WORLD WIDE JOURNAL OF
MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT

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Electoral Violence and the Challenges of Nation-Building in Nigeria: The 2011 Presidential Election Experience

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Abstract
The 2011 presidential election has come and gone but its negative impact on the political landscape of Nigeria has remained an albatross. As a result, the task of nation-building has become a Herculean undertaking as every effort towards remedying this malaise has not yielded the much desired results. In view of the above, this paper historicizes electoral violence and its challenges on the slogan of a united Nigeria with much emphasis on the 2011 presidential election. It argues that the high incidence of post-election conflict was triggered by religious and geopolitical cum ethnic leanings of the two major political party' candidates. The paper is therefore submitted that the survival of democracy is anchored on the belief, that the country's cultural diversity should be seen by all and sundry as a veritable strength and resource for their collective wellbeing.

Keywords: Democracy, Election, Electoral violence, Nation-Building

Introduction
Election is the major mechanism through which citizens choose their representatives. It is believed to be the hallmark of democratic governance. This necessitated the assertion by Gani Yorom that "Election is the cardinal principle of democracy, though not a sufficient determinant of democracy, but it remains the primary indicator for democratic governance"(2015). This presumes that without electoral representatives democracy is a mirage. On the other hand, it is imperative to understand that the quality of the electoral process is of utmost importance since elections are not necessarily democratic. It has been reasonably agreed globally that democracy is not an event, but a journey and that the destination of that trip is democratic consolidation (Buhari, 2015).
Elections are important in democracy as a result of their potential to institutionalize mass participation in government. This is so because elections confer on the electorate the power to select government representatives, it also gives them the opportunity to accept or reject those will eventually govern them. In this case, the ultimate goal of democracy is to create an ambience for mass participation in the act of governance and by extension it engenders the spirit of nation-building. However, the historical experience of Nigeria has shown that this noble electoral process by which the voters express their decisions about whom they choose for the position has been desecrated by its stakeholders on many occasions. According to Straus (2012:182), electoral violence remains one of the most reoccurring kind of violence seen on the continent of Africa. It is presumed that about 60 percent of elections held in Africa between 1990 and 2008 saw high levels of fatalities.
In Nigeria in particular, there has been an unattractive history of turbulent elections, dating back to the early hours of its transitions from colonialism to self-independence. Every single one of the nine general elections conducted in Nigeria since independence in 1960 (including 1964, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections) have been flawed by various gradation of violence. Election periods in Nigeria are most often described as warfare (Olaniyan and Amao, 2015:70), as lives and properties are wantonly destroyed. The declaration by former president Olusegun Obasanjo on the wee hours of 2007 elections as a

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"do or die affair" lends credence to the above assertion. As noted by Anifowose, indeed the Nigerian electoral process since independence has earned objectionable reputation for sham practices (2011). It is in this vein that it is rightly noted that results in Nigerian elections come in two separate columns. One that records the votes cast at polling stations; while the other that shows the number of people murdered around the period of the election (The Economist, 2011).Electoral violence has been the bane of democratic experiments in Nigeria. The ship of the first, second, third republics was drawn by uncontrollable electoral violence and the fourth is being threatened by this monster.

The widespread jubilations which heralded the inauguration of civilian administration in 1999 are gradually ebbing away like the "candle in the wind". The Nigerian experience with general elections has shown that political elites and their followers have not fully comprehended the tenets of democracy for sustained nation-building in Nigeria. This paper historicizes Electoral Violence and its impacts on nation-building in Nigeria. The scope is essentially on the 2011 presidential election. To this extent, the paper is divided into five parts; the first part is the introduction, part two focuses on conceptual clarifications, the third x-rays the historical perspective of electoral violence in Nigeria, the fourth discusses the impacts of electoral violence in the 2011 presidential election, and its negative effect on nation-building and then the conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications
Democracy
Democracy is one of the most familiar terms in many political discourses, however, its meaning and practices have been so daunting. According to a report from the Economist Intelligent Unit cited in (Ogundiya, 2011: 2-3), fifty-five countries in the world that constituted about thirty-five percent of the said democratic nations were indeed operating authoritarian regimes. In many instances, the definitions of democracy are the author's figment; perhaps, the variations are as a result of the world's ideological differences. Despite, the shortcomings, attempts have been made by scholars to define the concept. The word 'democracy' is a term that comes from Greek, it is made up of two other words 'demos' which means people and 'kratein' to govern, to rule. Democracy can literally translate as, Government of the people or the Government of the majority. This is what informed the doyen of Democracy Abraham Lincoln, when he simply defined Democracy 'as government of the people, by the people and for the people'. Joseph Schumpeter, (cited in Ogundiya, 2011:3) defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decision in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples' votes". Democracy is a system of government that enhances freedom of choice. This to a large extent, underscores Eme's definition of democracy as 'a system of government usually involving freedom of the individual in various aspects of political life, equality among citizens, justice in relations between the people and the government, and the participation of the people in choosing those in government' (2011:176). The assumption of the above is that equal voting power to choose one's representatives and leaders and also hold them accountable is the gamut of democracy.

Election
Elections could be best described as the lifeline of democracy. Democracy is deficient without an election. Despite, the growing trend in the world today about the possibility of democracy without an election, it clearly negates the tenets of the concept of democracy. As noted by Huntington cited in Bamgbose, the political system is said to be democratic "to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes, and in which virtually all the adult population are eligible to vote"(Bamgbose 2012: 206). It is in line with this that (Dye 2001) defines elections as "a major instrument for the recruitment of political leadership in democratic societies; the key to participation in a democracy; and the way of giving consent to government".

Electoral Violence
Electoral violence is "any random or systematized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical attack, forced 'protection', blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination' (Fischer 2002: 8). Bamgbose fine-tuned the definition of electoral violence when he described it "as all forms organized acts or threats physical, psychological and structural, aimed at intimidation, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election, with the intention of determining, delay or otherwise influencing an electoral process"(2012:26). It can be therefore deduced from Bamgbose assertion that electoral violence can be perpetuated as early as possible, during elections, and long after an election. Electoral violence is a type of political violence "distinguished by its timing, perpetrators and victims, objectives, and methods" (Bekoe 2012: 2).

Nation-Building
Although, nation-building remains imprecise and contested in meaning and practice, there are some notable definitions of the concept. According to Dinnen (2006), Nation-building as an 'abstract process of developing a shared sense of identity or community among the various group making up the population of a particular state'. Nation building is the process by which a population develops a sense of unison or connection that becomes the basis of individual and group political identity, this in turn influences individual and group political behavior (Callahan, 2003:13). The ultimate aim of nation building is to forge a national identity in order to succeed in nationhood agenda. Although, the concept of identity has been subjected to unquantifiable attacks as a result of its imprecise in definition, yet the concept has been used to define human relations in divers' ways. Identity is defined as "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture" (Alumona and Azom, 2018:292). On the other hand, the politics of identity is derived from the activities of individuals or groups who try to wipe up identical sentiments in the struggle for authoritative allocation and distribution of scarce resources of the state. In the face of this crisis, ethnicity becomes an instrument of sub-group security and survival (Nnoli, 1978).This is exactly the bane of electoral violence in

Nigeria's politics. It is in line with this that (Gambari: 2018) identified the real enemies as those who use ethnic, religious and cultural diversity tools to divide the country. As (Otite, 1990) observed and quite rightly too, the ethnic virus has been one of the most important causes of social crisis and political instability in Nigeria; ethnicity has been perceived in general as a major obstacle to the overall political and economic development of the country. Expectedly, politics by its core nature and character is to give birth to a nation building capable of engendering development.

A Historical Overview of Electoral Violence in Nigeria
Prior to September 1923, electioneering was alien to various kingdoms, empires and clans that made up the entity called Nigeria today. The first election took place in Lagos and Calabar following the introduction of Hugh Clifford Constitution in 1922. This election was based on a limited franchise as women were not allowed to vote and only men with a minimum income of 100 pounds a year were allowed to vote. In 1946, following the introduction of Arthur Richards Constitution, another election was held through indirect Electoral college, this election is remarkable in the sense, that it expanded the number of representatives to 45 members of the entire country with 28 members who were Nigerians. As restricted as both 1923 and 1946 elections were, they were devoid of violence.
Nevertheless, the Richards constitution, which divided the country into north, east and west sowed the seed for electoral violence battle amongst the three major ethnic groups, as that marked the beginning of one region trying to undo the other. However, the 1959 general election was devoid of high level of electoral violence, but it also records some forms of intimidation and victimization of opponents. As witnessed, when Chief Obafemi Awolowo was attacked and an attempt was made to set his helicopter on fire during his campaign tour to the Northern region (Toyin, 2013:169) Perhaps, the reason why there was less violence could be attributed to nationalism agitations which were at its peak. Nationalist were so engulfed with a change of government from the colonial administration to self-government. The subsequent election of 1964 heralded the spear of electoral violence. Two major political parties contested the elections, the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), which comprised of NPC, NNDP and Midwest Democratic Front (MDF). The second alliance was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) consisting of the NCNC, AG, NEPU and UMBC. The great maneuvering of the electoral process and the arrest and imprisonment of UPGA members in various political zones necessitated a call by UPGA leaders to all their supporters to boycott the election (Bamgbose, 2012: 209). According to Adeniyi's account of the 1964 general election; 'there were reports of massive destructions of lives and property, arson and physical roasting with the use of chemicals of petrel sachets on political opponents, particularly in the North and Western regions of the country'. It is not out of place to deduce that the seed of ethnic politics was sown during the pre-independence elections, germinated in the First Republic and the products started spreading during the Third and Fourth republics. For example, the Action Group (AG) as a party led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo developed from a Yoruba Cultural Association, Egbe Omo Oduduwa; the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon

(NCNC), later renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizen led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe was closely allied with the Igbo Union while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) developed from Jamiyyah Arewa led by Sir Ahmadu Bello. Thus the leadership of the aforementioned parties was along ethnic cleavages (Oladiran, 2013:699-700).
 The first democratic republic was eventually swallowed up by its mess of uncontrollable scourge of electoral violence. This gave the military another short at the helm of governmental affairs, which they held sway to until 1979, when General Olusegun Obasanjo's military junta handed over to another democratically elected president Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The Shagari led government conducted a civilian to civilian transition election in 1983, this election saw the loss of lives and destruction of property and, was massively rigged by the government of the day with the connivance of the then electoral management body (FEDECO). As a consequence of this action within a few months of the second term of the administration, there was yet another military intervention in the nation's politics which brought General Muhammadu Buhari on the 31st December, 1983. The military held on to power since then till May 29th, 1999. However, there was an interregnum transition to a democratic system between 1991-1993 transitions which eventually culminated to the 1993 presidential election that was annulled by the then military dictator General Ibrahim Babagida. Even when the election was widely acclaimed to be the freest and fairest election in the history of Nigeria Since the restoration of democratic rule in May 29th, 1999 successive administration have made an attempt to conduct credible elections devoid of violence and electoral fraud, but that has not been the case as the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections that saw the emergence of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, the late Umaru Yar Adua and Goodluck Jonathan were marred by high levels of incidence of electoral violence and fraud.
Basically, general elections in Nigeria can be categorized into two; transition and consolidation elections. Transition elections are general elections organized by a departing political authority, such as colonial authorities and military regimes, which includes 1954 and 1959; and 1979, 1993 and 1999. In other words, consolidation elections are general elections organized by civilian regimes in order to ensure continuity of the civil rule (Orji and Uzodi,2012:16-17). It is generally held that consolidations elections are more prone to violence, since political forces with stakes in the elections have more diverse interest. More so, some of these forces are actually in the control of state resources and election machinery.

Electoral Violence and the Challenges of Nation-Building: The 2011 Presidential Election Experience
The patriotic zeal that birthed the geographical entity called Nigeria in 1960, has suffered a major setback, due to the scourge of electoral violence that pervades the political scene. Since the first general election conducted in 1959 to the 2015 general election, it seems that every general election conducted tends to tear the nation along ethnic and religious divide. However, the 2011 presidential election took a new dimension in the scourge of electoral violence which finds expression more through ethnic and religious bigotry. It was widely held that the election revealed the deep-seated acrimony of the North and South politics of Nigeria. Although, the 2011 election was adjudged as

peaceful and fair (NDI,2011) most especially against the backdrop of 2007 election, which the European Union referred to as "the worst they have ever seen anywhere in the world" with its attendant level of intimidation and high level of violence which led scores of deaths.

However, according to Abdullahi (2013:69), there was virtually no difference between 1983 and 2011 as regards to loss of lives and destruction, except the ethnic and religious dimensions that were introduced at the latter stage of the post-election conflict in 2011. The unfathomable problem in Nigeria is the question of identity. Perhaps, the well over two hundred ethnic groups that made up the political entity could hardly express themselves as Nigerian but are beclouded by ethnic and religious chauvinism which is a reflection of the nation's political terrain. Manuel Castells rightly observed that identity is peoples' source of meaning (2004:6). The uncontrollable sentimental attachment to once ethnic and religious affinity has been the bane of Nigeria's political system since independence. It in line with this that Otite (1990:145) noted that the deployment of the ethnicity virus and religious fanaticism remain the veritable tools which have been fanning social crisis and instability in Nigeria

According to David R. Smock, the vice president of the United States Institute of Peace, he attributed the remote cause of electoral violence in 2011 presidential election to the deep-seated unwritten document believed to have been agreed upon by the members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) that the presidency should rotate between the North and South of Nigeria (Smock, 2011). This was religiously followed from 1999-2010, but due to the death of president Musa Yar dua the narrative however changed, as the Christian Southerner, his vice-president Goodluck Jonathan became the president. It was against this backdrop that northerners believed that President Goodluck would have honourably relinquished power to the North, in order for them to complete their two tenure. Perhaps, this could have been the foundation of acrimonious relationship between the North and the South which snowballed into post-election violence in 2011. It is imperative to understand that in Nigeria, political power is concomitant to economic wellbeing as such, those who hold position of authority determine the allocation and distribution of scares resources. In that case, anything that may stand as an obstacle is considered too costly to bear (Olurungbemi, 2014:249). As noted by the erstwhile INEC Chairman, Prof Attahiru Jega the increase in election violence in Nigeria is based on the fact that Nigeria politics has come to assume the very characteristics and attributes of a "rat-race in which only the fittest, richest, and filthiest survive". He affirmed that there is no civility or decorum, but crudity and immeasurable aggression and violence in the Nigeria political arena. In his opinion, this is as a result of the "Zero-sum game" mindset where the winner takes all and the loser loses all.

Another factor that would have caused electoral violence was the religious leanings of the two major presidential candidates General Muhammadu Buhari and Dr Goodluck Jonathan. For instance, prior to the election, Jonathan regularly visited churches and Christian gathering in a bid to solicit for votes. One of the major electioneering escapades was the visit to the Redeemed Christian Church of God, where he was believed to have knelt down and ask for prayer for victory from the General overseer pastor Adeboye. It was also reported that Pastor Paul Adefarasin asked members of his parishes to vote for a Christian president when Jonathan visited his church (House on the Rock) (Adamo, 2018).

Buhari's warning for an "Egyptian style" uprising if elections were not free and fair (The Punch, 2011). He also, warned his supporters to defend their votes by every available means and that going to court to contest the election would be a waste of time. The above assertions buttressed INEC's belief that the post-election violence were chiefly the inability of the political class to accept the election results in good fate, without resulting to "do or die" affairs. More-so, the unguarded utterance of some of the candidates triggered violence.On the day of the presidential election, Buhari claimed that the ruling party had manipulated the elections and that the violence began shortly after INEC declared Jonathan the winner. In the 2011 presidential election, Muhammad Buhari supporters took to the streets when he lost the elections, accelerating the post-election violence that resulted in hundreds of deaths. Muslim demonstrators attacked Christians and members of ethnic groups in southern Nigeria and killed those who were supposed to have supported the ruling party by burning their churches, shops, and homes. Demonstrators also attacked police stations, the offices of the ruling party and the electoral commission (Human Right Watch, 2011). In Kaduna it was reported that the immediate cause of violence was triggered by a statement credited to an Islamic scholar who told his congregation in a mosque in Ungwa Rimi area of the metropolis that General Muhammadu Buhari was being "rigged out of the race" with the introduction of the electoral clause in the Electoral Act. The Act which stipulates that for a candidate to be declared as a winner, he/she must necessarily have a majority votes in addition to winning twenty-five percent of the vote cast in two-third of all states in the country (Vanguard, 2011). In all, the 2011 presidential election was considered as free and fair to a substantial level; most especially put it into consideration the popularity of the various candidates as could be seen from the results below:

Presidential Election Result 2011

Party	Candidate	Percentage votes	Votes
PDP	Goodluck Jonathan	58.89	22,495,187
CPC	Muhammadu Buhari	31.98	12,214,853
CAN	Nuhu Ribadu	5.41	2,079,151
ANPP	Mallam Shekarau	2.40	917,012
Others	-------------	1.3	503,775

Source :(NDI, 2011)

However, despite the presumed fairness of each of the major candidates' votes cast, a critical analysis revealed that the voting pattern in the 2011 Presidential elections shows that ethnicity and religion played an important role in the outcome of the polls. The victory of General Buhari in the Northwest and Northeast and the victory of President Jonathan in the Southeast, Southwest South-South and the Middle belt states during the 2011 presidential election was not unexpected due to increase in religious and ethnic polarization. It is in line with this that Briggs rightly noted that today, Nigeria is clearly divided along the lines of religion and ethnicity (2018). The map below shows the performers of the major political party's candidates as regards too ethnic and religion sentiments except for the candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) Nuhu Ribadu who won just a state- Osun.
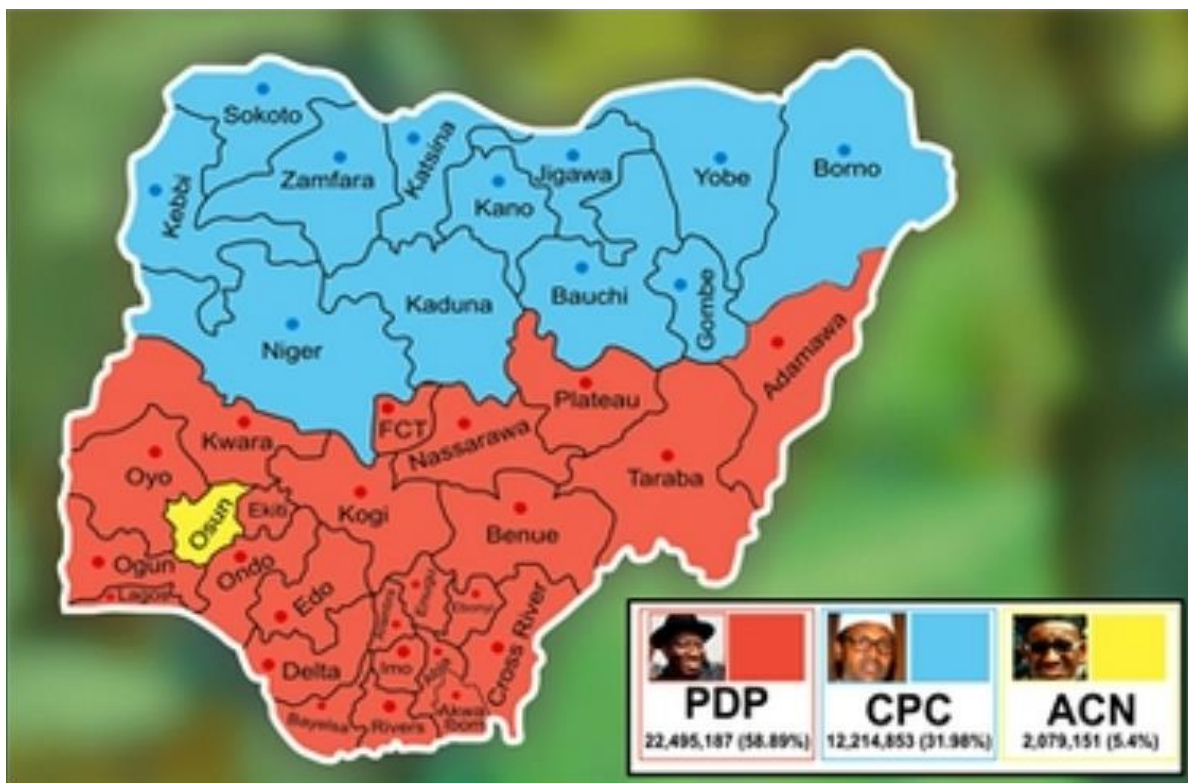
Source: Nigeriamuse.com

A major dysfunctional in the country's political system is the conceptualization of politics, as a good percentage of the nation's social classes see politics as a do-or-die business. They believe that violence in politics is a norm and tradition. These set of thinkers, are accustomed to the violence that emanates during the electioneering period. Most importantly, the youths who are recruited into private armies of politicians, already have the erroneous opinion that their duty is to cause mayhem, foment trouble, intimidate voters, send life threatening messages to opponents,. It is however, safe to pontificate here that politics has been greatly misunderstood by the political class, large section of followers, die hard supporters and even neutral watchers. In view of the above, the task of nation-building has become so burdensome. Electoral violence has caused a whole lot of harm to the socio-economic development of the nation. Nigeria being a country with a history of electoral violence has found it difficult to take its rightful place in the comity of developed nations despite having natural resources and other viable economic endowment. It is essential to understand that violence is an impediment to would be investors as nobody wants to invest in a country that is devoid of peaceful co-existence.

Conclusion

It is glaring from the above discussion that electoral violence has been the bane of democratic experience in Nigeria since independence. Nevertheless, the 2011 presidential election took a disturbing dimension which found expressions through religion and ethnicity. The genesis of the nation's woes is traceable to the British colonial masters that amalgamated the then hitherto independent nations purely for economic reason, without considering their oddness. It is however important, for Nigerians to add a novel, meaning to their existence as a people in order to build a new political community

knowing full well that the nation derives its strength and unity from our diversity (Babangida, 1994:5). Ayobolu, cited in Oladiran (2013) buttressed this point when he asserted that the country's cultural diversity should be seen as a veritable strength, which can be tapped as a critical resource for the nation's collective wellbeing. Democracy as it were, is a system of governance that underscores the plural nature of politics and hence gives recognition to the diversity of social forces in any community (Olowu,2005).

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