of a political stakeholder engagement framework for mitigating strategic election violence using the US election convention to illustrate. The final part is the conclusion and contribution to knowledge.

2. Defining Election Violence

Election violence can be conceptualised as a form of manipulation before, during and after elections (Daxcecter, 2013). The relationship between elections and violence have not received much research attention until recently. Further, the causes and outcomes of election violence can be assessed based on when and where it happens; hence, pre, during and post-election violence. Thus, the electoral process which gives people the right to govern themselves is challenged by threats to security, peace and development and a huge cost to the country (Frimpong, 2012). There are several causes of election violence and table 1 below details the various causes of electoral violence, with examples of where, the ways it happens, the extent of violence and the level of prevention tools used to mitigate electoral violence.

Table 1 Causes and Preventative tools of Election Violence

Causes of Electoral Violence	Examples of electoral violence of when and where	Forms and extent of violence	Tools of Prevention	Forms/Activities
Political parties and candidate's attitude to win or hold on to power	US 1968 Democratic convention; US 2016 Presidential election	Election Mal practices- stuffed ballot boxes, manipulation of voters register, missing ballot boxes, violence and intimidation of voters (Muyomba –Tamale, 2015) (Orji, 2017)	Political/diplomatic tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation • Dispute resolution mechanisms • Good offices • Crisis management systems • Political assistance 	Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public diplomacy/pressure • Recognition/normalization • Threat/use of diplomatic sanctions • Fact-finding/observer missions
Electoral corrupt practices	Nigeria 2011 presidential elections	Riots, 41 people injured in clashes between protesters and police. Attacking polling stations and disrupted voting in the town of Bouria (Bai et al. 2015).	Legal/constitutional tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional reform • Formal power sharing mechanisms • Human rights monitoring 	• Police, judiciary, corrections assistance/training/reform
Technical problems		Bloody civil war midway through the election cycle	Economic/social tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict-sensitive development assistance • Intergroup dialogue • Restrictions on illicit financial flows 	• Conditional incentives/inducements (debt relief, trade preferences, investment)
Improper institutionalization of political systems	Algeria 2014 April	800 Hundred people killed in politically motivated communal and sectarian violence ahead of presidential and parliamentary polls (Orji, 2017)	Military/security tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security guarantees • Confidence-building measures • Security sector reform • Military observer missions 	• Arms embargos
Lack of appropriate constitutional legislative	Uganda 2010 primaries and 2011 general elections-	Over 500 petitions filed for lack of trust in the electoral system		• Preventive military/police deployment
Colonialism	Sri Lanka			• Threat of force/deterrence
Old intra and inter community tensions	Sudan 2013-			
Acrimony amongst political stakeholders	US 1968 Democratic convention; 2016 Nigeria 2011 Presidential election-primaries and 2011 general elections- Uganda 2010			
Lack of trust in institutions and electoral systems	Kenya, August 2017	Riots and 2 people killed on the 9 th August in Kenya (CNN, 2017)		
Socioeconomic development constraints & Poverty	Bangladesh, 5 th January parliamentary and February 19 to March 31 district elections 2014	Homicide, property destruction, and even mass casualties and displacement (Bai et al. 2015)	Political Stakeholder engagement tools <i>RQ What are the constituents of the political stakeholder engagement approach?</i>	<i>What are the forms and activities involved?</i>

From the various causes, I categorised election violence into two main types: strategic and accidental. Strategic electoral violence is pre-planned and handled in a systematic approach which may involve parties and their candidates to affect the outcome of an election to ensure a party or a candidate wins the election (Burchard, 2016; Daxcecter, 2013; Höglund, 2009.). Incidental violence on the other is not planned, mostly circumstantial and violence erupts due to frustration based on inadequate systems and structure, inter and intra tensions, clashes between protesters, overzealous security forces, or supporters of opposing candidates or parties and the outcomes of an election. Examples are the 2012 elections in Senegal and 2016 elections in Niger. Although the two types of violence are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive and, different forms of interventions may be required to address these types of violence (Burchard, 2016).

In this paper, I focus on strategic electoral violence. This type of violence is manifested in several ways, such as insults, hate speeches, defamation of character, physical assaults, arsons, snatching of ballot boxes and even murder. Parties and their candidates could potentially be destructive in the election process through illegal practices of buying votes, corrupt behaviours, intimidation by party members, defamation and hate speeches in campaigns, and the exclusion of non-partisan sectors of the society which leads to violence and intimidation in the electoral process (Bratton, 2008; LeBas, 2006; Wilkinson, 2004.). For example, in Nigeria the 2011 elections had democratic quality at the polls, but, it was the worst violent election history the country has ever witnessed (Claes, 2015). Another example is the level of violence and even death in the Venezuelan election campaign process which led to the killing of an opposition activist in 2015 (Sagarzazu & Yang, 2015). The 2016 USA election campaign was the most unpleasant campaign in the US election history fraught with allegations of high-level corruption, sexual assault, hate messages, vote rigging and protest demonstrations immediately

after the elections which have never happened in the USA since 1800 (The Washington Post, 2016).

Whilst electoral violence is common, it is not tolerated. Over the years, several intervention approaches to mitigate the election violence have been purported which includes: legislations, UN resolutions or peace agreements, internationally supervised or verified elections and NGOs engaging in election monitoring and supporting roles (Claes, 2015) and bipartisanship dinners in developed economies; however, the root causes of election violence still persist (Mueller, 2011). The majority of the roles played by many of these organisations is mainly supporting roles to political parties, independent election commissions and local NGOs, but to date, these alone, have not been effective in minimising election violence in the long term (ref). Increasingly, there is the awareness that election is a process consisting of three phases: pre-election, election voting day and post-election voting day. Thus, any mitigating interventions must address all these phases of elections to practically reduce violence (Claes, 2016; Strauss and Taylor, 2012). Extant literature clearly states that mitigating election violence should not just be a support which includes trained election officials and vote tabulation software on voting day, but pre-election strategies to mitigate strategic violence (Claes, 2016) which includes the development of 'social interventions' with all key stakeholders, particularly civil society components (Danida, 2009). However, we still find that majority of the preparation made is towards Election Day; even though, there is evidence to show that most violence occurs prior to elections (Strauss and Taylor, 2012).

Prevention of violence on the day of elections is not an absolute guarantee of free and fair elections and neither a guarantee of democratic quality and election security (Daxcecter, 2013). Hence, the importance of sustainable mitigating interventions involving stakeholders is critical.

3. Defining Political Stakeholders

Stakeholders have been defined in many different ways in the literature without much consensus. There have been major debates about the theory over the years, especially during the 1990s with different authors providing different views about the theory; however, it remains a key framework for identifying different interest and power of stakeholders. For example, Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as any organisation or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives. Defining political stakeholders comes with its challenges from developing an academically vigorous concept with practical implementation to politics. The new definition must also co-exist with the numerous definitions of a stakeholder with a focus on politics. To ensure the rigorous nature of the definition, I examined the different types of political stakeholders, their power, legitimacy and urgency. Political stakeholders are divided into two main groups, national and international stakeholders (Holtbrugge, Berg & Puck, 2007). National stakeholders focus on the interest and well-being of a nation such as state governments, local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), central government, political parties and candidates. International stakeholders are multinational in nature and operate with delegated authorities of member states, and are predominantly supranational. Examples of these types of stakeholders are United Nations International Monetary Fund and trade organisations. This paper focused on national stakeholders with attention on the interest and well-being of a nation. I note that within a nation, there are several political stakeholders (see figure 1). Based on the definition of stakeholders,

the types and characteristics of political stakeholders, I define a political stakeholder in this paper, as an individual or group (political party) who has an interest or stake in the government or public affairs of a country and can affect or be affected by the achievements of the government or affairs of the country.

Any approach to mitigating election violence and intimidation should, therefore, target the different individuals and groups of political stakeholders depending on the level of risk they pose within a particular election context. Models for mitigating violence may be considered in terms of population segments of a particular context which may include the general public, political elites and likely perpetrators (Claes, 2015). This study focused on stakeholders of political elites and likely perpetrators in the mitigation of election violence, specifically on the party in power, opposition parties and their candidates and other stakeholders.

4. Political Stakeholders Engagement

In the past, election interventions have been mainly crisis management with a more reactive approach. However, over half a century now, most of the election interventions are mostly preventative in nature resulting from two sequential dynamics: the revival of preventive action as an aspirational norm in the peacebuilding field in the 1990's, and the growing characterisation of elections as a process as opposed to an event (Claes, 2015). Stakeholder management focuses on a proactive approach towards the general populace rather than the political parties and candidates. In this paper, I focused on stakeholder engagement approach as a mitigation for strategic election, which focuses on bilateral and tri-partisan approaches with the awareness to change Table 2 shows the different characteristics of stakeholder theory in relation to election intervention approaches.

Table 2 characteristics of stakeholder election intervention approaches

Crisis Management	Stakeholders Management	Stakeholders Engagement
Reactive	Proactive	Interactive
Vulnerable	Anticipate	Encourage
Episodic	Regular	Inclusive
Hostile	Defensive	Prepared to Change

Source: Jeffrey (2009).

Stakeholder engagement has been defined in various ways with reference to particular schools of thought in relation to performance, change and sustainability (Lorne & Dilling, 2012; Jeffrey, 2009). It has been defined as a process leading to a positive outcome of an initiative or a project (Jeffrey, 2009). Presently, stakeholders' engagement has gone beyond just the achievement of outcomes to a more inclusive and continuous process using different approaches throughout projects (IFC, 2007; Jeffrey, 2009; Lorne and Dilling, 2012). Therefore, to define political stakeholder engagement in this paper was based on three key criteria. First, the political stakeholder definition I conceptualised, secondly, the intervention of election violence as a process (Claes, 2015) rather than an event, and finally, the current definition of stakeholder engagement as a more inclusive and continuous process to bring about change (IFC, 2007; Jeffrey, 2009; Lorne and Dilling, 2012). Therefore, in this paper, I define political stakeholder engagement as a process of continuous inclusive engagement, encompassing a range of activities and approaches between political elites and those potentially impacted upon during the life span of a political initiative or project with the aim of building a better relationship to bring about change to improve performance, peace and security. The fundamental assumption of this political stakeholder engagement definition, therefore, is to

build better relationships with stakeholders in the country which can lead to peace, security and performance of a country. There are different engagement approaches to engage political stakeholders; however, to select appropriate and cost effective approaches, it is imperative that a stakeholder analysis is first conducted to identify the potential political stakeholders, their power and influence on the election mitigation process.

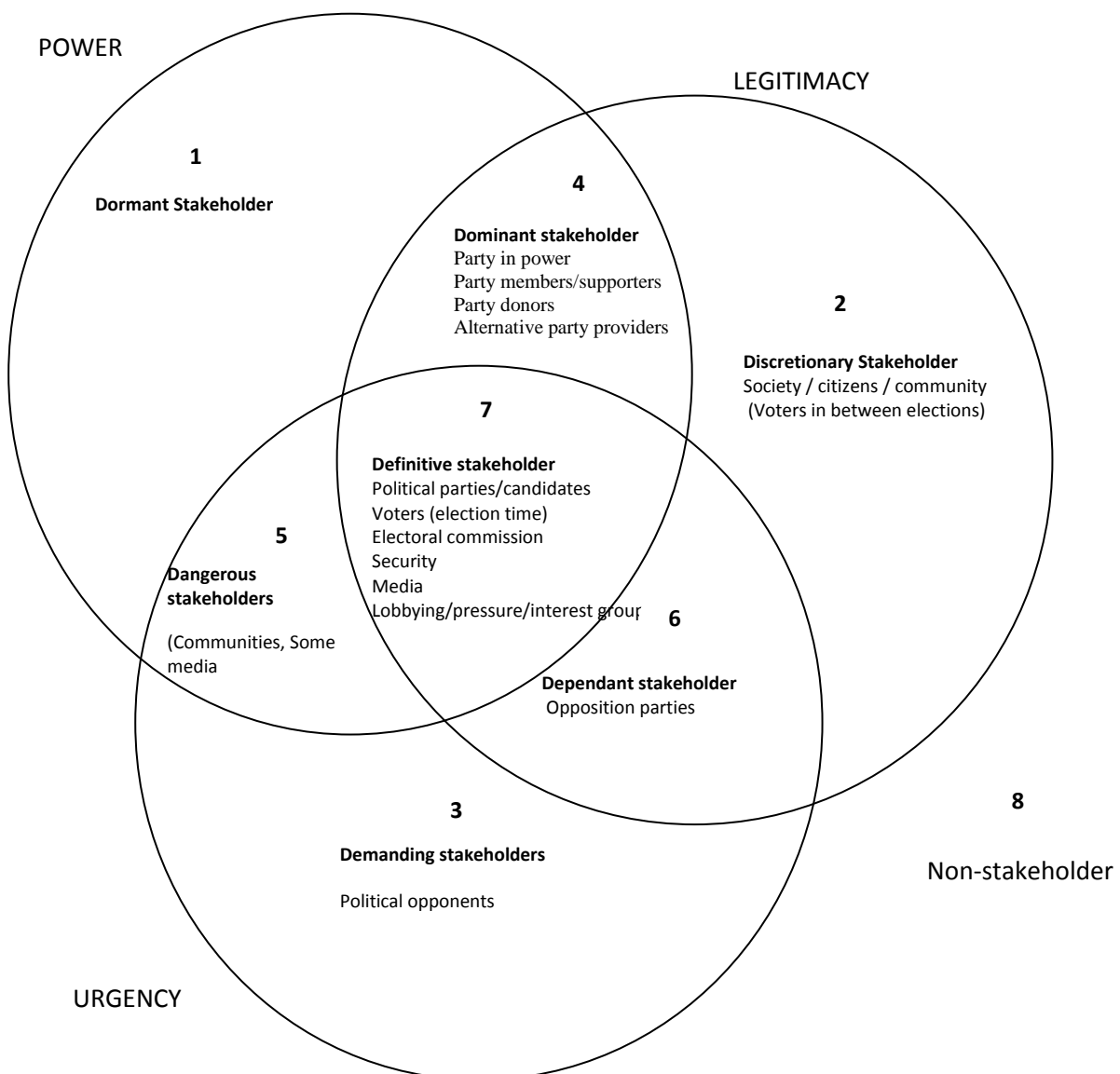
4.1 Political stakeholder analysis

In developing a sustainable political engagement framework, the identification of the stakeholders is a critical part before the engagement plan is developed in consultation with stakeholders. This is important because each political stakeholder has its own interest and power (Bal et al. 2013; Mitchell et al., 1997). The stakeholder analysis theory was used to analyse and understand the level of interest and power of the political stakeholders. There are several stakeholders' analysis tools but, in this paper, I adopted Mitchell et al. (1997) stakeholder salience theory to analyse the political stakeholders. They identified three main criteria for selection of stakeholders: power, legitimacy and urgency called stakeholder salience. Power (ability to influence the firm) a relationship among social actors in which one actor, A, can get another actor, B, to do something that B would not have otherwise done. Legitimacy (the legitimacy of the stakeholder relationship with the firm) is a generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, definitions. Urgency (urgency of the stakeholder's claim on the firm, the degree criticality and time sensitivity) the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate action (Mitchell et al. 1997 p. 869).

To determine the influential political stakeholders depends on attention to various classes of stakeholders, the perception of salience and the identification of stakeholders based on the

possession of one, two or all three of the attributes. The political stakeholders were divided into seven categories based on the combination of the various attributes perceived to be present in three groups: latent, expectant and definitive. Using these categories I conducted a stakeholder analysis to identify the various types of political stakeholders (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Political Stakeholder analysis



The latent group possesses one attribute: (1) Dormant stakeholders who possess the power to impose their will but, do not have any legitimate relationship or urgent claim and their power remain unused. In the political stakeholder analysis, there were no stakeholders identified. (2) Discretionary political stakeholders (society, citizens and voters in between elections) possess legitimacy but, have no power or urgent claims if there was no election, therefore there is no absolute pressure for government, political parties in power and candidates to engage in an active relationship however, they may choose to do so, for future election opportunities; (3) Demanding stakeholders (political opponents) have urgent claim but, no power or legitimate relationship and warrant a minimal government and candidates attention. The expectant group possess two attributes: (4) Dominant stakeholders (party in power, party members/supporters, party donors, alternative party providers) have power and legitimacy and therefore their actions bother government and other stakeholders; (5) Dangerous stakeholders (some communities and media companies/individuals) possess power and urgency but have no legitimacy, they are coercive and risk of being violent hence, dangerous; (6) Dependent stakeholders (opposition parties) possess legitimacy and urgency but, have no power, therefore, they depend on others for power to carry out their will. The definitive group possesses all three of the attributes: (7) Definitive stakeholders (Political parties/candidates, voters (election time), electoral commission, media, security and lobbyist/pressure/interest groups) have power and legitimacy, they are normally part of organisation's dominant coalition and therefore if their claim(s) is urgent, would be given priority. Using Mitchel et al. (1997) criteria, the following stakeholders were identified as the main political stakeholders (see figure 1) political parties/candidates, voters (election time), the electoral commission, Lobbying/pressure/interest groups and the media are the definitive stakeholders during the election process. Preventative measures have always focused on the voters, media whilst the political parties and candidates are not often

targeted. Based on this stakeholders' analysis, an engagement framework for political parties and candidates is delineated.

3.2 The political stakeholders' engagement framework

Increasingly, stakeholder engagement has become important to many projects and business performance. In extant literature, stakeholder engagement has been conceptualised from different perspectives: strategic management and ethical perspectives which are usually linked to sustainability and social learning perspective seldom employed (Mathur et al. 2008). Although, existing stakeholder engagement practices normally use the strategic management approach and sometimes, the ethical perspective; in this paper, all the three perspectives were deemed important and were employed to develop the political stakeholder engagement sustainable framework.

The strategic management perspective will, therefore, assist the stakeholders to capture knowledge, increase ownerships of the mitigating election violence project, reduce conflict, and encourage innovation and facilitation of spin-off-partnerships in the second tier engagement process. The ethical perspective will facilitate inclusive national and local decision making between stakeholders, promote equity and the development of social capital amongst the political stakeholders. The social learning perspective is a critical social process through which diverse political stakeholders will share a common forum to learn and reflect on each other's values, develop shared vision and objectives on mitigating election violence and using dialogue oriented approach to increase awareness, change attitudes and affect behaviours in both the first and second tiers of engagement (Mathur et al. 2008; Bal et al. 2013).

A well-managed process of political stakeholders' engagement will assist the political parties and candidates to develop strategies to improve the election process and reduce the incidence of strategic violence. Therefore, political stakeholder engagement should form a core element of a sustainable plan to mitigate election violence in the election process since it considers the expectations of stakeholders and endeavours to meet their needs (Bal et al. 2013). There are different types of engagement approaches and strategies depending on the level of interest and influence of the stakeholders (see table 3 below). Choosing the right approach is important in developing meaningful stakeholder engagement process (stakeholdermap.com, n.d., IFC, 2007).

Table 3 Types of Stakeholder's Engagement and level of interest and influence

Type	Description	Engagement Linkage	Number of stakeholders	Level of interest/Influence	Level of Effort
Partnership	Shared accountability and responsibility involving learning, making decision making and drawing up actions with responsibility.	Two-way Full responsibility	Few	High interest/influence	Greatest
Participation	Involved in the delivering of a task as part of a team	Two-way within limits of responsibility	Few	High influence /low interest	Greater
Consultation	A question and answer process where organisations ask questions and stakeholders answer.	Two-way Limited responsibility	Moderate	High interest /low influence	Great
Push Communication	Broadcasting information to target stakeholder group through emails, podcast, videos, leaflet, and websites.	One-way Information is sent to stakeholders	Many	Low interest / influence	Less
Pull Communication	Information is made available and stakeholders decide to access information	One-way Stakeholder's decision to access information	Many	Low interest / influence	Least

From the stakeholder analysis, political parties and candidates are key players; hence, the two-way partnership approach is most suitable for these stakeholders as a first tier engagement

process. Partnership and collaboration process accords shared accountability, decision making, learning and responsible and fair actions (IFC, 2007). It is proposed that political parties and their candidates develop a first tier stakeholder engagement partnership together, which will involve a two-way engagement approach of learning, decision making and actions to create and deliver strategies to prevent strategic election violence. Building partnerships with political elite stakeholders are critical to developing strategies to manage risks and opportunities in the political election process. In addition, a second tier stakeholder engagement involving consultation with other key stakeholders in the election is adopted during the consultation and implementation stage

Political parties and candidates are key stakeholders in the election process as they compete for public office using campaigns through party-based platforms to convince electorates for their votes. Thus, parties and candidates could potentially be destructive in the election process through illegal practices of buying votes, corrupt behaviours, intimidation by party members, defamation and hate speeches in campaigns, and the exclusion of non-partisan sectors of the society which leads to strategic violence and intimidation in the electoral process. Therefore, developing meaningful engagement process from pre to post election process between the parties and candidates a first tier engagement is very vital to achieving meaningful peace, security and stability in the forthcoming elections. The development of a political stakeholders' engagement process is based on certain critical guiding principles for success as outlined in table 4 below.

Table 4 Guiding principles of political stakeholder engagement

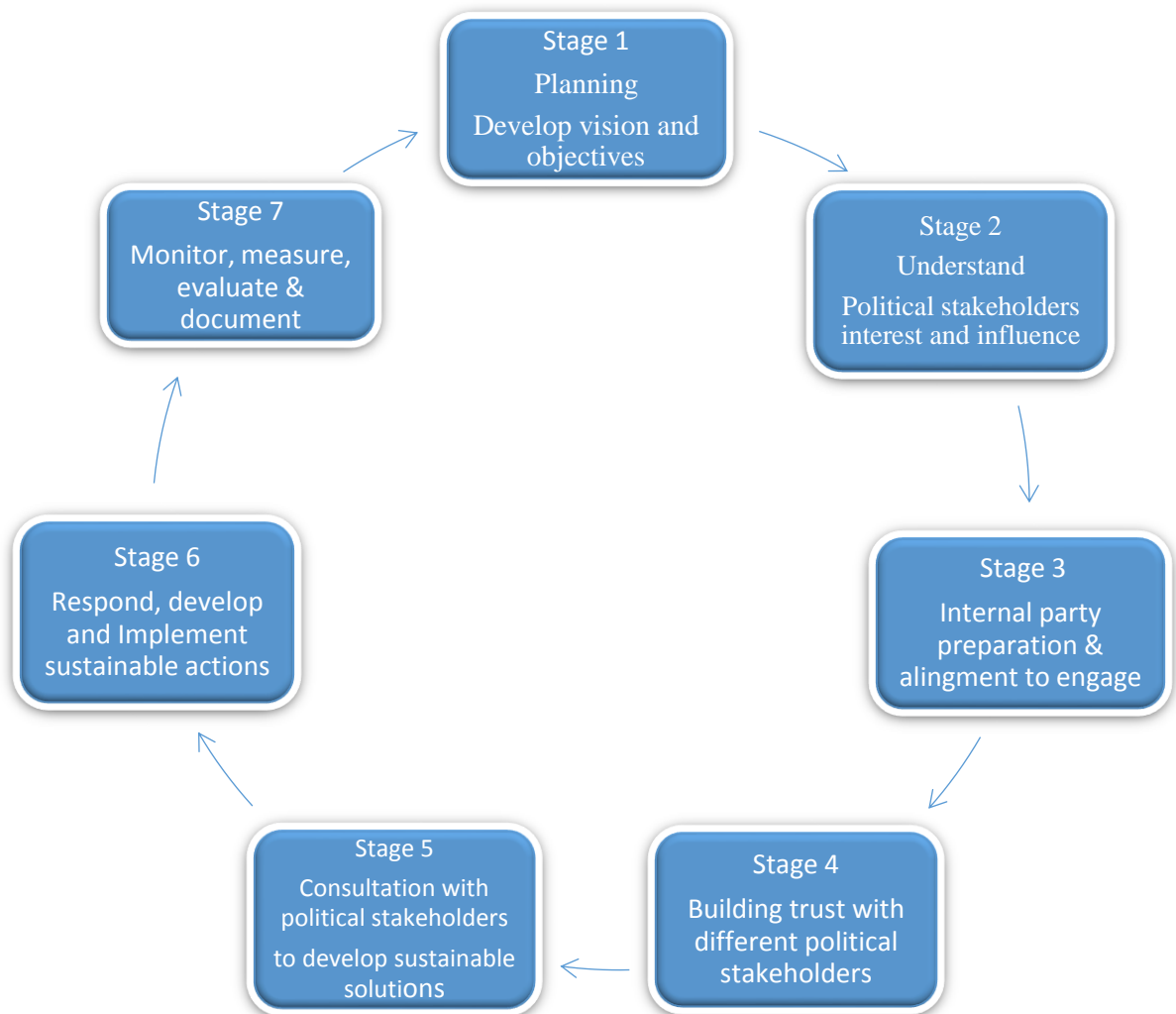
<p>Built on common values and visions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity by political stakeholders to exchange views and information and listen and issues addressed due to the two way process. • The process should be free from manipulation or coercion • Be characterised by a long-term commitment from both sides • Involve a representative group of stakeholders • Be targeted at those most likely to be affected by the political party and candidates activities • Be representative of your stakeholders, whether by gender, race, age, class, sexual orientation, education or religion • Not involve making commitments that cannot be delivered on <p>Utilise best practice in engagement's implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be developed early enough to scope key issues and have an effect on operational decisions • Be informed as a result of relevant information being disseminated in advance • Be meaningful to those consulted because the content is presented in a readily understandable format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relevant to the stakeholder and context you operate in • Put in place strong internal processes in the parties to build consensus and support among internal departments for stakeholder engagement and as a way to facilitate better engagement • Use techniques that are culturally appropriate • Use appropriate technology for the context, level of education or development of the stakeholders • Be designed to be context specific to reflect appropriate timeframes, local realities and languages • Utilise a documentation system to keep track of who has been consulted and key issues raised • Have a system for feeding back and following up on issues raised during consultation as well as clarification of next steps • Be managed by organisational staff who have facilitation, communication and conflict resolution skills • Have clear roles and scope about the objectives and activities to be achieved • Involve clarity of key point contacts on both sides
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Source: (Jeffrey, 2009)

Developing an effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement process between political parties and candidates should involve seven different stages. The process should develop a proactive two-way process between the different party groups and candidates involving communication, opinions and proposals flowing in both directions of parties and candidates and both willing to change their behaviour due to the meaningful engagement developed. The political stakeholder engagement process is an iterative process through which the parties and their candidates learn and improves their ability to perform meaningful stakeholder engagement whilst they develop relationships of mutual respect rather than the hostile relationship currently present in some developed and developing economies (Jeffrey, 2009).

Figure 2 below shows the different stages of building meaningful political stakeholder engagement

Figure 2 Stages of the political stakeholder s' engagement process



Adapted from Jeffrey (2009)

Stage 1 of the process involves planning by the political parties and their candidates to develop an effective and meaningful political stakeholders' engagement through the development of a vision and objectives of mitigating strategic violence (Bal et al. 2013; Jeffrey, 2009). It is important that the parties and their candidates prioritise what is critical (illegal practices of

buying votes, corrupt behaviours, intimidation by party members, defamation and hate speeches in campaigns, and the exclusion of non-partisan sectors of the society) to the parties in relation to preventing violence in the election process. It is important that the objectives developed to align to the stakeholder's responsibilities and skills and interests to effect the changes required to develop effective engagement strategies to reduce strategic violence in the election process, noting the evolving nature of some of the objectives during the process (Romenti, 2010).

Stage 2 relates to understanding political stakeholders. A formal identification of political stakeholders is a critical step in the engagement process. The political parties and candidates must conduct a stakeholder analysis to understand the interest and influence of their stakeholders. Using a stakeholder analysis framework, they must identify the power and interest of each stakeholder in the process (Jeffrey, 2009; Mitchell et al. 1997). It is important to understand the differences in the wants and needs of the other stakeholders and how that correlates to the parties and candidates own needs and wants (interest and power) and how these will impact on the engagement process. In designing this political engagement process, I used Mitchell, (1997) criteria of salience, to identify the urgency the political stakeholders have with political issues, the legitimacy of their interest and power they have to affect each other's parties, candidates and followers. The analysis of stakeholders is therefore important to identify key stakeholders, power and interest and cost effective resources as a basis for designing consultation and engagement strategies. It also ensures that the political stakeholders understand the commitment and objectives and responsibilities of the engagement process (Bal et al, 2013)

Stage 3 involves internal preparedness and alignment with stakeholders. It is a critical aspect of the engagement process through aligning the interests of the political stakeholders to the objectives of the engagement process. A vital component of the engagement planning process is the ability of the stakeholders to commit based on their internal capacity required for the meaningful engagement which may include the understanding of core political languages and concept to facilitate internal communication. The internal analysis facilitates the allocation of resources in comparison to the other political parties, candidates. The internal analysis enables the party to understand the commonalities and differences between them and the other parties. As such, the party will be able to dedicate appropriate time and resources to identify ways to develop conversations and win-win situations. Internal alignment will also assist the party to build its case and identify appropriate internal advocates for the engagement process which will make it easier to agree to commitments which they will be able to deliver to the political stakeholders' engagement process (Jeffrey, 2009).

Stage 4, the political stakeholders must build trust. Based on the partisan politics, the different political parties will come into the engagement process with different levels of trust and willingness to trust. It is important to recognise the differences and willingness to trust, and during interactions adapt to the level of trust present and needed for the engagement process. There are various issues to be addressed and managed by the parties during this process of building trusts such as the inequity of relationships, differential power of the candidates and parties in the process and political cultures and ways of working with the different groups. This aspect when managed well determines the willingness of the political stakeholders to share information both ways, improves communication and the understanding of each other to identify common grounds for developing the engagement strategies. To ensure trust is built during the engagement process, the political stakeholders can do the following to build trust:

the public declaration of the need for trust to develop meaningful engagement, consultation with political stakeholders in every aspect of the process, develop measurement mechanisms and assign responsibility to specific senior person to handle issues on trust and progress report in the team. Engagement process meetings held regularly and feedback communicated to all members of the political stakeholders in the team (Jeffrey, 2009).

Stage 5 involves consultation with political stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions to mitigate election violence. To be successful, it is important to achieve a fair representation of all political parties and candidates and not focusing on only the easy targets. All stakeholders must be responsive in the process through the provision of information and proposals which answer the expectations and interest of all stakeholders as initially identified in the vision and objectives. Information must be contextualised so that stakeholders get a detailed, holistic picture and a complete background information to draw fair and reasonable conclusions. During negotiations, all parties and candidates must be realistic with the possible trade-off in expectations, needs and objectives which favour the process rather than individual interests. This will help achieve sustainable solutions, agreement and build trust. The consultation process should be material to parties and candidate's key economic, social and environmental risks. This includes consultation with the second tier political stakeholder. The mechanism of consultation to be used includes personal interviews, meetings, workshops, focus groups, public meetings, surveys, participatory tools and stakeholder panels. It is important to choose relevant mechanisms for each stakeholder group as the level of efforts varies. Prioritise issues from your party and the stakeholders' viewpoint, understanding the stakeholders' issues of importance.

Once the pre-planning and consultation have been undertaken, stage 6 then involves deciding on appropriate sustainable actions for the issues agreed by the political stakeholders (Bal et al. 2013; Jeffrey, 2009). Based on the stakeholder analysis conducted, the possible reactions of stakeholders to the election violence mitigation proposal must be assessed and identify strategies to manage the reaction through negotiations and trade-offs depending on the level of interest, power and influence of the political stakeholders. The response to the reaction in fairness to all stakeholders is critical to the success of the engagement process. Based on the feedback develop a process to guide the implementation of agreed issues on how to deal with mitigating strategic election violence and the development of a systematic political engagement implementation plan that will lead to the innovation of orientation suitable for the achievement of sustainable mitigation of strategic election violence (Ayuso et al. 2011).

Stage 7 of the engagement process involves monitoring, evaluating, measurement and documenting the implementation process. The performance of the implementation must be measured through the sustainable targets set by the political parties and candidates, which will measure the effectiveness and quality performance of the mitigation strategies and each political stakeholder is meeting their responsibilities and agreements reached for the success of the strategies developed (Gao et al. 2006). Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the engagement process assesses whether the political parties and candidates have been able to achieve their vision and objectives for mitigating strategic election violence. This, therefore, provides the basis for setting further targets and the changing requirements of the engagement strategies to meet the dynamic election environment

The political stakeholders must employ a knowledge management approach to capture, articulate and utilise information created during the implementation process (Jeffrey, 2009).

Embedded in this part of the process is transparency through accurate documentation and reporting in languages appropriate to the stakeholders. Political parties and candidates in the engagement process must collate feedback on performance through the collection of a wide range of views. This is important to assess and understand the cost-benefits analysis of reputation, and risk management. Feedback collated should be used to improve upon strategies and actions employed.

5. The US 2016 Presidential Election Case

The 2016 US presidential election race between Republican and Democratic Parties and candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton was marked by a level of violence not seen in decades in US elections. This was very divisive plagued with fear, insults, allegations of sexual assaults against Trump and criminal case against Clinton involving her emails. Civil rights groups, activists, political opponents and some Republicans accused Trump of racism, sexism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. Hillary Clinton even labelled Trump's supporters as 'a basket of deplorables' which she later apologised (Morrill, 2016). The campaign era was fraught with violence at rallies, especially, those organised by Trump and Bernie Sanders supporters and protesters clashing and attacking each other resulting in several arrests. Employing the political stakeholder engagement framework could have lessened this failure on the part of the political parties. I use the US 2016 conventions to illustrate how the political stakeholder engagement framework could have assisted to mitigate violence at the two conventions.

5.1 Violence and intimidation at the 2016 Republican (RNC) and Democratic (DNC) National Conventions

The RNC events have often attracted large scale protest, for example, in 2004 during the RNC held in New York, the NYPD arrested over 1,800 people and paid out \$ 18 million in settlement

for civil rights violation (Washington Post, 2016). Trump as a candidate run a disorganised and unscripted campaign, which turned off Republican Party leaders and instigated anger across America (Washington Post 2016). Although the RNC in Cleveland was marred by plagiarism, protest and intra party skirmishes, day four was the most violent protest with the chaos that prevented delegates and media members from entering the Quicken Loans Arena for the evening event. There were a number of pro-Trump supporters defending the attacks from immigration activists and anti-Trump protestors burning flags and chanting "It's time, it's time for a revolution in locked arms. Police officers wearing riot gears and helmets yelled at the protesting crowd to move back, firing pepper spray at the surging crowd as pushing and shoving broke out during the protest, the police pinned down, arrested and handcuffed 17 demonstrators. Two were charged with felonious assault of police officer and the burning of an American flag which is protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution, protecting the right to free speech, and the other 15 were charged with inciting violence (Associated Press, 2016) (See appendix 1 for violence in pictures).

The DNC events have also attracted some level of violence with the worst one ever witnessed was the 1968 DNC held in Chicago, which attracted mass protest with the brutal suppression of anti-war protestors (Washington Post, 2016). Multiple grass root organisations, Republican supporters all protested at the DNC to get their voices heard. Several incidents were recorded inside the convention hall of the DNC at Philadelphia in 2016. Supporters of Bernie Sanders jeered at the very mention of Hillary Clinton's name and even, the DNC organisers had stated that Bernie Sanders campaign has a 'penchant for violence'. During President Barack Obama's speech, there were chaos and arrests outside the DNC. A chaotic situation erupted outside when protesters stormed the security barricades and seven people tried to enter the outer perimeter fence into the secret service designated area who were arrested and detained.

A protestor lighted the US flag which led to a woman being ignited after she tried to step on the burning flag. 69 arrests were made, including 10 citations for disorderly conduct related to a sit in a downtown protest of a convention (CNN.com) (see appendix for the violence in pictures).

5.2 How the political stakeholder engagement process could have mitigated violence at the 2016 RNC and DNC

I argue that using a political stakeholder engagement framework at the RNC and DNC political could have mitigated some of the violence witnessed at the 2016 conventions and subsequently, the campaigns of US presidential election in the following ways:

5.2.1 *Set a positive tone, terms and code of conduct for the presidential campaign*

The conventions are key events held by both political parties in the US elections for delegates to nominate their presidential candidates. This is attended by all stakeholders in the presidential election and supervised by the Republican and Democratic Party committees. Different sets of speeches are delivered by senior party figures and one of the highlights that set the tone for the convention is the acceptance speech by the presidential candidate to accept the party nomination for the presidential election. The nominee's acceptance speech traditionally sets the tone and terms of the presidential campaign. On the 28th of July, 2016, Donald Trump acceptance speech excited the crowd amidst chants of build the wall, lock her up, during which he consistently bashed her political stakeholder opponent Hillary Clinton's legacy as death, destruction, terrorism and weakness (CNN.com); whilst, Hillary Clinton condemned Trump for inciting violence which sets a negative tone and terms of the presidential election campaign.

Secondly, there is always a possibility of violence at any convention; however, Donald Trump the Republican nominee has increasingly attracted violent protest over the past year in his campaigns (Associated Press, 2016), his acceptance speech deepened incited violence. If both parties employed the stakeholder engagement process, it would have assisted to tone down the inciting of violence to get the campaign right.

Since there are several factors that can provoke violence throughout the election the two parties through the engagement process would identify and understand the potential causes of violence during the US 2016 elections to develop appropriate a vision to mitigate election violence. From the US causes of political violence, the DNC and RNC will set objectives such as ensuring political parties refrain from using inflammatory language, intimidation, avoiding incitement of violence, the actual act of violence, preventing other countries from interfering in the election process and the pledge to run campaigns based on issues and to accept the results in a peaceful manner. As the engagement process involves continuous dialogue and communication, all the presidential candidates jointly set the objectives and sign an agreement to abide by these to prevent violence at the conventions and the campaigns. These will have set a code of conduct of the Republican and Democratic parties and their candidates and the understanding of their roles in preparation to accept the nominations at the convention. For example, in Nigeria, the commitment and the signing of a peace agreement by all 14 presidential candidates to conduct violence free campaigns in the Nigerian 2015 election contributed to the successful reduction of violence during the 2015 presidential elections (Orji, 2017). Thus, if both parties employed the stakeholders' engagement process before the conventions, it will improve dialogue and communication between them and would have set a better tone and terms of the campaign in the right direction.

5.2 Effective mapping, understanding and consultation of political stakeholders

There were several political stakeholders present at the two conventions; political parties /candidates, voters, the electoral commission, lobbying/pressure/interest groups, media, security and emergency services. The proactive and transparent communication of the vision, objectives and plans with the US political stakeholders would have built trust and the seriousness of the political parties. For example, the APOU initiative in Sri Lanka, engaged political stakeholders which fostered open dialogue and communication with their stakeholders and facilitated inter party communication, mediation and rapid incident response (GNDERM n.d.). The USAID (2014) support to Political Party Development Project encouraged a multi stakeholder imitative which facilitated dialogue and communication between political parties in Nigeria and stakeholders especially private sector advocacy coalition to reduce election violence. Thus, the mapping of US political stakeholders would have given the two parties a good insight into their interest, power, knowledge, capacity to engage and improve communication and dialogue in relation to the types of electoral violence that could develop during the convention and develop appropriate strategies to avoid them.

5.2.3 The development, ownership and accountability for action plans to mitigate violence.

With the employment of the political stakeholder engagement process, the Republican and Democratic parties and candidates would have fair representation, complete information to take decisions, fair negotiations, and stakeholder feedback to develop a sustainable action plan to address potential election violence identified which is acceptable to all the political stakeholders (Bal et al. 2013). For example, both conventions are seen as National Special Security Events (NSSEs), which means that they could become targets of international/domestic terrorism or other criminal activity. Political divisive rhetoric and issues such as police brutality have the potential to further fuel already-heated tensions at the RNC

and DNC so, the security, law enforcement and emergency personnel will have to prepare in relation to training human rights, democracy and peace keeping for the likelihood that protests could disrupt business and travel in the host cities to maintain law and order (IJET, 2016). Hence, the mapping and consultation with this stakeholder group would have helped to identify preventative measures, education and avoid the police pepper spraying protestors, assault of officers and several arrests at both the RNC and DNC. The media played critical roles in the instigation or hindrance of spreading messages in electoral violence (Wennamann, 2015). Hence; consulting with the media group will assist to propagate the objectives and implementation plans to mitigate election violence through the various media outlets, and play their part through presenting violent free incited news and peace messages; hence, most of rhetoric divisive messages at the RNC especially would have been reduced.

The voters, political pressure groups and organisations through consultation will have their interest and concerns addressed. The Republican and Democratic parties, civil society organisations and the media will focus on the education of party supporters, citizens and other stakeholders on the action plans and the roles of the elected leaders in the election process. For example, during the 2013 Kenya election process, the media owners association developed training and sensitisation programmes for media houses and journalist to prevent inflammatory messages and the mobile phone operators also develop guidelines to prevent the use of networks to disseminate hateful speeches which contributed to the reduction of election violence in the election (Wennamann, 2015). The RNC and DNC continuous engagement with the political stakeholders will assist to cultivate a long-term relationship and the willingness to participate in the engagement process as they feel part of the process; hence, the commitment to adhere to agreed vision, objectives and plans which will lead to ownership and accountability for its success mitigating violence. For example the engagement and constructive dialogue of

EU election observers and civil society in Lesotho contributed to the peaceful election in 2012 (Muyomba-Tamale, 2015).

5.2.4 Effective monitoring, evaluation and measuring implementation of sustainable mitigation of election violence

The effective monitoring, evaluating, measurement and documenting the implementation of the agreed actions and targets during the stakeholder engagement process would have assisted the RNC and DNC to reduce rhetoric divisive speeches, internal skirmishes of Key Republican leaders skipping the convention, and Bernie Saunders supporters staging protest and demonstrations to disrupt the conventions through instituting early warning signs and which encourages early response to prevent violence or even to stop it before it escalate during the convention. The appropriate skilled personal and technology requirements would have been instituted to this effect. Due to the public declaration of the vision and objectives of the political parties, the other stakeholders who are part of the process would also serve as monitoring systems to encourage the reporting triggers and incidence of violence for rapid response. In addition, the stakeholders, especially, the media, civic society organisations and security and emergency services would hold the parties accountable to ensure the effectiveness and quality performance of the mitigation strategies and each political stakeholder is meeting their responsibilities and agreements reached for the success of the strategies developed (Gao et al. 2006). For example, PAFFREL and CMEV civil organisations in Sri Lanka have employed monitoring methods to carefully capture, impartially verify and the articulate information on election violence to develop actions for improvement as such developed a credibility attested by the political stakeholders (GNDERM n. d.). Thus, the employment of knowledge management practices, by the DNC and RNC will assist to capture real time data about the implementation of the mitigation strategies to measure the effectiveness as well their

commitments. The collated information would be used to improve upon strategies, targets and actions employed and articulated to all the different stakeholders to improve the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump to avoid the perpetuation of violence.

5.2.5 Build trust for successful engagement and implementation of action plans

Through the stakeholder engagement process, the Republican and Democratic parties and candidates through the public declaration of building trust will have to develop transparent systems in which all stakeholders know the rules of the engagement priorities for mitigating violence. The stakeholders will all be consulted at every stage of the engagement process, meetings would be held regularly and feedback communicated to all the political stakeholders in the team and publicly to all the political parties and their supporters, and other stakeholders. For example, the Election Commission of India has a transparent system of consultation at the provincial and district levels where grievances and complaints are handled in timely, transparent manner and this has instilled confidence in the system (Szilagyi, 2016). Further, the establishment of monitoring and measurement mechanisms with assigned responsibility to specific senior persons to handle issues on trust and progress report in the team would have improved transparency. The commitment for accurate documentation and reporting in languages appropriate to the stakeholders will improve transparency and engender the trust of the process and would assist to diffuse existing tensions and create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue and communication for a more stable political operating environment. The continuous engagement and communication will help to avoid stakeholders resorting to violent protest, sit-in in downtown, demonstrations, burning of the US flags and arrest at the RNC and DNC because the confidence of receiving a fair deal due to the engagement process.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Interest in mitigating election violence has increased over the years; however, it involves short-term measures such as political and diplomatic, legal and constitutional, economic and social, and military/security tools mostly focused on the general public rather than political parties and candidates who could be the real culprits to incite the general populace to engage in election violence. Whilst the political process for mitigating election violence has focused on voters and society wide, the act of political parties and their candidates is also important. Hence, mitigating election violence must be examined in the light of both approaches and all the stakeholders involved in this process. Even though some of preventative work in the short term, they are not sustainable. Therefore, there is the need for additional sustainable long term tools to mitigate the election violence (Claes, 2015).

The stakeholders' engagement theory has established an accepted role in the political process; however, it remains one of the underutilised election violence preventative measures in extant literature. Nonetheless, in practice, there is a recognition that the stakeholder engagement process is a valuable, sustainable agent for mitigating election violence which facilitates inter-party open dialogue, direct communication, mediation, rapid incident response and long term relationship among political actors (GNDERM, n.d.). However; our knowledge of how the stakeholder engagement is effectively applied in mitigating election violence is lacking in extant literature. This paper examined how the stakeholder engagement framework could be applied to political parties and their candidates to develop, communicate, deliver sustainable political strategies and tactics to their different stakeholders and communities for future violence free elections in 2016 and beyond. It further explored how the political stakeholder engagement framework could have mitigated violence at the RNC and DNC during the 2016 US elections.

The paper developed definitions for political stakeholders and stakeholder engagement. It supplemented the conceptual process of stakeholder engagement in business to the development of a political stakeholder engagement framework for mitigating strategic election violence. It developed an iterative process of stakeholder engagement between political parties and their candidates who together in a non-partisan approach, develop sustainable engagement actions and targets based on the needs of the wider political stakeholders and society in which they operate to mitigate strategic election violence. It offers seven key steps that could be adopted by political parties and their candidates to engage successfully to mitigate strategic election violence. The key steps are developing vision and objectives, identifying stakeholders, internal preparedness and alignment to stakeholders, building trust, consultation to develop sustainable solutions, deciding on appropriate sustainable actions and monitoring, measuring, evaluating and documenting implementation progress.

Using the 2016 RNC and DNC case, I illustrated how the employment of the stakeholder engagement process will help to set the right tone and conduct, understand and gain the commitment of all stakeholders, the development of trust, stakeholders' ownership and accountability for effective implementation and monitoring of strategies and action plans to mitigate election violence. Thus, by undertaking these iterative steps the political stakeholders can be engaged throughout the election cycle and reduce election violence during their conventions and campaigns and beyond.

In conclusion, political stakeholder engagement involves developing meaningfully sustainable and mutual relationships for dealing with political issues with political elites, voters and the broader societal stakeholders. The political parties and candidates develop a first tier engagement partnership to create sustainable strategies, and a second tier engagement process

to consult, communicate and deliver action plans to the different levels of stakeholders, for example, party members, donors, security/emergency services, lobbyist and followers from engaging in both strategic and accidental violent behaviours during elections. All the different stages are very important and identified in most literature on stakeholder engagement process, however, its application to political parties and candidates is limited. Secondly, not much has been discussed about the measurement of the engagement actions but, in this model measurement of the engagement process is an important part of the process (Bal et al., 2013). Further, the political engagement framework developed stresses the need for sustainable solutions, actions and targets to mitigate election violence. Sustainability, therefore, is a prominent feature in the management of stakeholder relationships and sustainable targets embedded in the process to ensure the continuous mitigation.

This paper makes important contributions to the development of a non-partisan stakeholder engagement framework to mitigate election violence. However, further research will benefit from testing the model and further validating the process for the political stakeholder engagement process with political parties and their candidates. This will lead to a rigorous analysis of the specific activities that these political stakeholders had engaged in and the holistic process. It will also assist to understand and evaluate the relationships between developing engagement actions and its implementation, especially, adherence to the actions and taking responsibility for the achievement sustainable actions to mitigate strategic election violence.

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