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Electoral Violence and Democratic Sustenance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Insights from the 2011 Post-election Violence in Northern Nigeria

Luqman Saka and Abdulrahman Abubakar*

Abstract

This article examines electoral violence and its implications on Nigeria's efforts at democratic sustenance, using the incidences of pre- and post-election violence that emanated from the conduct of the 2011 general elections as a point of departure. The article engages in the discussion of three important factors that underpin electoral violence and the implications that the deployment of violence in the electoral process constitutes for the democratic process in Nigeria. The article posits that the reification of violence as an instrument for acquiring and/or retaining political power negatively hinders efforts at enhancing democratic governance in Nigeria.

Introduction

Democracy is by far the best known system of government. This is because of its edifying significance as a mode of governance based on the principles of popular sovereignty, the rule of law, accountability, participation and the right of resistance to unlawful or tyrannical rule (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2000). The central idea of any democracy is to conceive and utilize election as the primary building blocks for democratic rule. Under constitutional rule, elections are the processes and means through which the acquisition of political power and authority can be achieved. Election provides opportunities for political participation in a democracy, and serves as the most reliable means for affirming the supremacy of the electorate.

Affirming the centrality of election to the democratic process, Ogundiya and Baba (2005) note that elections are not only

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meant to ensure, confirm or re-affirm the legitimacy of the governors through regular consent, but also provide a fertile ground for democracy to thrive. Indeed, the electoral process remains the most viable method for the peaceful and orderly transfer of power from one regime to another in a democratic system. Elections offer the electorate the freedom of choice among competing parties, programmes and candidates, the power to hold elected leaders accountable and further provide protection against perpetuation of arbitrary rule (Obi and Abutudu, 1999). The centrality of the electoral process within the context of a democratic process informs why free, fair and periodic elections are mostly considered as vital to the realization of a stable democratic polity.

The ritual of holding democratic elections is not strange to Nigeria, as the nation had conducted a number of elections, starting from the period after independence. The democratic credibility or otherwise of these past elections has been the subject of scholarly debates over the years (Akinwumi, 2004; Ake, 2001; Yaqub, 1999; Osaghae, 1998; Anifowose, 1982; Adekanye, 1989). The commencement of democratic rule in May 1999 returned Nigeria to the path of conducting democratic elections. Aside the transition elections of 1999, Nigeria had conducted three other rounds of general elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011. Like in Nigeria's previous republics, the credibility of these elections has also become a subject of debates, owing to the charges of electoral malpractices and the attendant incidences of election related violence (Abe, 2008; Herskovitis, 2007; Okolie, 2005; Akinwumi, 2004; Omotola, 2004).

Aside from the transitional elections of 1999, Nigeria cannot be said to have witnessed the conduct of violent free elections since the commencement of democratic rule in May 1999. The conduct of the 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections was marred with reported instances of election related violence. The utterance of former President Olusegun Obasanjo that the 2007 general election was a "do-or-die affair" for him and the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), clearly attests to the violent nature of electoral contest in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic in general and the violence that characterized the 2007

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general elections in particular (Tenuche, 2010; *Daily Trust*, 12/02/2007). Under the violence riddled party politics and electoral process, as depicted largely by the actions of leaders of the ruling PDP since 2003, the task of ensuring the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria has become a serious national challenge (Tenuche, 2010; Omotola, 2004).

Like in the previous republics, since 1999, the electoral process has been rendered vulnerable to abuse and ambushed through the twin evils of rigging and other forms of electoral fraud and violence by parties in power or others seeking to manipulate institutional levers to win power. The most prominent factor underpinning electoral malpractice in Nigeria is the fierce nature of competition for political office. This is further intensified by the existence of a spoilt system erected on the understanding of politics and power as a winner-takes-all phenomenon that has furthered the entrenchment of a never-lose-at-all syndrome (Tenuche, 2010; Joseph, 1987; Ojibo, 1980). Within this context, election, which is a critical part of the democratic process, therefore loses its intrinsic value and becomes a mere means of manipulation for attaining political power. Thus, election in Nigeria, especially since 2003, no longer offers the Nigerian electorate their freedom of choice that is the core to the institution of a democratic polity (Gambo, 2006).

It is on this premise that this article examines the issue of electoral violence, using the 2011 post-election violence in some parts of Northern Nigeria as a case study and the challenges it poses to the process of democratic sustenance within the context of the subsisting democratic process in Nigeria. This study is divided into six main sections. Following this introduction is the section that discusses the conceptual issues that relate to electoral violence. Section three examines the factors responsible for electoral violence in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. Section four examines the implications of electoral violence on Nigeria's democratic process. Section five discusses the possible options for democratic sustenance while the last section is the conclusion.

Electoral Violence: A Conceptual Discourse

Scholars from varying disciplinary backgrounds have sought to explain what constitutes electoral violence and its numerous manifestations in the course of the political process. Given the complexity of electoral violence, it is often misconstrued and interchangeably used for political violence. While the two are intrinsically connected, it is important to note that the two related phenomena are quite different. Although the two represent the deployment of violent acts in the conduct of the democratic process, it is noteworthy to point out that political violence is broader than electoral violence. Indeed, electoral violence is just a subset of political violence. Political violence encompasses all forms of violent acts, which occur in different kinds in the political system irrespective of their democratic credentials. For the purpose of clarification, an explanation shall be offered albeit in brief with regards to what constitutes political violence as discussed in the literature. This becomes necessary in order to clearly define the scope of what constitutes electoral violence and situate it within the broader theme of political violence. Anifowose (1982:4) gives an all-embracing definition of what constitutes political violence, when he conceives it;

...as the use of threat or physical act carried out by individual within political system against another individual or individuals and/ or property with the intention to cause injury or death to persons and/ or damage or destruction to property and whose objectives, choice of target or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance that is tend to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

Political violence is carried out in the struggle for the acquisition of political power, and in some cases it can be geared towards the consolidation of power. According to Anifowose (1982), it is often a natural concomitant of the political process

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especially where there is fierce competition over the sharing of power and resource. Be that as it may, electoral violence is a variance of political violence but both are all directed at influencing the political system.

According to Karim (2011), electoral violence is a form of violence that is perpetrated in the course of political activities, including before, during and after a period of election. It includes among others the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt opponents' political meetings or voting at polling stations, the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and others, or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. He stressed further that electoral violence can be any behavior involving or tending to involve the use of physical force to cause damage to property, maim or kill individual(s) in order to ensure or prevent electoral gains. In the same vein, Afolabi (2003) defines electoral violence as a form of violence that is associated mainly with the process of election in a given democratic polity or in the process of democratic transition. Electoral violence particularly in Nigeria, is a quintessential elite affair arising from the inordinate struggle for place in the structure of power that has often degenerated into open violence among individuals or ethno-communal groups who are deceived into believing that their interests are about to be imperiled.

According to Ladan (2009), electoral violence has both physical and psychological dimensions. The physical aspects include attacks and assaults by one group of party members and/or loyalists on another resulting in injuries and sometime deaths, the assassination of political opponents or people perceived as a threat to one's political ambition, the destruction of public or opponents' property, kidnapping and hostage-taking, armed raid on voting and collation centers and snatching ballot boxes and papers from polling officers and free-for-all fight. The psychological dimension of electoral violence includes the aggressive, abrasive and anarchic conduct of candidates and their supporters during the electioneering period. Nwolise (2007) notes that the psychological dimension of electoral violence manifests through the following acts: threats against and harassment of opponents by the security agents of the ruling party, which create political apathy, shoot-at-

sight orders that breed fear in voters, terror inflicted by political assassination which scares people from participating in politics or contesting elections, the publication or broadcast of abusive, insulting or intimidating material or advertorials, and threats to life through phone calls, text messages, among other such acts.

In his own definition, Fisher (2002) conceives electoral violence as acts or threats of coercion, intimidation or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises in the content of electoral competition. He stresses further that electoral violence is any random or organized acts or threats to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail or abuse a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay or to otherwise influence an electoral process. Taking a similar position, Ogundiya (2003) explains electoral violence to include all forms of violent acts like riots, demonstrations, clashes of party loyalists, political assassinations, looting, arson, kidnapping and the like whether they are spontaneous or not, which occur before, during and after elections. He describes the acts afore-stated as election motivated crisis employed to alter, change or influence by force the electoral behavior of voters or voting patterns or possibly reverse electoral decisions in favor of a particular candidate or political party.

Irrespective of its nature and forms of perpetration, electoral violence is elite driven. Members of the political elite in society are the principal actors responsible for the instigation of electoral violence, as they are responsible for the employment of the services of the army of idle youths to engage in violent acts directed at manipulating and/or influencing the outcomes of the electoral process. It is the violence and destruction that often emanate from instances of election disturbance in the past that often make Nigerians express anxiety and trepidation in the build up to elections (Yakub, 1999). This perhaps is what prompted Adekanye (1989) to counsel that the election period in Nigeria should be declared as a 'State of Emergency' and that the military should be charged with the conduct and administration of election.

The Factors Fueling Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Highlighting the centrality of electoral violence as a national crisis, Odoma (2013) argues that destructive violence arising from

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widespread violence has not only been a protracted social problem, but has equally been the bane of democratic failure in Nigeria. There is a growing public perception of some key factors that often account for and contribute to the occurrence of electoral violence in Nigeria. Some of these factors include: the undue premium placed on money in Nigerian politics, widespread illiteracy and poverty, corruption and the perversion of the electoral process, the sit-tight syndrome of incumbent leaders and the tendency of those outside government to seek power at all costs, amongst a host of other factors (Odoma, 2013; Ladan, 2007).

One of the most important factors that have continued to fuel the high incidences of electoral violence recorded in Nigeria since the return to civil rule is the high premium placed on politics and the huge financial rewards for political office holders, both elected and appointed. The Nigeria media is awash of recent with reports that the Nigerian legislature earns the highest salary and allowances in the world. This revelation has generated a number of controversies and led to the call for the reduction of the jumbo pay earned by political office holders in both the legislative and executive arms of government in Nigeria. For instance, Adisa (2010:11) notes that:

As at 2010, the annual recurrent expenditure for the 109 Senators and 360 members of the House of Representatives in the National Assembly is estimated at N67.32 billion, which is 25.4 percent of the 2010 recurrent budget for the country.

By looking at the salaries and allowances of political office holders, it is quite easy to understand why the winning of elections and occupying political office are approached in a warfare-like manner. For example, the breakdown of the salaries and allowances of a Nigeria legislator in both legislative chambers is put as follows: a senator earns N15 million monthly with another N45 million as quarterly allocation for constituency projects, and a House of Representatives member earns a monthly wage of N10.59 million with 28 million quarterly for constituency projects. Other benefits enjoyed by the national legislators include

severance allowances to be paid on completion of their tenure, N6.08 million for senators, N5.9 million for House of Representatives members; duty tour for their official assignment other than Abuja and not outside the country, N23, 000 per night for senators and N21,000 per night for House of Representative members. When they are outside the country, estacode for a Senator stands at \$800 and \$550 for House of Representatives members and refundable car loans of N8.1 million and N7.94 million for senators and representatives, respectively (Ameh, 2013; Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Commission, 2010 and Nnameka, 2010).

In a country where the minimum monthly wage is eighteen thousand Naira (N18, 000), all of these bogus salaries and allowances enjoyed by political office holders have made the contest for political positions in Nigeria become a battle for the fittest wherein no instrument used is too crude and no means morally repulsive to achieve success. The remuneration of political office holders and the display of affluence by government officials have without doubt inspired the use of violence to acquire and/or retain political positions by politicians who have come to see politics as the quickest route to amass wealth and status transformation in Nigeria (Odoma, 2013).

Closely linked to the issue of bogus salaries and allowances for political office holders is the problem of poverty and youth unemployment as one of the factors that help to fuel the embers of electoral violence. These two social challenges combined have immensely aided the frequent eruption of electoral violence since the commencement of the present Fourth Republic. While Nigeria is highly endowed in terms of material and human resources, yet the country's enormous population remains one of the poorest in terms of per capita income and purchasing power parity. Since the 1980s and the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and depth of poverty in Nigeria. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics on the poverty profile in Nigeria showed that the incidence of poverty rose from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 43.6 percent in 1985, dropped slightly to 42.7 percent in 1992 from where it rose sharply to 65.6 percent in 1996 and steadily rose to

70.2 percent in 2003 (Feridun and Akindele, 2005: 2). This has contributed to the characterization of Nigeria as a rich country with poor citizens. In the face of this excruciating poverty and youth unemployment, it is easy to lure the army of unemployed youth to become mercenary and political enforcers for parties and candidates seeking to acquire political power at all costs (Saka, 2010).

Another important factor aiding the perversion of the electoral process and fueling violence is the poor administration and management of the electoral process by the main institutional umpire, the election management body in Nigeria. For democratic elections to be free, fair and credible, the election management body must conspicuously demonstrate its neutrality to all parties in the contest for political power. Over the decades, successive election umpires in Nigeria have been accused of several electoral misdeeds that did not only impair the bodies' neutrality and credibility, but have equally heightened agitation and election violence (Odoma, 2013; Saka, 2007; Saka and Salu, 2006).

Under this present dispensation, many Nigerians have had cause to doubt the integrity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and thus the credibility of elections conducted by the body, especially under the stewardship of Professor Maurice Iwu. With the popular perception that the electoral umpire was biased and a stooge of the ruling party, the foundation was laid for the electorate to doubt the credibility of any election conducted by the body under Iwu. This invariably set in motion the agitation, litigation, violence and destruction that characterized the electoral process under Iwu's leadership of the electoral body. The long list of court litigation and violence that trailed the conduct of the 2003 and 2007 general elections proves this point. That the major beneficiary of the flawed 2007 general elections, the late President Yara'adua, accepted the charges of electoral fraud, recognized that it undermined the legitimacy of his regime and set up an electoral reform committee was an open admission of the allegations of fraud and the perversion of the process leveled against the electoral umpire (Odoma, 2013).

Carpenter INEC for its shoddy conduct of the 2007 general elections, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) notes that

“state institutions such as INEC and EFCC saddled with the responsibility of conducting free and fair elections and sanitizing the polity, failed woefully in their respective tasks” (TMG, 2007:5). This, according to the group, makes the 2007 general elections the worst elections that ever took place in the country. This is because in totality, it robbed Nigerians of their rights to be part of a constitutional process for recruiting their leaders into public offices (Omotola, 2007; Oshodi, 2007; TMG, 2007). Highlighting how the fraud and perversion of the electoral process in the conduct of the 2007 general elections encouraged violence, the TMG notes that: “the 2007 elections, unfortunately like most electoral contest in Nigeria, assumed the features of warfare rather than open and civil competition for political power” (TMG, 2007:7). So long as political office remains highly attractive and lucrative as an instrument for the corrupt acquisition of wealth and dispensing patronage, so long will politicians be willing and ready to use all the means available inclusive of violence to gain political power.

While the conduct and management of the 2011 general elections by INEC under Professor Attahiru Jega, OFR was better than what transpired in 2007, yet the perception of perversion and fraud with regards to the announced results of the presidential election triggered a wave of post-election violence in some states in Northern Nigeria. In Kano, Kaduna, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa and Taraba States irate youth and protesters burnt places of worship, public buildings and the houses of politicians from the ruling party and religious leaders considered to be aligned with the ruling party and targeted INEC buildings and its personnel as well (EU Election Observer Mission, 2011). The incidence of violence recorded after the release of the presidential election results seen by some sections within Northern Nigeria society as doctored shows the direct link between electoral fraud and violence in Nigeria.

The 2011 Post-Election Violence in Northern Nigeria

A cursory look at Nigeria's political history shows that ‘transition elections’ are relatively more peaceful, orderly and reliable than elections conducted and supervised by civilian administrations

(Saka, 2008; Okolie, 2005; Osaghae, 1998). The history of elections and the electoral process in Nigeria whether in the Fourth Republic or in previous republics clearly demonstrate and give credence to this assertion. From the benefit of hindsight, one can relatively claim that the process leading to the 1999 general elections and its outcome were more acceptable and relatively less outrageous. Although there were incidences of sharp practices and electoral irregularities, their instances and extent were child play when compared with what transpired in the 2003 and 2007 general elections.

Unlike the two previous elections after the transitional election of 1999, the 2011 general election was better in terms of the conduct and management of the process by the INEC under Professor Attahiru Jega's leadership (Orji and Uzodi, 2012). This notwithstanding, the electoral process and the actual conduct of the elections cannot be said to be devoid of sharp practices and violence (ICG, 2011). This was attested to by *The Guardian* newspaper in an editorial where it notes that: "the successful management of the country's 2011 general elections is praiseworthy particularly against the backdrop of the widespread violence that was experienced before and after the polls. However, the elections are far from being perfect" (*The Guardian*, 2011a).

While commending INEC for the credible management of the election process and the conduct of the 2011 general elections, however, the EU Election Observation Mission (2011) notes that in many respects the conduct of the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections represents a notable deterioration when compared to the Presidential elections. The mission in its report observed that the process of subsequent election was marred by an overall increased interference and undue influence of party agents and underage voting among other electoral vices, which is an exacerbation compared to the Presidential elections (EU Election Observation Mission, 2011). This deterioration in the conduct and management of subsequent elections without doubt undermines the credibility and integrity of the results of the elections. This in particular constitutes blight on the process in view of the charges of the perversion of the results released for the Presidential

election, which prompted post-election violence in some states in the northern part of the country in the first place.

To a large extent, the widely acclaimed success of the 2011 elections was dented by the post-election violence that broke out following the announcement of the results of the presidential elections. Indeed, the 2011 post-election violence is seen by many as one of the bloodiest incident of electoral violence in Nigeria's history of electoral violence (Bekoe, 2011; Ajayi, 2011; HRW, 2011; ICG, 2011; Shuaibu and Iroegbu, 2011). The 2011 post-election violence started in Bauchi and Gombe states, and quickly spread like wide-fire to other states in northern Nigeria. In all, the post-election violence rocked fourteen Northern states. However, it was more serious in Adamawa, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Niger, Kano, Kaduna and Katsina states. In these states where the post-election violence was most prevalent, violent protesters killed several people, torched, looted or destroyed businesses, churches and private houses (Shuaibu and Iroegbu, 2011; HRW, 2011). In the aftermath of the violence, thousands of people were displaced from their homes and places of business (Orji and Uzodi, 2012: 8). Although violence has been part and parcel of electoral contests in Nigeria since 1999, the 2011 post-election violence stands out in terms of its magnitude, severity and consequences (Bekoe, 2011; Ajayi, 2011; HRW, 2011; ICG, 2011).

One of the reasons that have been put forward as prompting the violence was the allegations of poll rigging in favour of the ruling PDP by one of the main opposition parties, the Congress for Progressive Change, (CPC). Officials of the CPC as well as some poll analysts pointed out that the pattern of voting in the South-South and South-East geo-political zones, where support for the PDP candidate was greatest, did not follow the track observed in previous elections, and raised fears of foul-play (Akhaine 2012). In categorical term, the CPC alleged vote buying, ballot-box stuffing, and the inflation of results by the PDP in the South-South and South-East states, particularly in Abia, Anambra, Bayelsa and Delta States, which recorded an abnormally high voter turnout of up to 98 and 99 percent. The 'astonishingly high voter turnout' in South-South and South-East states fits the pattern of the discredited 2003 and 2007 elections. This might likely have

informed why some observers argued that much of the result of the presidential election in these zones was doctored (Orji and Uzodi, 2012; Gberie, 2011).

Without doubt, the charges of the perversion of the electoral process, in particular that of rigging and the inflation of votes were important as variables prompting the 2011 post-election violence. However, this factor combined with others to fuel the post-election violence recorded across states in northern Nigeria. As Orji and Uzodi (2012) note, aside grievances over the election outcome, the existence of a ripe opportunity for violence, the increased salience of ethnicity in Nigerian politics, as well as the relative power parity between the PDP and the main opposition parties provide the underlying causes for the outbreak of the 2011 post-election violence.

The riots, looting, arson and assaults associated with the 2011 post-election violence were focused mainly on PDP leaders and supporters, state institutions, government officials, traditional rulers, and individuals suspected to be non-Muslims. Homes, businesses and properties of notable PDP members, such as Vice President Namadi Sambo, the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Ghali Umar Na'Abba, and President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign coordinator, Salisu Buhari, were either torched or vandalized. The offices of the PDP in Niger and Gombe States were burned. In addition to these attacks on properties belonging to the PDP and the party's key members, state institutions and government-owned properties, such as the Kaduna State Independent Electoral Commission (KADSIEC), the popular Minna Centenary round-about at Kpakungu area in Niger State and the INEC office in Gombe metropolis, were all destroyed (Orji and Uzodi, 2012).

Traditional rulers suspected to have supported the PDP were selected for attack. Specifically, the palaces of some of the most renowned and revered traditional rulers in northern Nigeria, including the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar; the Emir of Kano Ado Bayero; and the Emir of Zazzau, Shehu Idris, were targeted and attacked. In Bida, Niger state, two irate youths who were so brazen as to march to the palace of the Etsu of Nupe, Yahaya

Abubakar, with the intention to attack the palace, were shot and killed by security agents (Ebije, 2011). The attacks on these revered traditional rulers might be seen as an indication of a breakdown of their moral authority and a decline in the social and political linkage between the traditional elite and the masses of northern Nigeria.

While the violence recorded after the release of the Presidential election results given its magnitude and scale of destruction that trailed it was largely unexpected, yet violence as it relates to the conduct of the electoral process during the 2011 general elections was not restricted to the post-election period alone. Incidences of violence of varying dimensions and magnitude were recorded in the period leading to the actual conduct of the election in different parts of the country. Earlier into the electioneering campaign, Senator David Mark warned politicians to desist from any act of violence in the course of the electoral process as it portended danger to the survival of the nation's democracy and the democratic process (*The Guardian*, 2011b). However, Senator Mark too was caught in the middle of political violence on March 18th, 2011 when his campaign train was waylaid by armed political thugs. Though his campaign train was lucky as they hastily beat a retreat, other politicians and their campaign entourage caught up in the incidence of violence in the course of political campaign in Anambra, Edo, Ekiti, Jigawa, Plateau, Ondo, and Oyo States were not as lucky as violence resulted in killings (*The Guardian*, 2011b).

In Otukpo, Benue State men political thugs beat to death a driver of Rtd General Lawrence Onoja, an Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) senatorial candidate in the state. Onoja himself had earlier escaped an attack with gun wounds in his arm. Various parts of the state had witnessed incidences of violence and arson in the period leading to the elections. In Kebbi State, armed political thugs attacked the former Governor of the state, Alhaji Adamu Aliero, and the governorship candidate of the CPC, Alhaji Abubakar Malam. One person was killed and eight vehicles and two houses were set ablaze (*The Guardian*, 2011b; Akpodovhan, Nwaoko, Michael, Abassi and Ahmadu, 2011). The incidence of pre-election violence was not restricted to the aforementioned

states alone as numerous acts of violence were replicated in virtually most of the states of the federation with resultant huge casualties in the period leading to the conduct of the 2011 general elections.

As widespread as the pre-election violence experienced in the run up to the 2011 general elections was, it represented a child play when compared with the eruption of violence and the destruction of life and property that followed the announcement of the results of the presidential election in some selected states in Northern Nigeria. Kaduna State witnessed the highest level of destruction in the orgy of violence recorded in the region sequel to the announcement of the results of the 2011 presidential polls in which the incumbent President Jonathan was declared the winner. Given a breakdown of the casualties of the orgy of violence, the then Inspector General of Police revealed that 518 persons were killed in Kaduna out of which, six were police personnel. The former IGP also noted that 77 persons were injured while 22,000 persons were displaced. The police chief also revealed that 157 Churches, 46 Mosques and 1,435 houses were all burnt. Aside these, 437 vehicles and 219 motorcycles were also burnt in the post-election violence that gripped Kaduna State (Alechenu, 2011; Olatunji, Owuamanam, and Olorok, 2011).

In Gombe city, more than 10 persons were feared dead in the violence that broke out following the release of the presidential poll results. In the violence, the house of the state PDP chairman, Mr. Jack Gumpy, was set ablaze and nine persons trapped inside the house died. Also, the house of the former Minister of Education and PDP leader, Hajia Aisha Jibir Dukku, was attacked and several vehicles destroyed. Three buses and an INEC office were burnt along Federal College of Education road while another INEC office in Bajoga, Funakaye Local Council was also torched. In Niger State, two Churches, five vehicles, over ten houses and other property worth millions of naira were destroyed by irate youths. At least two persons were also confirmed dead in the violence. In order to contain the situation, a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on Minna, Kontagora, New Bussa and Suleja.

In Kano State, the residence of Galadiman Kano, Alhaji Tijani Hashim, alleged to be the political godfather of Vice-

President Namadi Sambo, was razed by youths believed to be angry over the victory of Jonathan at the polls. Also, the Gandu Albasa home of the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Umar Ghali Na'Abba, and that of Alhaji Bako Saria were also torched. The duo was reported to be at the vanguard of the Jonathan re-election project in the state. The attack was also extended to the Bamaina Aluminium factory reportedly owned by Governor Sule Lamido of Jigawa State. The irate youths on rampage set bonfires in major streets in the Kano metropolis and targeted the residences of dozens of other PDP leaders for destruction. The outbreak of mayhem in Kano resulted in the drafting of men of the Nigerian Armed Forces and the imposition of a dusk to dawn curfew on the state. There was also reports of violent protests in Taraba and Plateau States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (*The Guardian*, 2011c; Olatunji, Owuamanam, and Olokor, 2011).

The 2011 Post-Election Violence and its Implications for Democratic Sustenance in Nigeria

Undoubtedly, the orgy of violence before and after the conduct of the 2011 general elections portends danger for the sustenance of democratic the process in Nigeria and has grave implications for security and governance in the country. First, democratic stability, good governance and economic development cannot be achieved or attained amidst an unstable and crises-ridden social and political environment. Conflict in its constructive form is seen as the essence of social and political life and democracy also allows for competition among the various ideologically differentiated groups in the polity. But when conflict becomes destructive, endemic, persistent and attains an unmanageable level, then democracy becomes an illusion (Ogundiya, and Baba, 2005).

The most obvious consequence of electoral violence remains the wanton destruction of properties and threats to human lives. Innocent citizens in most cases are often the victims of electorally motivated violence (Karin, 2011). Electoral violence has caused much destruction to both private and public properties since the return to civil rule in 1999. While it is difficult to get accurate figures in Nigeria, however, the International Crisis

Group in its report estimated that more than 1,000 people lost their lives in the violence that characterized the 2011 general elections (International Crisis Group, 2011). Aside this staggering casualty, thousands were displaced while properties worth billions of naira were destroyed. The unbridled use of violence that characterized the conduct of elections in Nigeria, including the 2011 general elections, has what ordinarily should be a civil duty to become an exercise that generates insecurity for Nigerians (Saliu and Saka, 2006). The loss that emanates from the violence that results from the electoral conduct might have informed the Economist position that results in Nigerian elections come in two separate columns, one records the votes cast at polling stations and the other the number of people killed around the time of the election (*The Economist*, 2011).

Perhaps in realization of the enormity of the destruction and loss that emanated from the crisis, the Federal Government of Nigeria, two years after the violence, disbursed the sum of 5.7 billion naira to the representatives of eight states affected by the violence. This monetary compensation for the victims of the violence was one of the key recommendations of the administrative panel raised to investigate the 2011 post-election violence headed by Sheik Ahmed Lemu. The breakdown of the amount disbursed to eight states that benefited in the first tranche is as follows:

Table: Federal Government Monetary Compensation Disbursed to States for Victims of the 2011 Post-Election Violence

S/No.	State	Amount Disbursed in Nigeria Naira (N)
1	Katsina State	1,973,209,440.00
2	Bauchi State	1, 574, 879,000.00
3	Kano State	944, 827, 000.00
4	Zamfara State	93, 253,485.00
5	Niger State	433,375,875.00
6	Adamawa State	420,089,840.00
7	Jigawa State	208,667,634.00

Source: *The Punch Newspaper* (2013:21).

Five other states, Borno, Yobe, Nassarawa, Gombe and Kaduna States were expected to get their disbursement at a later date, according to the Vice-President, Namadi Sambo that presented the money to beneficiary states (*The Punch*, 2013). While the disbursement of the fund to the states for onward distribution to the victims of the violence was commendable, yet it remains an open question whether the fund will get to the people that it is meant for, given the pervasive nature of corruption that characterizes the conduct of government business in Nigeria.

Also, as part of the efforts to take stock and probably prevent a future occurrence; the Federal Government raised an Administrative Panel headed by the former Grand Khadi of Niger State, Sheik Ahmad Lemu, to investigate the violence. The panel's core term of reference was to "specifically probe the violence that heralded the announcement of the presidential election results in some states in the North, as well as the pre-election violence in Akwa-Ibom State" (*ThisDay*, 2011). While one need not doubt the competency and ability of the panel to credibly discharge its assignment, which it did, yet an administrative panel for the purpose of stock taking cannot provide justice and restitution for victims of the violence. This is because it was an administrative panel set out for stock taking and not invested with the power and mandate to indict perpetrators and sentence them for their part in the post-election violence. The obvious lack of accountability by government, justice for victims and punishment for the perpetrators of social and political violence in general has given rise to a culture of impunity in Nigeria. This, if not addressed, will continue to embolden the sponsors and agents of political violence and will no doubt continue to undermine Nigeria's efforts at instituting credible democratic process.

The culture of violence that has characterized our democratic process since 1999 has also impacted negatively on the essence of democratic governance in Nigeria. The promotion of the welfare needs of the people through a sound policy and programmes is the object of government and election is usually the means through which people are able to remove a government that failed to meet their expectations and install one that will promote their welfare. Knowledge of this fact makes every democratic

government aspire to be responsible, responsive and accountable to the people. If a Government can sustain itself in power through electoral violence, then the ability to perform or record achievement becomes irrelevant in elections. In fact, the very essence of elections becomes questionable and the whole democratic process meaningless. Thus, the deployment of violence to acquire and retain political power portends great danger for and undermines the very essence of the democratic governance and democratic process in Nigeria, respectively.

Electoral violence has empowered social miscreants and thugs to be at the drivers' seat of the democratic process in Nigeria. Political thuggery and the wanton deployment of violence have become a defining hallmark of Nigerian politics and resulted in the production of bad leaders at the expense of experience, reliable and credible political leaders. Also, the use of violence as an instrument to gain political power in Nigeria has discouraged active citizens from participating in the political process in general and the electoral process in particular. The reification of the culture of violence as witnessed in Nigeria undermines efforts at democratic sustenance.

Conclusion

In this article, an attempt has been made to examine electoral violence and its implications on Nigeria's efforts at democratic sustenance, using the incidences of the pre- and post-election violence that emanated from the conduct of the 2011 general elections as a point of reference. The article established the fact that electoral violence has strong negative implications on Nigeria's democratic process and the nation's efforts at democratic consolidation. It engages in a brief conceptualization of what constitutes electoral violence and how it negatively impacts on the democratic process. It examines three important issues (the high premium placed on politics; poverty and youth unemployment and poor administration and the management of the electoral process) that are core among the factors driving the use of violence in the contest for political power within the context of Nigeria's democratic experience. Though the article gave importance to these three factors, however, they in no way constitute the only

factors underlying the use of violence in Nigerian politics. Indeed, the position of this article is that these three factors are part of the factors driving violence in Nigeria's body politics.

The article engages in a detailed examination of the incidence of violence that preceded the commencement of the election especially in Akwa-Ibom and the violence that engulfed some states in Northern Nigeria after the release of the results of the presidential election of 18th April, 2011. The article also engages in the discussion of the implications that the violence constitutes for the democratic process in Nigeria and how it hampers the nation's efforts at democratic consolidation. It pursues the argument that the reification of violence as a instrument for acquiring and/or retaining political power negatively hinders efforts at enhancing democratic governance in Nigeria.

An appropriate departure point for tackling the problems of electoral fraud and violence is to take a more critical look at the political economy of power, its control and use within the context of Nigerian politics. By looking at Nigerian politics from this angle, one would be able to see the reason why politicians in the nation's history have all taken election as a contest that must be won at all costs, using the available means of which the deployment of violence is an important part. The trend by which the control of state power is seen and used as an avenue to convert public funds into private pockets needs to be looked into and possible solutions to reverse this hideous trend proffered. This effort is needed because it is this very benign political economy of power that promotes the culture by which winning elections by individuals and groups is taken to be a do-or-die affair. This orientation of winning at all costs is what leads to the bastardization of the electoral process and the use of violence a recurring phenomenon in Nigeria.

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