


# Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigerian 4th Republic: Implications for Democracy

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## Abstract

Electoral process in Nigerian fourth republic is gradually degenerating to a conflict situation and has become a recipe for electoral violence. Election periods in Nigeria witness high spate of assassination, maiming, thuggery, arson, unlawful arrest, abductions and intimidation of persons or group of persons. It creates an atmosphere of war which tends to create room for the survival of the fittest. This is because elections are seen not only as opportunity to control political power but an access to national resources. It is seen as an investment which no one will like to lose and so fair and foul means are exploited to get electoral votes. This ugly situation has negative implications on democracy. This study highlights the critical roles that political parties in Nigerian fourth republic play in the promotion of electoral violence. The research design for this study was historical-descriptive design. The data were obtained through secondary sources. Guided by the research methodology and structural functionalist theoretical framework, the study established a link between the character of party politics in Nigerian fourth republic and electoral violence. It found out that party politics was the major factor behind electoral violence in Nigeria which in turn hinders the democratic aspiration of the country. The study concluded that political parties in Nigeria have proved to be undemocratic and anti-democratic institutions. It recommended inter-alia, that political parties should be made to play critical roles in democratic consolidation and so, should change from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts. In addition, the rules and procedures that govern electoral behavior and conducts should be strictly applied and enforced to serve as deterrence.

## Introduction

Party politics is a key attribute of electoral democracy. It involves the totality of activities exhibited by political parties in the bid to maximize party interests in a polity. The significance of political parties as vital institutions in a democracy cannot be over-emphasized. They are instruments for organizing political recruitment and representation, political competition and democratic accountability. They also serve as links between the state and the civil society, influence the executive, formulate public policy, articulate and aggregate diverse interests, present candidates for political offices and develop competing policy proposals that provide people with choices (Downs, 1952). It is said that a strong and sustaining democracy is dependent on well-functioning political parties (Levitsky, Steven and Maxwell, 2003). As key players in a democracy, their actions and inactions have great impacts on democratic consolidation or democratic crisis as the case may be while a peaceful party politics will engender democratic consolidation, a turbulent or violent party politics will inspire pessimism and generate democratic crisis and violence.

This study focuses on the link between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic: Implications for democracy. Understanding the link between party politics and electoral

violence in Nigeria's fourth republic will be useful in the management of the politics of violence and violence in politics in Nigeria.

### Statement of the Problem

Democratic consolidation in Nigeria through the conduct of credible elections has remained elusive. The history of electoral process in Nigeria since the acquisition of political independence till date has shown that party politics have generated so much bitterness and virulence which in some cases threaten the corporate existence of the country. Although, electoral violence has been a common characteristic of party politics in Nigeria from political independence till date but the situation appears to be worse in the fourth republic. Elections in Nigeria since 2003 have been plagued by violent activities such as theft and snatching of election materials, killings, arson, abductions, assault, intimidation, destruction of properties and election materials, rioting, looting, violent clashes and protests, mayhem and chaos (Ikelegbe, 2014). This has been a consequence of a hijacked electoral process which has in most cases witnessed lack of credibility for the official results of the elections, resulting in the partial or outright rejection of such results by the political parties and the electorates. In some cases, the election results are contested in courts even after it has degenerated to organized violence. The 2011 presidential election crisis is a case in point. This unfortunate development does not only inspire pessimism in the electoral process but is counter-productive to the collective existence of Nigeria. It is therefore on this premise that this study attempts to look at the link between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implications for democracy.

This study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the links between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria's fourth republic?
2. What are the impacts of electoral violence on Nigerian democracy?
3. What are the worthwhile recommendations that can reduce or nip-in-the-bud the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria?

### Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study are

1. To identify the links between party politics and electoral violence in Nigeria.
2. To discuss the impacts of electoral violence on Nigerian democracy.
3. To make recommendations that can reduce or nip-in-the-bud electoral violence in Nigeria.

### Conceptual Clarification

It is very appropriate to situate the key concepts of this study to their correct and proper perspectives. We therefore conceptualize the following concepts;

#### Democracy

This is the involvement of the people in the running of the political, socio-economic and cultural affairs of their society (Chafe, 1994). It is also the institutional arrangement in which individuals acquire political power by means of competitive struggle for people's vote (Schumpeter, 1975). It is however commonly defined as government of the people, by the people and for the people (Abraham Lincoln).

## Electoral Violence

This is the threat or use of physical force on persons and property, intended to alter, change and modify electoral behaviour, decisions, outcomes and perceptions that have consequences for the distribution, arrangements and configurations of power and resources. Electoral violence can be physical, structural and psychological. While physical violence refers to infliction of physical injury and destructions, structural violence is systematic and largely perpetrated through state power and resources. It affects issues of justice, equity and fairness.

The psychological violence injures the psyche and integrity of the persons. Electoral violence can also be mass based (such as riots, demonstrations), relatively unorganized and spontaneous like assassination or detonation of bombs.

## Political Parties

Political party is an alliance of like-minded people who work together to win elections and control government (Badejo et al, 2015). Political parties are vehicles through which politicians legitimately compete against one another for political power and for them to put their philosophies and policies into effect.

## Party Politics

This involves the totality of the actions or political behaviour of political parties directed towards the actualization of the interests of their members with special emphasis on controlling state power. The struggle for power amongst the political parties in a polity is an expression of party politics.

## Theoretical Perspectives

There are several perspectives that can provide some framework of understanding and explanation of the high incidence of electoral violence in Nigerian party politics. However, this study shall be anchored on the theory of structural functionalism.

Political scientists like Gabriel Almond, William Mitchell and James Coleman adopted the structural functional framework of the sociologists to political analysis. Proponents of this theory such as Parson (1971) and Almond (1956) posit that socio-political structures have specific assigned functions to perform in the proper functioning of a system. These structures maintain functional relationship among themselves. The theory is useful in reflecting on whether state institutions and structures (political parties and electoral management bodies) in Nigeria which are saddled with the constitutional functions of political representation, political competition, democratic accountability and regulatory responsibilities are effectively discharging their functions.

The institutional –functionalism variant of the structural functionalism theory highlights the interface between the nature of state and governance institutions and the nature of political behaviour (Vallings and Moreno-Torres, 2005). The assumption is that weak and fragile institution of governance; weak laws, personalization and privatization of state institutions, power and resources and weak governmental legitimacy are associated with certain situations such as deep social inequalities, inequalities in group, identity and sectional access to development and resources, economic decline and poverty which create room for violent forms of electoral process. The structuralist model of the theory on the other hand argues that certain conditions of society drive, provoke or act as purveyors of electoral violence. These conditions include exclusionary and divisive politics, politicized identity, identity-based inequalities and grievances, social divisions and

marginality as well as protracted political mismanagement (Kambudzi, 2008), absence of national cohesion (Biegon, 2009) and absence of elite consensus on rules of the game (Cheeseman, 2008).

### Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigeria: An Overview

The Nigerian electoral process has been associated with party politics that is characterized with lack of internal party democracy, ethnic driven politics, lack of committed political leadership, absence of clear cut political party ideologies and marginalization of the electorates. The situation has created room for an electoral process that mainly serve the interest of certain class of citizens. This runs counter to the norm in which the electorate are seen as the most important factor in the political calculus of the electoral process because they are supposed to be doing the electing (Frank, 2009). According to Frank, the electorate who are supposed to be kingmakers, turn out to be marginal participants in the process. This culture of alienating the electorate, having become the norm is contrary to democratic consolidation and to large extent a recipe for crisis.

To ensure the uninterrupted marginalization of the majority of the people by the political class and the drivers of the political parties, most ordinary Nigerians are made to be vulnerable and depressed. This is because from the beginning (after political independence), the political parties and political gladiators in Nigeria refused to pay attention to the development of the people. The people are only incorporated into the political arena during elections. Either as electorate or electoral officers, the impoverished masses merely respond to the socio-economic conditions of their existence by accepting the directives of the political class through monetary inducements for the purpose of swaying their political action. Ake(1996p.10) offers an explanation thus:

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Poverty disempowers and subverts democracy...in accepting bribe; voters collude in commoditizing their democratic rights and reinforcing their low self-esteem, thus, turning election into bondage.

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The political parties and their sponsors have no doubt made party politics a do or die affair in Nigeria and so resort to exploitation and marginalization of every dissenting voice. With a large army of lumpen-proletariat which includes unemployed youths and motor park touts roaming the streets, the political parties have no difficulty in recruiting thugs and bodyguards who are ready to carry out their selfish instructions aimed at manipulating the electoral process. So, because of the high premium attached to acquisition of state power, thuggery, arson, assassination, kidnapping, snatching of ballot papers, intimidation and other forms of violence have become the defining characteristics of the Nigerian party politics. It is on the basis of this that party politics in Nigeria has degenerated to the Hobbesian state of nature (where life was described as brutish, nasty, poor, short and solitary). Obasanjo's statement in Tell magazine, No. 41, October 2002, captures the scenario thus;

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We fight and sometimes shed blood to achieve and retain political power because for us in Nigeria, the political kingdom has for long been the gateway to the economic kingdom.

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This exposes the content, context and character of the Nigerian party politics and indeed explains the objective basis of electoral violence in Nigeria.

Mehler (2007) identified the following as the motivations for party-linked violence: expression of grievances, means of domination, discrediting the opposition, mode of political competition and contests, instrument of electoral contests and struggle for patronage and resources.

Electoral violence is sometimes deployed and mobilized by political parties to intimidate opponents, express grievances, protest against perceived injustice occasioned by manipulation and compromise of election outcomes or to make the violent entrepreneurs relevant in such a way that they can be called upon for settlement.

Politics in Nigeria means so much and has too much stakes that it is more or less regarded as war such that political opponents are regarded as enemies that must be crushed (Emordi and Unumen, 2011). There is "obsessive preoccupation with politics" and political power is pursued with maniacal zeal (Ake, 1996, P. 24,28). Violence is thus a key instrument of politics. Ake (1996 P.73) notes;

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In the circumstance in which the state is privatized, those in power will use violence and state repressive apparatuses to retain power. The people excluded will resort to violence in their quest for office.

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When the state power has been reduced to a private property, the acclaimed owners use all means at their disposal to retain it. It is on this premise that politics has been reduced to a competition without rules, restraint and impartial references and yet so intense, acrimonious, rapacious, violent, volatile, anarchic, unstable and warlike (Ake 1996 p.22-28). The Nigerian political elite is a divided, fragmented, fractious and incoherent class that is only united in the capture of state power (Ake, 1996), while the ruling class is largely self-seeking, anti-democratic, parochial and parasitic nature. Lacking in ideology and legitimacy, its principal organization and mobilization strategies are the politicization of identities, repression and violence. The Electoral Reform Committee Report (2008 p.19) stated as follows:

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The Nigerian politicians have become more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power; more reckless and greedy in their use and abuse of powers; and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts at replacing them.

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These negative occurrences are products of state weakness in terms of poor capacity, partiality, ineffectiveness, non-transparency and weak legitimacy of relevant state institutions like the security agencies, electoral management agencies and other public authorities associated with the management of the electoral process. Also, political parties compete for power in a violence prone environment and deep identity divisions that sometimes overlap with partisan interests.

### **Party Politics and Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

Competitive and well-organized party politics are necessary conditions to deepen electoral democracy in contemporary time. A well organized party politics and a well functioning political parties are supposedly essential for the success of electoral democracy and overall political development of Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2013). However, the character of party politics in Nigeria from the time of political independence have always been associated with violent actions that often threaten the collective existence of Nigeria. This ugly scenario has remained a poignant index in Nigeria's electoral process. It is even more disturbing as this negative trend appears to be assuming a more dangerous dimension in Nigeria's fourth republic.

The Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar led military junta in its nine months of existence conducted a general election and consequently handed over power to a civilian government headed by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on May 29, 1999. This handover of baton to a civilian government marked the commencement of Nigeria's fourth republic.

From 1999 when the fourth republic was born till date, Nigeria has witnessed six general elections under the superintendence of civilian administration. The party politics that drove these elections operated in a hostile habitat which were created by a long period of military rule and so were characterized by poorly structured political parties that could not perform articulative, aggregative, communicative and educative functions. The political space was highly liberalized to the extent that many political parties were registered. Some of these parties were pretenders and not contenders. This development made the democratic process very fragile and amenable to electoral violence. The party politics as usual were associated with absence of internal party democracy, ethnicization of political privileges, poor leadership structure, party indiscipline and lack of clear party ideologies. Consequently, all the elections viz 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 general elections as well as other staggered elections in the fourth republic witnessed different forms of irregularities and electoral violence such as killing, maiming and displacement of many lives and destruction of property worth millions of naira.

In the 1999 general elections which ushered in The Fourth Republic, three political parties contested the elections. They were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). However, by the time the 2003 general elections were conducted, 27 additional political parties were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to contest. This further rose to above 50 during the 2007 general elections and by the 2011 general elections, 63 political parties were on the ballot and by 2019 general elections, Nigeria had about 91 political parties. Some of these political parties had zero electoral base which made INEC to reduce the number to 18 political parties that contested the 2023 general elections.

Violence has been a common feature of party politics in the fourth republic and the political parties are the major purveyors. Nnoli (2003) argues that the political parties lacked ideological content and clear programmes as the platform for action, identification, mobilization, legitimization and conflict management but instead have displayed huge appetite for money, identity, patronage and violence. Most of the frontline parties are hijacked by the godfathers or sole founders who are driven by selfish interest, impunity and violence around distributive politics and power struggle. They are also plagued by disputes and factionalisation (INEC, 2007), greed, opportunism, self-service and deceit and are actually to some extent, coalitions of various functions of regional and economic rent seekers (Ojo, 2008 p.6). The political parties are also besieged by internal wrangling, recurrent tensions and crisis. It is therefore not surprising that party politics are characterized by electoral violence.

A clear evidence of the party-violence linkages are found in the nature of party primaries, intra-party conflicts, inter-party squabbles, patrons and client relations, ruling parties and state violence, opposition parties and mobilization of electoral violence and post election reactions. We shall discuss them as follows;

### **Party Primaries**

The party primaries in the fourth republic were done with impunity and without recourse to approved party procedures. Party candidates were sold to the highest bidders and popular aspirants were recklessly substituted.

In the 2003 general elections, the process of primaries and nomination of candidates faced a different challenge due to the absence of thoroughness in the process. For instance, the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) cleared all but one of its incumbent governors and affirmed them eligible to contest the elections. Other political parties that had incumbent office holders followed suit. Adeyemo (2003) notes that although the political parties were empowered by the electoral Act



2002 to screen their candidates, the Act required the parties to verify the claims of their candidates before submitting them to electoral commission but this was grossly neglected.

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) 2003, a coalition of 170 human rights and civil society organization) noted that the 2003 electoral process in Nigeria was undermined by the conduct of the primaries of many of the political parties as “godfathers” foist their preferred candidates on the parties through undemocratic processes.

The Electoral Risk Management (ERM) reports emphasized that the 2015 election witnessed widespread rejection of party primaries results by contestants. In the report, it was indicated that violence broke out during party primaries across the federation especially in Ondo, Delta and Abia State (EMR, 2015). For the 2023 general elections, the primaries witnessed a situation where money openly exchanged hands. Infact, for the two major political parties ( APC and PDP) victory mainly in the presidential primaries was procured by the highest bidders. For other elections, only the anointed candidates of political godfathers emerged as party candidates thereby leading to protest that resulted in the defection of some key party members and their followers to other political parties. For instance in Rivers state, Senator Magnus Ngei Abe and his followers defected to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) from the All Progressive Congress (APC) because of the overbearing influence of the former minister of Transport Mr. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi in choosing party candidates. A similar thing also played out in PDP when the former governor of Rivers state (Nyesom Wike) manipulated the governorship primary to favour his anointed candidate Mr Siminilaye Fubara.

### Intra-party conflicts

Intra party politics in the fourth republic has been plagued by suspensions, expulsions of party members, defection and deep divisions and factions that have manifested sometimes in violence. The PDP, APC, ACN, ANPP and APGA in many states at different time have been riddled with internal rivalry, disputes and conflicts between factions and struggles over the control of party and governmental machineries which have led to emergence of dual party executives and party secretariats and the decamping of losing factions (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009; Guardian 26 October 2010 p.g). APC had suffered from different forms of intra-party conflicts to the extent that it has cost the party, participation in the 2019 general elections in Rivers State and Zamfara State. The case of APC appears worse in Nigerian history.

Some selected incidents of intra-party conflicts in Nigerian’s fourth republic were reported in Vanguard 12 Nov., 2010 p.16 and Sunday vanguard 24 October 2010 p.25. They are as follows;

1. In 2007 general elections in Borno State, the ANPP witnessed violent intra-party clashes between the factions of Ali Modu Sheriff and Governor Kachala.
2. In 2010, in Edo State, the Labour Party witnessed a violent intra-party clash between factions at the state secretariat. Bloodshed was averted by police intervention.
3. In 2010, in Oyo State, the PDP recorded violent intra-party clashes between Akala and Ladoja factions. The violent attack was because of the suspension of anti-Akala legislators in the state assembly.
4. In 2010, in Edo State, the ACN recorded a violent intra-party clashes resulting in shootings and killings during party membership registration.
5. On May 11, 2018, aggrieved supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) allegedly loyal to Senator Magnus Abe clashed with those loyal to the Transportation Minister, Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi at the Rivers State High Court. The clash started when some faction members came to

the court to secure injunction to stop the local government congress billed to hold on Saturday May 12, 2018 but met the court under lock and key. The situation resulted in violent clash as some angry youths forced the gate open (Ereyi, 2018).

In addition to the above, in the build up to the 2023 general elections, the emergence of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar as the presidential candidate of the PDP as well as the non selection of Nyesom Wike as his running mate created serious intra-party squabbles that led to the withdrawal of support for the presidential candidate by Wike and his supporters. This development has caused serious crack in PDP today because of the recriminations and counter- recriminations it has generated in the party.

### Inter Party Squabbles

The Nigerian political parties according to Guobadia as cited in (Kurfi 2007 p. 162) are war machines cocked almost permanently to go into combat with perceived opponents both existing and potential enemies that include not just “the opposition party but also the electorate who refuse to toe the party line. They have also been described as organized criminal organizations for seeking, gaining and retaining power (Alemika, 2011).

Akelegbe (2014 p324) reported some selected incidents of inter-party conflicts and violence between 2001 and 2009. They are

1. On March 21, 2003 in Kwara State, the PDP and ANPP had violent clashes between supporters of their gubernatorial candidates. Two persons were killed.
2. On March 21, 2003 in Cross Rivers State, the PDP and ANPP had violent clashes between supporters of their gubernatorial candidates. One person was killed.
3. On April 26, 2007 in Rivers State, the supporters of PDP and ANPP fought at Ogu-Bolo Local Government Area in Rivers State. One person died.
4. On March 2001 in Kogi State, the members of PDP and ANPP clashed. One person was killed.
5. On February 2009, in Edo State, members of ACN and PDP had inter-party clash with dangerous weapons in the House of Assembly. Several honourable members were injured.’

In the build up to the 2023 general elections, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), (2023) observed that candidates, election officials and politicians were violently attacked. Party militias, criminal gangs and other armed groups engaged in violence to suppress opponents, deter rival candidates from running and influencing the electoral process.

From the beginning of the 2023 electoral campaign, ACLED monitored the impact and dynamics of political violence in Nigeria through the Nigeria Election Violence Tracker, an interactive resource created in partnership with the Nigeria-based Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD). The report pointed that political violence in the build up to the 2023 general elections was largely in line with the levels observed in the 2019 elections.

In the 12 months preceding the 2023 general elections, ACLED recorded over 200 violent events involving party members and supporters, resulting in 100 reported fatalities. Part of the violence involved direct, organized attacks against civilians followed by mob violence and abductions. Unarmed civilians were the target of violence in many of the events recorded by ACLED. In one of such cases, gun men described as bandits killed an APC ward Chairman in Kaduna State in April 2022. The PDP candidate for Ideato North and South federal constituency in Imo State was killed in his residence in Akokwa community in January 2023. A former PDP women leader in Abia State was among the four people killed in Ohafia local government area in March 2022 while a Labour Party



women leader in Laura local government area of Kaduna State was killed in November 2022 after gun men raided her house.

In November 2022, supporters of NNPP and APC clashed in Gwale local government area of Kano State.

### Patrons and Client Relations

Conflicts and misunderstanding between patrons and clients (godfathers and godsons) have led to political violence in some states. Good examples are that of Anambra and Oyo States. The attempts by Chief Chris Uba (Patron) to remove the former governor Dr. Chris Ngege (Client) from office in Anambra State thriggered a reign of conflicts, violence, governmental crises and stalmates between 1999 and 2006, involving thugs, armed groups and police (Ibeanu, 2007). Also, in Oyo State, Governor Rashidi Ladoja went against his godfather, the late Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. Alhaji Adedibu was widely believed to have orchestrated the illegal removal of Governor Ladoja from office when the latter refused to allow Alhaji Adedibu unrestrained access to the security votes of the Governor (Abati, 2006). This led to series of clashes between the supporters of Adedibu and Ladoja.

### Ruling Parties & State Violence

In certain occasions the ruling parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic use the security agencies to harass and unleash violence against opposition members. Such violence includes persecution and intimidation of opponents over alleged corruption, possession of arms and abductions. Sometimes this was followed by invasion of homes and business offices of the opposition members by security agencies, strangulations and destruction of businesses, severances of state patronage, arrests and detention. In September 2003, an ANPP rally in Kano was attacked by the police. The vice presidential candidate of ANPP Dr. Chuba Okadibo died subsequently allegedly from police tear-gas (Ogundiya & Baba 2005 p.379). The security agencies were also used to intimidate voters especially in the stronghold of the opposition party. A good example was the use of security agents to intimidate and harass voters during the 2019 governorship election in Rivers State. Also, ruling party and state officials and candidates who are dissatisfied with any action in the electoral process, use security agencies attached to them to cause political and electoral violence and irregularities with impunity (Abutudu & Obakhedo, 2009).

On January 31, 2023 in the build up to the 2023 general elections in Rivers State, political thugs allegedly hired by the ruling party in the state reportedly attacked the campaign team of the governorship candidate of APC Mr. Tonye Cole, shot sporadically and abducted the party's campaign director in Opobo town in Opobo/Nkoro local government of the state. Also, within the same period, the campaign team of the governorship candidate of SDP Senator Magnus Ngei Abe was also attacked in Ahoada West local government area of Rivers State leaving many injured by suspected thugs of the ruling party (PDP) in the state.

### Opposition Parties & the Mobilization of Electoral Violence

The opposition parties in many states in Nigeria in the bid to contain the excesses of the government in power mobilize the youths, the lumpen-proletariats and thugs to resist alleged electoral malpractices and protect their mandates through barricades, road blocks and vigils on the road and INEC offices (Ya'u, 2009). In 2007, the opposition parties in Bauchi, Edo, Ekiti and Osun resorted to these methods to checkmate the rigging plans of the ruling party. Also, in Edo State, the supporters of ACN and voters demonstrated in parts of the state, burnt the INEC office at Igarra and some properties of PDP stalwarts in Benin City when the governorship election result was announced. In

Osun, belligerent youths, women, angry mobs and demonstrators burnt down properties belonging to PDP members and Oyinlola solidarity campaign office in Oshogbo following the announcement of the governorship election result in 2007 (Olorode, 2007).

In 2023, aggrieved supporters of the Labour Party Presidential candidate Mr. Peter Obi and that of PDP Alhaji Atiku Abubakar protested the declaration of the candidate of APC, Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the winner of the 2023 presidential election.

### Post Election Violence

A good example of post election violence in the Nigeria's fourth republic is the violence that the announcement of 2011 presidential election witnessed. The declaration of the 2011 presidential election results by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which was in favour of the then incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan ushered in another epoch of post-election violence in Northern part of the country (Bamgbose, 2012). The violence witnessed the use of explosive devices in public offices, places of worship, vandalization of governmental properties and wanton loss of lives. In terms of human casualty, the 2011 post-election violence was unprecedented in Nigerian electoral history. While police records of death in Kaduna alone was 401, the Human Rights Watch (2011 p.1,4) recorded 180 in Kaduna and Zaria and over 500 in Southern Kaduna (Orji and Uzodi 2012 p.61). The Human Rights Watch (2011) estimated that 800 persons were killed in the violence. Hundreds of persons were injured, maimed, raped, beaten, matcheted, shot and brutalized in the affected states. A police report indicated that about 1,435 private houses, 987 shops, 157 churches, 46 mosques, 45 police properties, 16 government properties, 437 vehicles and 219 motorcycles were burnt or destroyed in Kaduna state alone (Ogbaudu, 2011, Cited in Orji & Uzochi, 2012). Between 48,000 persons (Omenazu & Pascal, 2011) and 65,000 persons (HRW) were internally displaced in about 12 states.

The violence was a response to an alleged claim that the election was rigged in favour of the ruling PDP against the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) which was placed second in the presidential election results. It is necessary to point out here that the CPC had prior to the election warned of alleged PDP intention to rig the election and through the presidential candidates, Gen. Mohammedu Buhari had threatened that "the people should lynch anybody that tries to tinker with the votes" and crush anybody that stands in the way of the people (Amina 2011 as Cited in Orji & Uzodi 2012 p. 41).

The February 25th presidential elections ended up in violence in Rivers state as angry youths allegedly protested against attempts by the state governor (Barr. Nyesom Wike) to manipulate the results of the presidential poll in favor of his preferred candidate. The development led to the killing of three youths suspected to be political thugs in a clash at Ogbakiri community in Emohua local government area of the state between political thugs hired by the two leading political parties in the community (the PDP and APC).

### Implications of Political Party Linked Violence on Nigerian Democracy

Political party-linked violence is a recipe for democratic crisis. It is injurious to national stability, security and democratic consolidation. The involvement of political parties in electoral violence is capable of accentuating the proliferation of arms, armed groups, cultists and militias and heighten political tensions which is capable of precipitating the breakdown of law and order and bring to the fore an unpopular government.

It is also capable of causing low voter turnout and indeed political apathy. This is because violence during elections puts fear in the minds of the people and so virtually everybody including intellectuals,

social crusaders, students, market women and workers feel discouraged from party politics except those who have a neurotic attachment to power or no other means of livelihood or no self-esteem. This has led to a situation where mediocres and expendables take over the entire system, thus deepening cynicism.

Party-linked electoral violence is a threat to democratic consolidation and survival. It causes assault on civil rights and liberties as well as democratic values and ethos. It is also injurious to the collective sensibilities of the people.

## Conclusion

The character of party politics in Nigeria makes the electoral process weak and vulnerable and its future remain endangered by the unholy attitude of the political parties. Political parties in Nigeria have shown open disdain for democratic consolidation due to their huge appetite to capture power by all means. The parties have jettison their traditional role of articulating, and aggregating citizen's interests, deepening democratic institutions, developing and promoting viable policy positions and programmes.

The unwholesome character of party leadership, weak cohesion, defections and gross disregard for electoral principles have made the political parties wear the toga of institutions with high propensity to violent conflicts. To redeem the image of political parties and rejig Nigerian party politics in line with democratic order and ethos, we make the following recommendations.

## Recommendations

1. The political party should be made to play critical roles in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. They should be restructured from mere institutions for acquiring political power to effective institutions that are capable of mediating and reconciling societal interests and conflicts. Therefore the issue of effective leadership, internal democracy, party ideology and the mobilization and linkage to civil society and the citizenry have to be addressed.
2. The rules and procedures that govern electoral behavior and conducts should be strictly applied and enforced to serve as deterrence.
3. The culture of violence in the electoral process in Nigerian party politics has to change through proper political education, promotion of democratic values, ethics and procedures in political participation and competition. The rules and procedures that govern electoral behaviour need to be applied and enforced without fear or favour.
4. The regulatory agencies such as INEC, security agencies and anti-corruption agencies need to be strengthened in terms of competence, effectiveness, impartiality, integrity, confidence and credibility.
5. The political parties need to be strengthened as critical democratic institutions that play vital roles in the electoral process. They should develop capacity to moderate, control and manage their members passions and responses to grievances or perceived threats and losses. In this regards party-based grievances should be resolved before elections so that they do not become violence triggers.

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