

Election-Related Violence and Security Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons from the Aftermath of the 2011 General Election

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Abstract: *This paper examines elections and the security challenges in Nigeria with a specific reference to the post-2011 electoral violence in the northern part of the country. The data for this paper are drawn mostly from the secondary sources while personal observation was employed to compliment findings from the literature. Systematically, the paper reviews the conceptions of electoral violence; perspectives on election-related violence and security of lives and property in Nigeria; lessons from the 2011 general election and the challenges ahead of 2015 election in Nigeria. The major findings of the paper reveal that from the 1950s, elections in Nigeria approximated a war that is often waged to determine political power. All weapons are always available for politicians in Nigeria to use religion, ethnic sentiments, out-right bribery, the power of incumbency, corruption, the abuse of electoral process, etc. to unleash violence and threaten the security of lives and property in the country in such a way that in such election-related crises, it is estimated that over 10,000 Nigerians have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands have been displaced while property worth billions of Naira have been destroyed due to election-related violence in the country. Consequently, the prevailing security challenges in the contemporary Nigeria have equally had some link to the hostile political atmosphere in Nigeria created by election-related conflicts. This paper recommends for tolerance to opposition in Nigeria's political practices. Political power and positions in Nigeria should not be seen as open sources to wealth, which often leads to electoral contests as "win-or – die" affairs. Elections should not be "win-or-die" affairs in Nigeria. The imposition of candidates on the electorate in Nigeria during elections should also be discouraged, among others.*

Key Words: *Election; Violence; Security Challenges; Killing of lives; Nigeria*

I. Introduction

Elections are important element of democracy whereby the people choose their representatives in government periodically. However, in Nigeria, since the return to democracy in 1999 after prolonged years of military rule in the country, elections have rather created hostile and unstable political climate in the country. This is noticed in the intra and inter-party conflicts, election-related violence, and the devastating effect of "god-fatherism in the electoral process which combine to create security challenges in the country (Ogundiya and Baba, 2007:255). Election-related violence that has been gripping the Nigerian state since the country's return to democracy in 1999 and the aftermaths of the 2003, 2007 and the 2011 general elections have often posed great security challenges for Nigeria. Thus, Suberu (2002:457) concurs that in such election related crises, it is estimated that over 10,000 Nigerians have lost their lives, hundreds of thousands have been displaced while property worth billions of Naira have been destroyed due to election-related violence in the country. Consequently, the prevailing security challenges in the contemporary Nigeria have equally had some link to the hostile political atmosphere in Nigeria created by election-related conflicts.

II. Statement of the Problem

This paper examines elections and the security challenges in Nigeria with a specific focus on the post-2011 electoral violence in the northern part of the country. Systematically, the paper is sub-divided into seven different sub-themes, viz the introduction; statement of the problem; literature review on conceptions of electoral violence; perspectives on election-related violence and security challenges in Nigeria; Lessons from the 2011 general election in Nigeria; the challenges ahead of 2015 election in Nigeria; conclusion and policy recommendations.

III. Literature Review on the Concept of Electoral and Political Violence

Several explanations are offered in the available literature to conceptualize electoral violence. Ogundiya and Baba (2007:247), for instance, observe that electoral violence is used inter-changeably with political violence. However, it has been noted by these authors that political violence is much broader than electoral violence which occurs in different kinds of political systems that may not necessarily be democratic. Thus, political violence can be distinguished from electoral violence in the sense, as Anifowose (1999:4) observes, that political violence is the use of threat or physical act carried out by an individual or individuals with in a political system against another individuals or property with the intention to cause injury or death to person and damage or destruction to property whose objectives are to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

According to Jegede (2003:31), there are different manifestations of electoral violence such as murder, arson, abduction, assault, violent seizure and destruction of electoral materials, etc. These acts are perpetrated by individuals and groups with the intention of influencing the outcome of elections or deter elected officials from consolidating their positions after elections. Ogboaja (2007:5) sees electoral violence to mean all forms of organized act or threat, physical, psychological and structural, aimed at intimidating, harming black mailing political opponents before, during and after an election, geared towards influencing the electoral process to one's selfish desire. Election-day violence is the most celebrated and documented electoral violence. At the structural level, election-day violence includes deliberate use of security personnel, political opponents and their supporters, etc. Politicians also use this to destroy electoral materials and prevent voters perceived to be in support of their opponents from voting (Ugboaja, 2007:8).

Our emphasis in this paper, however, is to draw lessons from the aftermath of the 2011 general election in Nigeria. Thus, according to Ogboaja (2007), post-election violence is the type of violence that takes place after the result of the election has been announced. It also includes killing of opponents, burning of public or private property, violent public demonstration, attack on the electoral personnel, acid bath on political opponents and publication of offensive advertorials involving the use of abusive language in the electronic media against political opponents. This can also be caused by long length of time it takes for election petitions to be disposed off and the suspected bias on the judgment of election petitions' tribunals.

According to Nweke (2005:387), generally, electoral violence is "any form of physical force applied at disorganizing electoral process, destruction of electoral materials and intimidating of electorate to vote against their wish". Odojin and Omojuwa (2007) buttressed that various forms of violence have characterized Nigerian election organized under incumbent government that are them selves' part of the contest in the particular elections". Apart from the regional or ethnic division and distrust, complete with the personnel aggrandizement which access to state power guarantees and which creates the climate that makes electoral contest a do or die affair, there is the additional fact, according to Odojin and Omojuwa (2007:46), that in Africa generally, Nigeria in particular, incumbent governments constituted by partisan politicians are difficult to unseat through elections. This difficulty is not necessarily due to good performance on their part or popular acceptance by the electorate, it is due mainly to what is called "sit-tight syndrome" by which all the resources of the state, including its coercive apparatuses, are deployed to keep the government in power even against popular wishes.

According to Omeiza (2008), the term electoral violence has been used generally in two strands of research. At the first instance, electoral violence is seen as a subset of activities in a larger political conflict. In this context, electoral violence has been studied as part of the trajectory of ethno-communal violence in divided societies such as Kenya, Sri-Lanka and India, where it has been noted that violence tends to cluster around election times (also see Høglund, 2006). In a second approach, electoral violence is seen as the ultimate kind of electoral fraud while electoral fraud has been defined as the efforts to shape election results (Høglund, 2006). Incidentally, as observed by Agubamah (2008), the spate of electoral violence and deadly conflicts in the general elections in Nigeria seems to lend credence to the notion that in most of Africa, Nigeria inclusive, electoral conflict and violence increase tremendously as elections approach or after elections. Electoral violence has, more than once, stunted attempt to establish and institutionalize democratic rule in Nigeria and by implication enhances the security challenges in the country. This paper adopts liberal theory of democracy to analyze electoral violence and security changes in Nigeria, particularly as it tries to draw lessons from the 2011 general election in the country.

1.4 Election-Related Violence and Security Challenges in Nigeria.

This segment of the paper tries to x-ray the various ways or manifestations of election-related violence in Nigeria and how the violence relating to elections have often posed challenges to security of lives and property in the country.

1.4.1 Elections and Violence in Nigeria's First and Second Republics

According to Oyediran (1997:8-9), from the 1950s, elections in Nigeria approximated a war that was waged to determine "who got what, when and how". All weapons were available for these political combatants to use religion, ethnic sentiments, out-right bribery, the power of incumbency, corruption, the abuse of electoral process, etc. Indeed, evidence abound in the literature that at least up to the decade of independence, electoral behavior in Nigeria was not guided by ideology, party programmes or the merit of those standing to be selected or elected, but by a political calculus based on ethnic geo-politics, the means to assume power by all costs, either singly or by a fluid conglomeration of small power blocs around a big power bloc for the purpose of fighting the war to win which would give the right to rule and share the national cake (Agubamah, 2008). The situation remained the same in the 1960s with the major political parties being regionally based. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) were based in the North, West and East respectively. After independence, the first major election was held in 1964. The relationship among the major political parties degenerated into conflict (see Ogundiya, 1999:10). Most importantly, the crises within the AG which spread to other areas of the political geography of the western region and the whole country, affected in no small way the election of 1964 in its conception, execution and outcome (Oyediran, 1997). For instance, as argued by Agubamah (2008:6), the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) brought the NPC and the Akintola-led Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and other minor political parties together under one umbrella. The umbrella used its power of incumbency to ensure that it hung to power even in the so-called "wild-wild west". Dudley (1965:15) presents a vivid description and account of the election of 1964 in the following words:

The electoral officers were terrorized into absconding from their offices once they received the nomination papers of government party candidates, leaving the opposition candidates with no opportunity of registering their nomination papers. So flagrantly was the electoral procedure abuse that at the close of nominations, some 88 out of a total of 174 NPC candidates in the North had their candidature unopposed. In the West, about 30 percent of the NNDP candidates were unopposed. The situation in the East was not much different (Dudley, 1965:15).

What is germane to our analysis is that electoral fraud of 1964 brought about the crises that eventually led to coup of 15th January, 1966, which put a stop to the democratic process in Nigeria's First Republic. The situation in 1979 and 1983 were not quite different. The intra and inter party relationships were not cordial. This, as well documented by Tamuno (1991), indicates that five political parties were registered: National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) and the National Advance Party which was later registered in 1993 (also, see Ademolekun, 1985).

Indeed, events preceding the Federal election of 1979 gave the impression that Nigerian political parties and politicians may after all have learnt some lessons from the demise of the first republic. However, as Agubamah (2008:7) notes, events later proved contrary. It would be recalled that during the run-up to the last federal elections in December, 1964, government and members of the public expressed fears and anxiety over orderly behavior by party leaders and their followers. Similarly, concern was expressed as the 1979 series of elections approached. This, according to Ojigbo, was evident in the speech of General Olusegun Obasanjo to the political stakeholders that:

Various groups and individuals are beginning to degenerate into undesirable political practices akin to those that bedeviled the past civilian regime. It is a fact that in some cases, both leaders and the led have begun to appeal to those selfish and sectional interests which led to the chaos in which we found our country over a decade ago the utterances attributed to some... have bothered on irresponsibility. I would like to implore the leaders of all the political parties and, indeed, supporters to vividly remember that it was the combination of political irresponsibility, sectional incitement, down-right disregard for truth and the lack of integrity in our action and the absence of patriotism to guide us which led to the practical condition in which we found ourselves (Ojigbo, 1983).

However, it is pertinent to say that the 1979 federal election was relatively peaceful. The reasons for the relative peacefulness of the election in contrast with the escalation of violence noticed in the earlier series of the 1950s is well presented by Tamuno (1992:373) in the following words:

Much of this relative peace was due to the subsequent restraint exercised by party leaders and their followers. It would be recalled that Obasanjo had made repeated appeals to them. It could also be argued that the politicians heeded the appeals made from self-interest. They would, thus, avert any possible change of mind by the military regime over the transition to civilian rule under any pretext whatsoever. More so, the availability of troops which any military government, in distress, could deploy for purpose of public security did some psychological effects on the electorate.

As buttressed by Agubamah (2008:9), the 1979 electoral provisions, which generated a lot of constitutional and political controversies, to the surprise of many political observers, did not degenerate into political violence after it was decided in the Supreme Court in Favour of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the NPN Presidential candidate.

Nevertheless, the consequences of not learning from past mistakes proved costly in the 1983 elections. There was massive rigging, part of which was made possible by criminal manipulation of the election register in 1983. As released by FEDECO to the public on July 27, 1983, the voters list had 65.3 million names against 46.5 million for 1979 (Tamuno, 1991). The rigging resulted into uncontrollable violence in some states like Ondo, Oyo and part of Anambra States. The reaction of the electorate was spontaneous and destructive. For instance, in Ondo State, the destruction to lives and private properties were enormous to the extent that the country was brought to a standstill. In Oyo State, according to the Guardian (August 14, 1983), the day of the gubernatorial election was August 13th, which was a day of rage. The police admitted that seven people were killed in Ibadan and two people killed in Ilesha that day. Voting had to be canceled in Ibadan and Ilesha because of the level of violence in the areas. According to the West Africa of August 22, 1983, "Cars and houses were burnt and in some areas, vigilante road blocks were set up. More than 250 people were reported arrested in Oyo State on Election Day, mainly in Ibadan and Ilesha. Meanwhile, the police advised people to "keep indoors" from, 7pm to 6am on Saturday night and public processions were barred in the state for a forth night.

In Ondo State, where Chief Akin Omoboriwo was announced to have defeated the incumbent state Governor, Chief Michael Ajasin, violence of unprecedented levels reduced the state to huge smoldering rubble (Ogboaja, 2007:10). The "victorious" Omoboriwo went into hiding in Lagos. Note even the reversal of Omoboriwo's "victory" could stem the tide of bloodshed. The violence in Ondo broke out on August 16, 1983, following the announcement of an unofficial result by Chief Adekinle Ajasin, stating that Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) would be declaring Akin Omoboriwo winner of the gubernatorial election. In the violence that followed the announcement, many people were killed in Akure, the state capital. Notable victims were former member, Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), as well as staff of FEDECO. The FEDECO headquarter in Akure was burnt, police vehicles burnt on Oba Adesida street where about 300 houses were also burnt. The NPN secretariat in Ondo State was also burnt while most streets in the state capital were barricaded. The situation was the same in many other cities of Ondo State such as Ado-Ekiti, Ifaki, Okitipupa, Ikere, Efon Alaye and Aremo. At the last count, fewer than 40 people were reported dead, including Ondo State's former majority leader, Mr. Tunde Agunbiade, his wife and two children as well as Mr. Olaiya Fagbamigbe, a member of the then National Assembly and the state secretary of the NPN. The violent attitude of the political class in the second republic warranted the return of the military to governance. Expectedly, the military seized the opportunity of the electoral violence to terminate the Nigerian Second experiment of democratic rule in the country.

1.4.2 The 1993 Elections and Violence in Nigeria

In 1993, the elections were inconclusive. The unrealized transition programme of General Ibrahim Babangida was laced with mayhem at its various stages in the political hotbeds of the nation. The eventual annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election was characterized with unprecedented political violence that claimed the lives of many citizens. Meanwhile, as Ogboaja (2007:12) buttresses, the despotic rule of General Sani Abacha did not also go without violence in its bid to return the country to some form of democracy. As General Abacha fought to transform himself from military head of state to civilian president, many citizens lost their lives, especially those identified as stumbling blocks on his way. Those who lost their lives in this period included Pa Alfred Rewane, Kudirat Abiola, Suliat Adedeji, a prominent Ibadan Politician, Emmanuel Omotelinewa, a retired Naval Officer, Toyin Onagoruwa, son of Olu Onagoruwa, Basoye Tejuosho, mother of Dapo Tejuosho, a notable businessman and traditional ruler, Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'adua, leading critic of the Abacha, was also alleged to have been killed instantly. According to Ogboaja (2007:12), Shehu Musa Yar'adua was reportedly injected with a lethal substance, resulting to his demise in Abakaliki prison. Also killed during the Abacha regime was Sola Omatoshola, the Chief Security Officer at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, a couple of Journalists, including Bagaudu Kaltho of the News Magazine, who was killed also by hired assassins. There were also spate of politically motivated bombings and shootings across the country that left so many dead. Regrettably, these acts, as argued in this work, portend ills for security crises in Nigeria.

1.4.3 Elections and Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The emergence of the fourth Republic gave Nigerians great hope and confidence in the belief that democracy had effectively returned to the country at last. This confidence was strengthened by smooth conduct of the 1999 general election because the 1998/99 general elections lacked bitterness, boycotts thuggery and other malpractices usually associated with electoral process in the country (Nnadozie, 2007:69). The later characterization of the 1998/99 elections can be attributed to several factors. The first was the general feeling or more appropriately agreement, even of unwritten, among Nigerians not to do anything that could be used by the military establishment not to vacate the political arena. The second factor was the fact that the two presidential candidates this time-chief Olu Falae of AD/APP accord and General Obasanjo of the PDP were not only from the same geo-political zone- the South West, but also from the same ethnic group-the Yoruba. This, perhaps, is

why the country was spared the agony of the ethnic rancor and mudslinging usually associated with electioneering and elections in the country. Though there were the usual accusation and counter accusations of riggings among others from both political camps, none was so serious as to threaten or disrupt the series of elections that staggered between December, 1998 and February 1999. All the petitions and complaints arising from the elections were quietly, even if not amicably settled by the election tribunals set up for the purpose. Two years before the 2003 elections, violence associated with party/electoral politics had been on the increase, in a very frightening proportion (Alabi 2004:21). As the legislative arms of the government at various levels seemed to be getting over the problem of violent and extra-constitutional means of changing the leadership of their respective houses, the race for election or re-election (the second term syndrome) seemed to have taken the center stage in the series of intra-party/intra-government crises of confidence as exemplified by disputes, between governors and their deputies, between governors and members of National Assembly, between governor and local government chairmen etc. political meetings and gatherings had continued to record clashes between various groups loyal to different individuals. Such political differences had been known to be settled with fisticuffs, broken bottles, stones, knives, cutlasses and most unfortunately barrels of gun. On March 15th, 1999, frayed nerves arising from electioneering and declaration of results gradually settled down as the elected officers got down to business of governance.

As the bid for re-election by those who won the 1999 election and the challenges by those who sought to replace them set in 2003, many politicians started moves to outdo each other. This led to gradual rise in the tempo of political activities soon political violence started rearing its ugly head. On September 9, 1999, the first politically motivated murder in the 4th Republic was recorded with the killing of Mr. Sunday Ugwu in Enugu State. His cruel killing was later said to be that of mistaken identity. The target was reportedly his elder brother, Honourable Nwabueze Ugwu, representing Nkanu East in Enugu State House of Assembly. One month after the Enugu incidence, the former Chairman of All Nigerian People's Party in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State was killed by suspected thugs. In Rivers State, there was an attack on Engineer Bekinbo Soberenkon, former People Democratic Party's (PDP) gubernatorial aspirant in the State. This took place in 2001 by hoodlums as he was about to enter his house at GRA in Port-Harcourt. Also in Rivers State, Honourable Monday Ndor, a State House of Assembly member representing Khana I Constituency was assassinated in 2001. He was shot dead in his premises by suspected hired assassins in what was believed to be politically motivated. On September 9, 2001, President Olusegun Obasanjo called out the army and on September 8, a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the city of Jos, Plateau State, following violence clash that engulfed the city on September 7, between Muslims and Christians in the city. The cause of the violent clash was alleged to be as a result of appointment of one Alhaji Mohammed Muktar as the State Coordinator of the Poverty Alleviation Scheme. It was reported that more than 500 people were killed, thousands wounded and property worth hundreds of millions of Naira destroyed.

In the wake of the outbreak of violence in Taraba State between Tivs and Jukuns in October, 2001, the Federal Government began to deploy troops around the border between Benue and Taraba to end the bloody feud. Reports of what followed next remained continuous, but one of them held that Tiv Militia ambushed and captured a contingent of 19 soldiers at Vase near the border and killed them in cold blood. The Militia's actions were prompted by previous incidents in which armed men in uniform attacked several Tiv communities. The Tivs suspected that some elements in the military were backing their Jukun rivals in collaboration with a former Minister of Defence, who they alleged treats the Tivs as political and ethnic rivals. In 2002, Benue State witnessed a major threat to peace as ethnic crises in Nasarawa and Taraba State spilled over to it. Hundreds of thousands of Tiv internally displaced persons were chased out of Nasarawa and Taraba States. This led to military invasion of Benue State that left scores of civilians dead. As these crises heightened, political opponents of Governor George Akume deployed hoodlums, under the guise of students, to cause a major disturbance in Markurdi, the State Capital. While the hoodlums said they were protesting the killing and maiming of Tiv people in different parts of the middle Belt, those behind it pushed for a state of emergency in Benue State, apparently to discredit Akume's administration. This led to the imposition of a dusk dawn curfew on Markurdi and Gboko. Before this situation could die down, Otukpo became engulfed in violence. A reception on honour of Barnabas Gemade, a chieftain and former National Chairman of PDP was disrupted by those believed to be pursuing the agenda of creating insecurity in the State. This resulted in a confrontation with the police and many were wounded. The 'war' went further as they equally disturbed the reception organized in honour of the then People's Democratic Party's (PDP) National Chairman, Chief Audu Ogbeh. The hoodlums hauled stones and missiles at the PDP Chieftains, Ministers and Governors who attended the ceremony. Few months earlier, on December 21, 2001, Hon. Odunayo Olaggaju, representing Ife Central in the Osun State House of Assembly was killed in a mysterious circumstance by a gang of gunmen believed to be political thugs. Shortly after this, on December 23, 2001, the assassins visited the Bodija, Ibadan residence of Chief Bola Ige, the then Attorney General of the Federation and assassinated him. Mrs. Janet Olapede in Mamukayo village, Ondo State, incurred the wrath of her political rivals and was clubbed to death on August 13, 2002. Her husband was equally dealt

blows of clubs by his wife's killers and left unconscious. Far away in Aiyetoro, Gbede, Kogi State, the Kwara state Chairman of the People's Democratic Party, Alhaji Ahmed Ahum Petegi was shot dead on his way to Abuja by perceived political opponents.

On September 1, 2002, Chief Barnabas Igwe, the Chairman of Onitsha Branch of Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), and his wife Abigail were brutally murdered by suspected agents of the government because of his alleged hard stance on the state government politics. Mr. Dele Arejo, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos state was on November 25, 2002 trailed to an outskirt of Lagos and killed there by suspected political opponents (Ogundiya and Baba, 2007). The United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP) National Vice Chairman, Alhaji Isiaku Mohammed was assassinated in what was described as political murder in Kano. He was gunned down in his bedroom in September 2002 by assailants who turned against all entreaties including the offer of a huge sum of money. The following Month, November 25, Dele Arojo, the PDP gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos State was attacked and killed by suspected political opponents. Chief John Agbatutu, Peoples Democratic Party, Delta Central Senatorial District aspirant, was allegedly killed by political opponents on December 13, 2002. His assailants killed him using clubs and other objects to hit him on his head. Several persons were injured and valuable property estimated at millions of naira were destroyed at Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area, Delta State, on January 11, 2003, when irate youths engage in a bloody clash in a renewed hostility between rival youths suspected to be supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Alliance for Democracy. On January 13, 2003, political thugs attacked and kidnapped two All Nigeria Peoples Party's Members in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Edo State All Nigeria Peoples Party's chairman, Mr. Patrick Iyham was abducted by unknown men, suspected to be political thugs, beaten to a state of coma and dumped on the road. The event took place when the suspected thugs invaded the All Nigeria Peoples Party State Secretariat in Benin. Similarly, far away Yobe State, Adamu Waziri lost his life during an interparty conflict between the rival gangs from ANPP and PDP in the state. A prominent politician and All Nigeria Peoples Party Senatorial aspirant in Orlu Senatorial Zone, Imo State, Chief Ogbonnaya Uche was murdered in cold blood in his Owerri residence on February 8, 2003 in what was alleged to be politically motivated killing. On February 18, 2003, over fifty houses were destroyed at Jato-Aka, Benue State by political thugs suspected to be People Democratic Party sponsored. It was during this mayhem that Mr. Orya Korinjo, Special Adviser to Benue State Governor, on Political Affairs lost his 90-years old father, his mansion and food items set ablaze and kept burning for over one week. George Akume was rather lucky to escape death in the hands of suspected political opponents on the following day being 4th March when his convoy was attacked on his way to Abuja but his friend Mr. Agom Andrew, a Chieftain of the PDP was not lucky as he was killed in the attack. Three days later, on 7th March, Philip Olorunnipe, the Chairman, Kogi State Electoral Commission was killed by suspected hired killers in what was described as an attempt to settle political scores. The same day, in Owerri, Imo State, the Imo State Governor's Principal Secretary, Theodore Agwatu, was trailed to his house in Owerri from a political rally and murdered in cold blood. His killers were alleged to be sponsored by political opponents. In the same Month, eight people died in a political clash between ANPP and PDP thugs when they had a violent clash in Jato-Aka Kwande LGA Benue State. Elder Paul Unongo, former Minister of Steel in the Second Republic and All Nigeria Peoples Party Governorship Candidate in Benue State escaped death by whiskers while the security guard attached to his residence was not as lucky as he was killed by assassins suspected to be sponsored by a rival Party. Mrs. Emily Omoye, a Chieftain of AD died on March 3rd 2003 as a result of acid poured on her in December 2002 by suspected political opponents. On March 5, 2003, Chief (Dr) Marshal Harry, the National Vice Chairman, All Nigerian Peoples Party, South-South was murdered in cold blood in his Abuja resident by suspected politically motivated hired assassins. Sikiru Babalola, a US Criminologist and a PDP gubernatorial aspirant of Ekiti State in 2003 was brutalized in 2003. The thugs got hold of him while the Church service in which he attended was going on, beat him, dragged him out of the church, stripped him naked and his perceived lifeless body was thrown into a gutter. His jeep car was destroyed. He was later revived by good Samaritans. In the same vein, Moshood Gadado and Ibrahim Rasak lost their lives on March 21st, 2003 in Kwara State during the inter party clashes between supporters of People Democratic Party and All Nigeria Peoples Party gubernatorial candidates. On February 18, 2003, over fifty houses were destroyed at Jato-Aka, Benue State by political thugs suspected to be Peoples Democratic Party sponsored. It was during this mayhem that Mr. Orya Korinjo, Special Adviser to the Benue State Governor on Political Affairs lost his 90 years old father, his mansion and food items set ablaze and kept burning for over one week. An attack on the Jigawa State Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Saminu Turaki's convoy by suspected political rivals took place at Dutse on February 22, 2003. This attack left several cars damaged. On the same day, in Owerri, Imo State, the Imo State Governors' Principal Secretary Theodore Agwatu was trailed in his house in Owerri from a Political rally and murdered in cold blood. His killers were alleged to be sponsored by political opponents (Yaqub, 2003).

1.4.5 Electoral Violence During and after the 2003 General Elections in Nigeria.

According to Ogoja (2007), in Rivers State, three persons were killed in Etche Local Government Area during a clash between rival political parties at Okehi on April 12, 2003. This was during the National Assembly Elections. At Obio Akpo, one person lost his hand in a violence clash between rival political party supporters and so many others seriously injured. The house of Local Government Caretaker Committee Chairman was touched. One person each lost their lives at Rumokwuta and Rumueme in Port-Harcourt in a violent clash between two rival political parties. In Asari-Toro, Akukutere Local Government Area of Rivers State, one person was stabbed to death as rival political parties clashed. In Bayelsa State, the brother to the United Nigeria Peoples Party (UNPP) Governorship candidate, Dr. George Fente, was killed in the coastal town of Nembe. The deceased, Sammy Samuel, was shot dead a day before April 12 election after his two hands and legs had been severed. The United Nigeria Peoples Party was said to be holding an open-air meeting when hoodlums armed with guns and machetes opened fire on them. It was reported that six persons were killed in Cross River State during the April 12 National Assembly Elections. One of them was roasted beyond recognition and put in the boot of his car in Boki. One person was killed in Akpabuyo, one in Obubra Local Government, two each in Mko and Yahur Local Government Areas of the State. The State Government Lodge and twelve vehicles were set ablaze at Sagbama, Bayelsa State by suspected Peoples Democratic Party opponents. The violence rocked the April 12 election in the area as the election in the area was declared inconclusive. It was reported that five persons were killed in Bayelsa State to violent clashes between the rival political parties in the state. At Ikolo village in Yenagoa Local Government Area, also of Bayelsa state, militants Ijaw youth suspected to be political thugs shot dead four police officers as they were returning from official election duty on May 4, 2003. The lingering feud between two rival political groups in Effurun, Delta State, on Tuesday May 13, 2003 claimed twenty lives including that of pregnant woman and rendered over two hundred people homeless. The youths made up of supporters of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and those of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) attacked themselves over alleged imposition of a candidate as the next chairman of Uvwie Local Government Council. Oluchi Iroegbu was allegedly shot and killed by the police on April 24, 2003 at Umuokiri in Umucheka Mbano, Imo State on a reprisal attack after the youth from the area were alleged to have killed a police officer who went there to effect arrest of political thugs. After the 2003 elections in Nigeria, precisely on July 10, 2003, Governor Christ Ngige was abducted from the government House, Awka, Anambra State. A team of policemen led by the Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Raphael Ige, in charge of zone A, Umuahia, broke into security operatives and abducted the governor alleging that he had resigned his position as governor of the state. The abduction was said to have been sponsored by his estranged political god-father, Chief Christ Uba. It took the intervention of so many powerful forces including the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to secure his release.

Another version of politically motivated killing in Nigeria was recorded in September, 2004, when Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, one time Senate President and Political Adviser to the President in the second republic was killed. His death was linked to a tear gas spread in his car by the police at the ANPP rally held in Kano on September 23, 2004. The ruling party was accused of using the police to terminate his life but the ruling party denied the allegation. On December 22, 2005. Supporters of Chief Lamidi Adedibu, led the group of 18 law makers to forcefully take over the House of Assembly complex in Ibadan, Oyo State as a prelude to impeachment the then Governor of the State, Chief Rasheed Ladoja. Armed with sophisticated weapons, Chief Adedibu supporters acting in consonance with the police sacked loyalist of the former Governor and chased civil servants away from the State Secretariat complex. The two groups engaged themselves in exchange of gun shots and other dangerous weapons. In the process, not less than two people were fired dead, many were wounded. The hoodlums proceeded to the Government House, vandalized and looted the offices. Before the violence in Oyo, Jos capital of Plateau State and its environs witnessed an unprecedented violence in the state that left scores of its citizens dead. The political violence with ethnic coloration saw the imposition of a State of Emergency and the subsequent suspension of the Governor for six Months. At the end of the conflict perceived to have erupted between the supporters of Deputy Senate President, Ibrahim Mantu and the State Governor, Chief Joshua Dariye, left vehicles, houses and the likes destroyed.

1.4.6 Elections and Violence during the 2007 Elections in Nigeria.

Electoral violence was also major issue of concern throughout the 2007 electoral process. While in some States, peaceful campaign activities were observed, incidents of violence increased as the elections drew nearer (EU Reports 2007). Overall credible reports, including those from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDSA) and International and domestic media, indicate that at least 200 people, including police, were killed in election-related violence. This is higher number than was reported for the 2003 elections and is unacceptable with respect to the fundamental right to life and the democratic process. Despite welcomed and repeated messages from security agencies which showed a zero tolerance policy towards electoral violence, the security agencies, INEC and political parties did not appear to take decisive steps to address the situation and

hold perpetrators to account. During the campaign, numerous violent incidents were reported by EU observers and other credible sources. These often involved destruction of campaign materials as well as INEC buildings and party supporters. At time, inflammatory speech or indigenous references like “Son of the soil” or “home boys” further aggravated the tense atmosphere (EU Reports 2007).

IV. Lessons from the Aftermath of the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria

According to Maduagwu (2012:248), the shocking irony of Nigeria’s 2011 general elections was that the elections were described by the Human Rights Watch (2011) as among the fairest in Nigeria’s history, but they also were among the bloodiest.

It is common knowledge that conducting free and fair elections has been the Achilles heel of the Nigeria’s democratic experiments right from Independence. Virtually all elections in Nigeria since independence, especially those conducted by civilians, have been marred by massive electoral malpractices, including electoral violence (see Maduagwu, 2012:248).

Kurfi (2005) argues that Nigerian elections had been generally flawed and each successive one worse than the previous one such that the only elections in Nigeria with minimal rigging and other malpractices were those conducted by the colonial authorities and the military. What, he further argues, would have passed as the fairest and freest election in Nigeria was the famous “June 12” 1993 Presidential election which was presumably won by Moshood Abiola but the election was later annulled by the Military “President” Ibrahim Babangida.

The 2011 general elections had been generally acclaimed to mark a new beginning in Nigeria’s electoral history. It was therefore inexplicable that widespread electoral violence of unprecedented intensity and magnitude would almost spontaneously and at the same time break out throughout most of the Northern States even before the final result of the Presidential election was announced. It has been argued (Maduagwu, 2012:248) that the result of the 2011 Presidential election reflected the age-long division between the majority Muslim North and the predominantly Christian South. President Jonathan won the election with a majority of the votes (about 59 %) and also secured the constitutional requirement of securing 25% in at least one-third of all the states, which he (Jonathan) secured in 31 States of the federation. Muhammadu Buhari, Jonathan’s main opponent at the election, won only about 32% of the total votes and secured 25% of the votes from only 16 states, mostly in the North. However, Buhari won the majority of the votes in Northern States of Nigeria. Accordingly, both ethnic and religious affiliations were important factors in the voting pattern for the 2011 Presidential election in Nigeria (see Nwakanma, 2011) Consequently, when the results of the 2011 Presidential elections were announced on April 17 and it became clear that Jonathan was going to win in the first ballot, Maduagwu argues that:

...the supporters of Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate of CPC, almost spontaneously poured out into the streets of 12 Northern States in violent demonstrations. For three days, there were serious rioting in the Northern States of Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. Despite the efforts of the Police and the military to quell and control the riots, Human Rights Watch estimated that more than 800 people died in the riots while 65, 500 people were displaced (see Maduagwu, 2012:249).

Incidentally, as is often the case in political, ethnic and religious violence, especially in Northern Nigeria, the post election violence of 2011 took both religious and ethnic dimensions. The victims cut across several of the religious and ethnic divides in the country; property destroyed during the riot included vehicles, shops, residential houses, Churches and Mosques. More so, very uncharacteristically, Maduagwu (2012:249) expresses that the rioters of the 2011 post Presidential election violence in major cities of the Northern States of Nigeria also targeted the prominent members of the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP), burning their houses, vehicles and other property. Most of others affected included the brutal murder of some ten National Youth Corps members—Christians of Southern Nigeria origin in Bauchi state who were among the ad hoc assistants recruited by INEC for the conduct of the 2011 election, Muslims and traditional rulers who were believed to have supported Jonathan (Maduagwu, 2012:249).

V. Implications of 2015 General Elections on Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria.

Electoral malpractices and the violence that often unfold cast very dark shadow on Nigeria’s democratic journey since 1999. Part of the inevitable challenges ahead of the 2015 elections in Nigeria as aptly captured by Maduagwu (2012:251) is that:

... one would have thought that the major obstacle militating against democratic consolidation and good governance in Nigeria has been removed. This belief is

predicated on the assumption that if Nigerians are able to choose their leaders, then ... they would be able to determine who their leaders would be; those who would really govern them and not exploit and impoverish them.

Continued violence in the electoral process is capable of stunting the growth of democratic values, attitudes and institutions in the country. It can also breed continued intolerance in Nigeria's political and electoral process. Meanwhile, leaders that emerge in the midst of electoral violence are often "elected" by the minority because the majority who have fear for their lives do not go near the electoral process. More so, the demise of the victims of electoral violence in Nigeria, who are often bread winners of their respective families, makes for more social and economic hardships on the lives of average Nigerians. There is therefore the possibility that the more the electorate react to election related issues such as rigging, manipulation of election result, imposition of leadership and the like, the better the chances for the actualization of democratic stability in Nigeria because it will empower the tendency of impacting pressure on the political elites to redefine their approach on leadership, democracy and democratization (Alibaba, 2013).

VI. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

We find it expedient to conclude in this paper that there must be tolerance to opposition in Nigeria's political practices. Political power and positions in Nigeria should not be seen as open sources to wealth, which often leads to electoral contests as "win-or - die" affairs. Elections should not be "win-or-die" affairs in Nigeria. The imposition of candidates on the electorate in Nigeria during elections should be discouraged. This would allow the citizens to freely choose their representatives during elections without resorting to violence. Election riggings, falsification of election results, multiple voting, acts of thuggery and the intimidation of the opposition in the electioneering process should be completely eradicated in Nigeria's politics. Killing and maiming of political opponents in Nigeria's electioneering and political process should be discouraged. Security measures should be tightened in Nigeria to checkmate re-occurrence of election-related violence and always curtail the high rate of insecurity of lives and properties that has increasingly become a recurring decimal in Nigeria's socio-economic, religious and political systems. Perpetrators of election-related violence should be treated and punished according to the existing laws. Meanwhile, gainful employment opportunities should be made available to the teeming unemployed youth in Nigeria to avoid their being idle, which makes them to be easily used to perpetrate violence by desperate politicians in the country before, during or after elections.

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