

# Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implication for Democratic Development

Adekola Abdulazeez Alao<sup>1\*</sup>

Department of Political Science and Public Administration,  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin.

\*Corresponding Author  
E-mail [aaadekola50@gmail.com](mailto:aaadekola50@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

*Elections have meaning for most people only in a democratic context, because they lead to the choice of decision makers. Elections are the litmus test of any democratic governance. Nigeria over the years had conducted a number of elections mostly characterised by violence. Thus, this attribute has hindered Nigerian democratic development and also has advert effect on the credibility of election results. It is against this backdrop that the paper attempts to examine Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implication for Democratic Development. The paper adopts secondary source of data collection using all relevant documented materials to analyse the work. The paper presents the conceptual framework; examines and critically discusses the types of electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; identifies and discusses the implication of electoral violence on democratic development in Nigeria. Therefore, it is then discovered that electoral violence occurs in three occasions, which are: Pre, during and post elections periods. Consequently, violence that characterised elections in Nigeria's fourth republic is a major obstacle to democratic development and Nigerian inability to conduct free, fair and credible election. The study prescribes a number of measures that should be taken to deepen and consolidate democratic governance in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Election; Violence; Democracy; Implications; Development

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## INTRODUCTION

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The history of election in Nigeria can be traced back to the Clifford Constitution which introduced, for the first time, the elective principle in the political life of the country. Indeed, this was the first time; Africans were elected into the legislature of a British Territory in tropical Africa. The fact that politics determines the allocation of resources in the society has been a major factor in the long history of violence in Nigerian politics. Nigeria was recently ranked as the fourth most violent country by Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED) judging by the number of violent events that occurred from 1997 to 2003 (Jimoh, 2014).

The Nigerian politicians, who inherited the legacy of the colonial political structures, also embraced the use of violence for protecting their interests. The corrupt tendencies among the dominant political elites exposed the Nigerian political system to tension and violence. Nigerian politicians' approach to political contests and governance manifested in their desperation to cling to power, make money and seeking for patronage. According to (Dudley in Jimoh, 2014), *"to be a member of the government party means an open avenue to government patronage, contract deals and the like.... The leadership becomes a self-recruiting oligarchy which has been known to tolerate no opposition to itself"* (p.284-297). It is evident that one recurring phenomenon in the unending saga of violence in Nigerian democracy is electoral violence, which began in the First Republic and continues till the present fourth democratic dispensation. On this note, Nigeria had not been fortunate to conduct free, fair and credible elections. In the present fourth republic presidential democracy, Nigeria has witnessed six presidential elections and all have been characterised by violence, before, during and after elections. The tendencies that interplayed with the people to produce election results in Nigeria since independence have not yet been sufficiently dissected and explained. These tendencies are varying and have been adjudged be linked to the root cause of the electoral violence.

Similarly, at any level of government, a truly representative system of government must depend upon the integrity of elections as an honest, secret and accurate way of determining the public will. This suggests that there must be consensus on the rules of the game of elections. This point is given credence by Mackenzie (1964) who argues that one of the four conditions for a free election is: a general acceptance throughout the political community of certain, rather vague rules of the game, which limit the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiment that if the rules are not observed more or less faithfully, the game itself will disappear amid the wreckage of the whole system. Hence, one of the preliminary steps to a genuine democratic government is the resilience of the electoral system as the general procedure and process of selecting persons within a democratic system into top executive and legislative posts in a defined polity (Bello-Imam, 2015). In this respect, Nigerian politicians do not comply with the acceptable rule of the game in the political contest, referred to as an election. The politicians' desperation to acquire political power makes them find all means possible to achieve their objective irrespective of the rules. This, action then results into attacking anybody who stands to block their chance, and this later results into violence.

All over the world, where democratic governance is in vogue, a number of processes are embarked upon before, during and after the elections. Each of the processes is instrumental to the accomplishment of a free, fair and credible election. Conversely, any of the processes or a combination of some of them, which are wrongly or irreligiously implemented can vitiate the results of the elections and consequently lead to violence. This assertion is to an extent manifested in Nigerian elections. It is against this backdrop that this study attempts to examine and analyse the electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and explores its implication on democratic development.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Election is defined by Bello-imam (2015) in semantic term as a technique where by citizens chooses their representatives in accordance with mechanisms fixed by the constitution or the established government of a state. It also connotes the process of selecting the officers and representatives of an organization or group by the votes of its qualified voters. The process accords citizens the right to choose at regular intervals, among competing leaders and policies.

Furthermore, like many other institutional and political mechanisms, election is a modern procedure to the extent that it has formally replaced other, older modes of selection (co-option or heredity, for example) and is available in all contemporary democratic political systems. However, the democratic element in this virtually universal procedure varies enormously from one country to the other (Campbell, 2010). In addition, an election provides the chance to decide who will govern a particular society. At this level, it serves as an opportunity for the public to make choices about the policies, programs, and future directions of government action. At the same time, elections promote accountability. The threat of defeat at the polls exerts pressure on those in power to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and take account of popular interests and wishes when they make their decisions.

On the other hand, electoral violence is conceptualised differently by commentators with different views. However, scholars are unanimous in their opinion that electoral violence is an attempt to destabilize the election process and also a

physical attack on the election materials and the participants in election process. Past elections in Nigeria were characterised by both psychological and physical violence. Generally, violence involves the threat or use of physical force with the intention of injuring, killing and intimidating another person. It also involves the destruction of property with a view to inflicting emotional or psychological injury and economic loss on another person. One of the major benefits of democracy is that it inhibits collective violence by providing mechanisms for non-violent competition for power and resolution of conflicts. Observance of the rule of law and respect for the courts are, however, necessary if this benefit is to be realised. Where citizens and government officials ignore the rule of law or disobey court orders, anarchy and violence are precipitated (Uwa and Ologunowa, 2013). Violence as a recurring phenomenon is chief among the many vices associated with elections and electioneering in the Nigerian politics. Election-related violence can therefore not be taken out of context of the general prevalence of violence in Nigeria's societal life (Ibrahim, 2015). Electoral violence has bred ethnic militia that occasionally engineered other vices like kidnapping, militancy and insurgency.

Fischer (2002) defines electoral violence (conflict) as any random or organised act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced "protection," blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination. In the opinion of Igbuzor (2010), electoral violence is any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities, including the pre, during and post-election periods, and may include any of the following acts: thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at polling stations, or the use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with electoral processes. Similarly, Albert (2007) defines electoral violence as a form or forms of organised acts or threats—physical, psychological, and structural—aimed at intimidating, harming, or blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process (Albert 2007).

Democratic development is intended as a broad, introductory survey of the political, social, cultural, economic, institutional, and international factors that foster and obstruct the development and consolidation of democracy. Democratic development is a situation where all aspects of the features of democracy such as free

and fair election; an independent electoral management body; an impartial judiciary; majority rule; adherent to the rule of law; and the freedom of participation etc are properly maintained. Secondly, democracy is developed when the resources are similarly allocated to take care of the welfare of the people, as a component of good governance.

### **Types of Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

There have been three types of election violence in Nigeria since the first republic namely: Pre-election, election day and post-election violence. The pre-election violence occurs at the period of preparation for the election into the political offices. Violence occurs mostly during party primary when political parties are conducting election to elect their candidates and during campaigns when political parties and candidates are requesting for the electorates' votes. This trend is deepened, assuming more gravely disturbing and more sophisticated dimensions from one election to the other since the emergence of electoral competition in Nigeria, particularly in 1950s till the present democratic dispensation (Eme Ekekwe in Jinadu, 2008). Nigeria's Fourth Republic, therefore, elicited concerns about history repeating itself in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and even 2019 elections.

### **Pre-Election Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

Pre-Election Day violence can occur in three critical aspects of pre-election processes: voter registration, campaign, party primaries. This can in turn threaten the very target of achieving free and fair election in any political system. Irregularities in voter's register, blurred identity, and poor technical quality might lead to void registration and subsequently denials of voting right. These not only disenfranchise the voters but also trigger bigger scale violence on the Election Day. Campaign period is also a prominent stage with high tendency for electoral violence.

The manifestation is mostly during campaigns, political meeting and rallies. It can be intra and/or inter party conflict. In the Nigerian context, the deployment of thugs and cults groups to attack opponents and/or supporters of opponents is usually the case. This is done with the intention to intimidate opponents and send psychological fear to potential voters (Uwa et al, 2013). Violence can also occur in party primaries where the parties are in the process of choosing candidate. Here, the party breaks into different

groups in support of their aspirants. Violence usually occurs when the leadership of the party or godfather of an aspirant tries to manipulate the rule of the game. Some aspirants may know fully that he/she will be defeated if election holds. Thus, he/she can organise for them to destruct the process of the election so that election will not hold. And several other means could be adopted that can trigger up violence.

To cite some random examples, that of the typically Pre-election violence in the country's Fourth Republic competitive electoral politics, IRI (2003) observes that, pre-election period in 2003 was surrounded by tension and violence. The assassination in early March of Dr. Marshall Harry, regional campaign coordinator of Nigeria's largest opposition political party, Al Nigeria's People Party (ANPP), shocked the nation and received intense media coverage. Furthermore, prior to 2003 elections, Chief Bola Ige, a strong leader of Alliance for Democracy (AD) and Anthony General and Minister of Justice was also assassinated. In Akwa Ibom, widespread protests trailed the July 19, 2002 PDP primaries in the state over allegation of imposition of candidates for local government council polls. In one of the local government councils in Cross River State, a lecturer at the University of Calabar, was arrested with firearms on the day of the PDP local government primaries on his way to the venue of the primaries to engage in battle on behalf of his candidate who was contesting for the PDP chairmanship ticket (Jinadu, 2008).

Jinadu (2008) explicitly makes reference to electoral violence in Niger Delta. In Bayelsa state, violence and arson trailed the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP primaries and paralysed social and economic activities in the state in 2006. In Yenagoa, the declaration of Anthony Samuel as the Local Government Council Chairmanship candidate led to spontaneous reactions: the governor's campaign office in Amarata was vandalised. In Nembe, over twenty persons were killed when supporters of two prominent in the local government areas clashed. In Ekeremor, the PDP Legal Adviser was kidnapped and locked up inside his car booth, as manipulation of electoral results was perfected, while the Deputy Leader of the state House of Assembly was kidnapped in Kolokuma/Opakuma Local Government Area, taken to the bush to be killed before he was rescued. Nine people died on 20th of July, 2006 at Gokana when Rival cult groups, Deebam and Deewell, fought for two politicians: Kenneth Kobani (State Commissioner for Finance) and Gabriel Pidomson respectively (Member of the Rivers State House of Assembly), who were engaged in a 2007 elections battle with militias to control Bodo. Streets were deserted and schools were closed (Bello, 2015).

NDI (2007) reports that in the lead-up to the 2007 elections, acts of violence were committed by supporters of competing factions within political parties, particularly during contests for party nominations, and against members of rival parties in the general elections. IFES, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the International Crisis Group and Human Right Watch cited as many as 280 election related death and many more injuries in the six months leading up to the 2007 elections. In Rivers State, on 17th of November 2006, two PDP members were shot dead in a gun battle during the PDP congress (Bello, 2015). The split between Chief Adedibu and Governor Ladoja of Oyo State resulted in the numerous clashes in the run-up to the 2007 elections, claiming several lives and property.

When the 2011 polls were fast approaching, politically motivated violence took place in several states. In Edo state, for example, a political contender was gunned down in August after declaring his intention to contest for a seat in the House of Representatives. A security aide to the then Bauchi state governor was shot in what may have been an attempted attack on the governor himself, an incident that followed several other attacks involving Bauchi politicians or their affiliates. Well-known Niger Delta militant Saboma George, accused of past election rigging, was killed in Rivers state, while the supporters of two gubernatorial candidates clashed in Kano, leading to one reported death and numerous injuries. In Anambra and other Eastern states, high-level political kidnappings were reported during this period. Meanwhile, in October 2010, Nigerian security officials intercepted thirteen shipping containers of smuggled weaponry at the Lagos port in what many analysts consider an ominous portent for that year's election season (Ebele & Chloe, 2010).

In Jos, 3 people were reported dead on 17th of January 2011 when Hausa youths being escorted by Special Task Force (STF) members for voter registration were attacked by Christian youths. One Hausa boy was killed. The STF gunned down one Christian boy while dispersing the mob. One electoral official was reportedly lynched and burned, and two soldiers were wounded. Furthermore, the convoy of the gubernatorial candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN, Senator BabaTela, was attacked by thugs sponsored by PDP stalwarts. Seven people were injured (Albin-Lackey, 2007).

In the 2015, prior to the elections, the campaign train of President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP was stoned with sachet water in Bauchi State. This was in addition to the burning of campaign buses, and a case of bomb blast near a campaign ground in Potiskum, Gombe State. Sporadic gun shots at APC members were also reported in Rivers State allegedly by PDP thugs. Crisis Group African Report (2014) reported that in preparation for 2015 election, in many local constituencies, there is concern that candidates' struggles for nomination could degenerate into attacks on individuals and factional violence around the party's primaries. In the bid up to 2019 elections, the level of violence, hate speech and general toxic political environment contradicts the commitment to the Peace Accord signed by political parties and candidates prior to the elections. Situation Room (2019) reports that patriotic Nigerians are deeply worried about the spike in politically motivated killings in the period leading up to the elections. According to various reports from members of the Situation Room across the country; over 260 Nigerians have been killed since the commencement of campaigns from October 2018 to the date of election.

Nigeria's many political parties are central to the prospects of future electoral and political violence. As noted earlier, at present, there appear to be greater risks of intraparty conflict in 2019 elections than the interparty tensions that characterized the 2015 elections. Political party primary and nomination processes were strongly contested. Violence has, in fact, already occurred during the primary seasons most especially in the ruling Party. Ahead of the 2019 elections, there were violent incidents. For instance, Crisis Group (2019) reports shows that on 17 October, 2018, two thugs were killed in a fight at a political rally in the Obanikoro area of Lagos, Lagos state; on 26 October, gunmen shot a PDP member of the Ekiti state House of Assembly, Michael Adedeji – he died 29 October, 2019. On 27 October, gunmen believed to be hired assassins stormed the residence of the APC chairman in Enugu state, Ben Nwoye, and severely wounded his police orderly (Nwoye said the attack was a “politically calculated assassination attempt” arising from controversy over the party's primaries in the state). On 14 November, 2018, about 25 gunmen attacked a rally organised by local PDP leaders in Ipo community, Ikwere local government area, Rivers state, with the local government chairman, Samuel Nwanosike, narrowly escaped death; on 1 December, 2018, some APC leaders were almost lynched when thugs attacked their meeting in Nasarawa village, Gwaram local government area, Jigawa state. Civil society organisations directly observed cases of violence against women during party rallies in several states across Nigeria including Benue, Kogi, Borno, Katsina, Abia and Imo.

They also observed hate speech against women during the election process (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2019).

Based on updated information available from media and other sources, during the campaign and the three-election day in 2019, European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) (2019) reports that approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence, 84 of which were in the South-South zone. This figure is a comparable to that of the 2015 general elections where approximately 64 people were reported killed in the campaign leading up to the February 23 elections, 21 of these deaths occurred in the week following the postponement of the elections. Approximately 35 people were reported killed on February 23, and 24 and on March, 9 and 29 2019. However, the exact numbers of incidents and fatalities are hard to obtain and there are different views on what is categorised as electoral and political violence.

### **Election Day Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

As election day violence constitutes electoral violence often; people have misconstrued electoral violence as election day violence. Prominent in the list of acts constituting election day violence includes burning of election offices and material including ballot boxes and papers, intimidating voters, snatching of ballot boxes, rigging and diverting election materials. In stable democracies with contingency plans, alternative means of voting might be made readily available but new democracies like Nigerians are prone to setbacks in such cases. A few examples of election day violence in Nigeria will be examined below:

Ebele et al (2010) observes that violence during the 2003 election was more blatant and widespread and other elections in Nigeria as intraparty clashes, political assassinations, and community unrest in already volatile areas such as Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta, characterised these elections. This development also marked the unchecked proliferation of arms and ammunitions, which led to hiring and arming of militias by politicians to serve narrow political ends. This ugly development was characterised as "a low intensity armed struggle". By EUEOM (2003) who further reported 105 election related death in election day violence in 2003 elections.

The Nigeria Watch database confirmed that the People Democratic Party, PDP was the main party affected by political and election day violence in 2007, as its followers compromised 73% of the total number of fatal incidents reported. This figure

does not mean that they were always the aggressor but from 2006 to 2014, the PDP implicated in 474 electoral violence incidents out of a total of 915 extracted from the Nigeria Watch database, representing almost 52% of these incidents (Albin-Lackey 2007). In the 2007 elections, there were reports of ballot stuffing and snatching from constituencies throughout the country. National Democratic Institute, NDI (2007) states that in Kwara and Osun states, soldiers had kept voters at bay while PDP incumbent cronies seized and/or stuffed ballot boxes with pre-marked ballot papers. In Offa in Kwara State, however, the police recovered ballot boxes that had been previously snatched by club-wielding thugs. In Ekiti State, some party supporters snatched ballot boxes or otherwise attempted to stuff ballot boxes in plain view of voters and election observers. In many cases, the observers witnessed indifferent security forces, who did not act to stop attempts at election rigging. In Ogun State, where two people were reported killed on Election Day, claims that 6,000 police officers would be deployed appeared not to prevent ballot box snatching and stuffing in the state capital, Abeokuta. Furthermore, reports from Edo state indicated that at least seven persons were killed during the polling.

On April 22, 2011 at Riyom in Plateau state, at least one person was killed and three others injured in a pre-dawn attack. During the governorship election period, many actions by some politicians to pitch the Berom against other ethnic nationalities were uncovered by the state government. On April 14, 2007 in Njaba, Imo state, thugs attacked the electoral officer, but he was saved by the police, while five persons were shot dead. On the same day at Ikeduru on the same state PDP thugs killed an Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC official and took away ballot boxes (Bello, 2015). INEC's assessment of 2015 elections however revealed that the elections were peaceful and orderly country wide. Some states, nevertheless, recorded significant number of violent incidents with the most affected being Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ebonyi and Ondo states. In addition, INEC's records show that there were 66 reports of violent incidents targeted at polling units, the commission's officials, voters and election materials. These were in 16 incidents in Rivers State, 8 in Ondo, 6 each in Cross River and Ebonyi, 5 in Akwa Ibom, 4 in Bayelsa, 3 each in Lagos and Kaduna, 2 each in Jigawa, Enugu, Ekiti and Osun, Katsina, 1 each in Plateau, Kogi, Abia, Imo, Kano and Ogun (Ibrahim, 2015).

As reported by Ibrahim (2015) quoting Ndujihe and Kumolu allegations of widespread rigging that trailed the outcome of elections in Akwa Ibom State, the main opposition party, All Progressive Congress, APC, called attention to cases of ballot box

snatching, organised violence, the withholding of sensitive electoral materials among other anomalies during the presidential, national assembly as well as the governorship elections in the state. The Lagos State chapter of the PDP and some sections of the public also accused the APC of manipulating the electoral process in the state. Ibrahim (2015) reported that cases of infraction on the electoral law were cited in Rivers State where sixteen people were reportedly killed. The INEC headquarters in the state was burnt down and two people were killed during voting during the gubernatorial elections. This accusation necessitated street protests in the state capital, Port Harcourt by supporters of the opposition, calling for the election to be rescheduled.

An EUEOM (2015) report states that on the 2015 election day, at least 30 people were killed in 121 incidents. During the April 12, 2015 elections. Predominantly, there were inter-party clashes and attacks on election sites by hoodlums, often involving ballot box and the theft of essential material. The two main parties (APC and PDP) made many accusations of rigging, intimidation and violence by their opponents. The problems were most pronounced in Rivers and Akwa Ibom states where there are multiple credible reports of violence and interference, which again warrant further investigation in order to develop specific strategies for such states to prevent problems recurring (EUEOM, 2015). On the 2019 election days, there were several reported cases of electoral violence in Nigeria. These ugly and unwarranted incidents have dented the credibility of the 2019 election results. For instance, according to Yahaya (2019), the violence that marred the February 23, 2019, presidential and national assembly elections led to the arrest of 128 people for various electoral offences ranging from ballot box snatching, malicious damage of items, voter trading and homicide. In Katsina state, in northwest Nigeria, three ad hoc staff of the electoral umpire were declared missing, voting was disrupted while other people fled to different directions in the Danmusa Local Government Area of the state as a result of the activities of political thugs while a Police Corporal lost his life during the governorship and house of assembly election (Oyelude, 2019).

In Kurmin Gwari, Kaduna state, in northwest Nigeria, there was a clash between the supporters of the two main political parties (PDP and APC) few days to the governorship and state house of assembly elections during a political rally resulting in a number of people injured (Busari, 2019). On March 22, 2019, a day before the supplementary election in Kano State, a number of political thugs wielding various kind of weapons dispersed the electorates and journalists in Suntulma Gama Primary School

in the Nassarawa Local Government Area of the state (Shuaibu, 2019). According to Situation Room (2019), incidents of vote suppression were reported in Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Kaduna and Lagos states. Some of the most blatant cases were recorded in the Okota, Isolo and Oshodi districts of Lagos, where either INEC official were reported not to have appeared or thugs invaded opposition strongholds and snatched ballots that had been cast and burnt them to ensure they were not counted.

### **Post-Election Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

Electoral violence can also occur hours or days after elections. This can emanate from dispute over election results and the inability of judiciary system to handle election dispute fairly. Post-election violence might occur where the judiciary is perceived to be partial. This might lead to low level of confidence on the judicial system by the candidates and so they would prefer to take laws into their hands rather than waste time in a corruptible judicial system. The frustration and fear of partial judgment then leads them to the hard option of electoral violence. This can also lead to higher scale violence beyond elections (Uwa, 2013). The manner in which election results are announced might also lead to electoral violence and in some cases lead to the targeting of certain groups or those of particular ethnic origin in a multi-ethnic society. While there have been several cases of post-election violence in Nigeria since independence, only a few of them will be discussed below.

Since the rebirth of Nigeria's democracy in 1999, violence of varying levels has been an unfortunate staple of the Nigerian elections. Local peace-making efforts in conflict-prone states such as Kaduna have led to meaningful security improvements. The risk of election violence nationwide is unacceptably high (Ebele et al, 2010). A Few examples of Post-election violence during the 2003 and 2007 elections will now be scrutinized. On May 24, 2007, four persons died in Port-Harcourt when gunmen allegedly hired by the PDP invaded capital city, terrorising many strategic areas by shooting into crowds, into the air, or at guards in front of the house of Governor Peter Odili. While helicopters flew over the city, the police pursued the assailants. In the process, bus conductor was shot in the head, and another in the rib near Abali Park. Similarly, woman selling plantain and a man were shot dead at the Fire Service and Water Line Junctions respectively. In Ikwerre on July 8, 2011, a member of PDP was shot dead by gunmen who invaded the venue of a political party meeting (Bello, 2015).

A National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2007) report also corroborated the account of EUEOM observant that election day violence was followed by public protests in many states as INEC announced results mostly in favor of the PDP that in some cases were at odds with anticipated results. In some instances, INEC's national headquarters announced results, whereas this responsibility lay with the Residential Electoral Commissioners (REC), who served as chief returning officers for the gubernatorial elections. In particular, in Delta State, the results were declared in Abuja before the collation and counting of votes had finished in the state.

It was reported that in Ondo State, protesters set ablaze the houses and vehicles of known PDP supporters. In Edo State, former Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) President Adams Oshiomhole of the Action Congress, AC was arrested for leading protests against the declaration of victory for the PDP candidate. In Kogi State, riots broke out when the state was declared for the PDP, and a Deputy Commissioner of Police was among a reported total of 15 persons killed. In Nassarawa State, six persons were reported killed during protests against the declaration of the state for the PDP over the opposition ANPP candidate. The palace of a traditional ruler in the state was razed by a mob in the ensuing violence. In Adamawa State, where INEC's purported disqualification of the AC gubernatorial candidate had come too late for his name to be removed from the ballot papers, the commission voided all votes cast for that candidate. The candidate and his party claimed that he had been leading in the count before the commission took this position prompting sporadic protests in several parts of the state. In Imo State, where there had been relatively few reports of violence, INEC cancelled the results of the gubernatorial election on the grounds that there had been electoral violence (EUEOM, 2007).

In the 2007 elections, the violence surrounding the elections, including the burning and destruction of at least nine INEC offices was, in part, symptomatic of the lack of trust in INEC to deliver credible election results. For instance, EUEOM (2007) reports that, (INEC offices in the LGAs Onitsha North, Akwa North, Newi South, Orumba North and Ihiala in Anambra state were burned down while the INEC offices in Ogbaru and Atani LGAs were bombed on April 14, 2007. Furthermore, in 2007, the Benue state INEC office in Markurdi, and the Katsina state LGA INEC office in Daura were destroyed on May 1 and April 21 respectively.

On November 27 and 28, 2008, at Jos East, North and South, Christians candidates from the PDP were declared winners of the state elections but Muslims from the ANPP contested the results. A clash ensued, and homes, mosques, and churches were burnt as a result. A Muslim charity organisation allegedly recovered more than 300 bodies while the Information commissioner for Plateau state, Nuhu Gagara reported 200 persons dead. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, 10,000 people fled their homes and camped in various locations in the metropolis. On November 30, 2008, Agence France Press reported that 381 bodies were placed in a mosque. On 1 December, a Muslim official at the main mosque, Murtala Sani Hashim, reported 367 bodies. Health officials reported at least 400 bodies. Other sources reported 500 buried in mass graves on December 1, 2008. On December 30, 2008, Agence France Press reported that the police carried out more than 90 summary executions in the course of suppressing violence (Bello, 2015).

In the same incident, Human Right Watch reported that at least 130 persons were killed by policemen and soldiers. On July 29, 2008 it was reported that sectarian attacks in Jos claimed nearly 1,000 lives. Mercenaries were said to have been brought from neighbouring states (perhaps linked with Boko Haram). Muslim religious authorities in Jos registered between 469 and 632 dead amongst Hausa/Fulani and 23 amongst Catholics. The Stefano's Foundation reported 103 Christians dead in Congo-Russia, Nasarawa, Rikkos, Sarki, Mangu, and Tudun Wada. Plateau State Judicial Commission stated that 312 people were killed, including 118 Christian Ibo and 31 Yoruba (Bello, 2015).

The 2011 election was reported to have been well-run relative to previous elections. Nonetheless, "violence claimed 800 lives over three days in Northern Nigeria and displaced 65,000 people, making the elections the most violent in Nigeria's history" (Bekoe, 2011). In 2011, for instance, the results announced tagged the PDP as victor of both the presidential and gubernatorial elections in Kaduna State. This announcement sparked protests in the state by supporters of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and its presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. The demonstrations quickly transformed into religious clashes, with several churches, mosques, and homes burnt. On June 1, 2011, the then Inspector General of Police then, Alhaji Hafiz Ringim, disclosed that 518 persons, including six policemen, were killed in Kaduna State. The death toll reported by Human Rights Watch was even higher, with a total of 800 persons who died in post-election violence (HRW 2011). The table below captures the number

of lives claimed by electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 2006 and May, 2014.

Table 1: *Number of Fatalities from Electoral Violence per State and per Zone (June 2006 to May 2014)*

Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria	Number of Fatalities
<b>South East</b>	
Abia	23
Anambra	38
Ebonyi	22
Enugu	24
Imo	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>South-South</b>	
Akwa-Ibon	91
Bayelsa	93
Cross-Rivers	54
Delta	142
Edo	83
Rivers	181
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>644</b>
<b>North East</b>	
Adamawa	49
Bauchi	63
Gombe	33
Taraba	61
Yobe	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>North Central</b>	
Benue	109
Kogi	107

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Kwara	53
Niger	86
FCT	59
Nasarawa	158
Plateau	850
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1422</b>
<b>South West</b>	
Ekiti	31
Lagos	80
Ogun	51
Ondo	55
Oyo	110
Osun	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>North West</b>	
Jigawa	10
Kaduna	653
Kano	152
Katsina	17
Kebi	23
Sokoto	11
Zamfara	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>891</b>

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*Source: Bello, S. K. (2015). Political and electoral violence in Nigeria: Mapping evolution and patterns. Retrieved from <https://Political-and-electoral-violence-in-Nigeria-Mapping-evolution-and-patterns>*

There were several cases of post-election violence in the 2019 elections. For instance, in Taraba North-Eastern Nigeria, the Police Command confirmed the murder of five persons by political thug a day after the presidential and national assembly election in the state who were returning from election monitoring exercise (Alhassan, 2019). On a zone by zone basis, the total number of incidents and fatalities that was recorded during the 2019 election period is presented by Situation Room (2019) as follows: North Central: 23 incidents, 111 people killed, North East: 16 incidents, 146

people killed, North West: 20 incidents, 172 people killed, South East: 7 incidents, 14 people killed, South-South: 59 incidents, 120 killed; and South West: 36 incidents, 63 killed when the incident and fatality numbers are parsed on a state-by-state basis, Benue, Borno, Kaduna, Rivers and Zamfara, lead the casualty figures. From an analysis of the period of study which covers a period of 127 days, about 15% of all incidents, and 20% of all fatalities occurred on election day.

## **Implications of Electoral Violence on Democratic Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic**

It is evident that the analysis of electoral violence in Nigeria examined in this study overtime has shown how the country has wobbled democratically; hence, how the country has remained a mere civilian government not a true democratic government. Therefore, this has adversely affected democratic development in Nigeria. It is obvious that for a country to be democratically developed, it must adhere to some of the cardinal principles of democracy. Thus, election violence in Nigeria overtime have prevented the country from adhering to these principles, and subsequently has negatively affected the country's democratic development in the following areas:

### *Destruction of Lives and Properties*

Nigeria since independence has had a chequered political history mainly by its inability to form a government that is a product of conducting free, fair and credible elections devoid of sentiments. Virtually all elections since independence have been hotly contested, crises ridden and characterised by bitter electoral disputes. Similarly, all the elections that have been conducted by the various electoral bodies since independence have been marred by serious allegations of fraud and violence. In the present Nigerian democratic dispensation, elections have been characterised by violence and the destruction of lives and property. For instance, over 800 people died in the post-election period of 2011. Furthermore, house and other property have been destroyed in various incidents of elections related violence reported since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. If democracy is designed to provide and promote good governance and the protection of live and property, election, which is the cardinal principle of democratic process, should not be characterised by violence, which in turn claims lives and destroys property. The violence that occurred in Jos after the 2007 election is a typical example.

### *Promotes Electoral Malpractices*

The attitude of Nigerian politicians to appropriate more of the nation's wealth, and their desperation to retain power is not entirely altruistic; in fact, the quest for political power is driven in most cases, by the morbid desire for material gains are motivating factors to use all avenues most especially violence to manipulate the electoral systems. Thugs hired to scare voters and electoral officials in connivance of security agents to perfect riggings, and the snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes. This is a strong motivating factor why succession into political offices is not a smooth but rather a very problematic process. The incumbent pre-occupied their mind for all avenues to defend their atrocities or plan not to leave the office if possible.

For instance, during the governorship polls in 2015, heavy gun shots were reported in Ozuoba and Rumuolumeni in ObioAkor Local Government Area of the State. Soldiers moved into Buguma in Asari Toru Local Council where two persons were feared dead amid shooting by political thugs. Unknown arsonists also razed a police patrol vehicle, the house of the State Commissioner for Women Affairs, and the state's INEC polling centre in Kalabari National College. INEC had been accused of colluding with security operatives to compromise the integrity of the electoral process in virtually all the 23 local governments of the State. In addition, electoral officers in almost all the LGAs were reported to have withheld the unit, ward and local government result sheets and handed over ballot papers to the PDP thugs allegedly guarded by armed soldiers, police and Department of State Service operatives (Ibrahim, 2015, p.15).

### *Disregard of the Rule of Law*

Since independence, Nigeria has failed to achieve democratic standards as an essential element of democracy. This shortcoming can be attributed to the violation of the rule of the game through violence. This is attributable to the misuse of power by the political office holders before, during and after the elections, which eventually results to crises. Election violence emanates from disputes over the election results and the inability of the judiciary to handle election disputes fairly. Thus, violence might occur where the judiciary is perceived to be partial. This might be as a result of the low level of confidence in the judiciary by the aggrieved candidates who would prefer to take

laws into their own hands instead of wasting time with a corruptible judicial system. The frustration and fear of partial judgment then leaves them with the hard option of electoral violence, leading to higher scale of violence beyond the elections. This development has a great adverse effect on the democratic system as the use of violence to obtain power amounts to the disregard of the rule of law. In sum, electoral violence emanates from voting or the attempt to violate the rules of the game.

### *Denial of Popular Participation*

Election violence prevents the attainment of the principle of “one man one vote” which promotes political equality where each member of the community will be given an equal opportunity to participate in the nation’s political decision-making process. In Nigeria, where elections are characterised by violence, people cannot freely stand for election. There are cases of thugs employed by the politicians scaring voters in order for them to easily manipulate the results of the elections. Furthermore, the principle of majority rule which requires mass participation of the citizens in government and the protection of minority interest are denied of the people through violence.

### *Disorganisation of Electoral Processes*

Another implication of electoral violence is the disorganisation of electoral process. Violence in pre-election period usually occurs during the party primary elections and campaign, which are an essential part of the electoral process. Many campaigns in Nigeria’s fourth republic democratic dispensation have been disorganised by thugs from the opposition party. For instance, in 2007, the campaign team of Bukola Saraki was attacked and dispersed in Offa, leading to the death of some people and others wounded. Furthermore, the convoy of Senator Baba Tela, the gubernatorial candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN, was attacked by thugs sponsored by PDP stalwarts. Seven people were injured Albin-Lackey (2007). Additionally, Crisis Group African Report (2014) reported that in many local government constituencies, preparation for the 2015 elections, led to the candidates’ struggles for nomination, degenerated into attacks on individuals and factional violence around the party’s primaries.

### *Promotion of Thuggery and Proliferation of Arms*

It is widely evident that violence is a characteristic of Nigeria's democratic elections. Thugs are used to perpetrate these illicit acts sponsored by the politicians. This development is an indication of the encouragement of thuggery and the promotion of insecurity in the society. For instance, the use of transport unions in Lagos and Oyo state since the beginning of Fourth Republic have led to the production of the highest number of thugs in these states and also subjected them to insecurity. A series of violence erupted even after the elections in the course of fighting for supremacy between and among different factions. The ammunitions used during the electoral process to foment violence are used in many occasions to threaten people and also to rob. This kind of activity was witnessed in Kwara state when thugs used by Saraki political empire and Governor Lawal were terrorising people in Ilorin township after the 2003 elections. It was not until the government reacted with the use of military men to disorganise and arrested some of them that the town could regain its peaceful character. In Lagos and Oyo states, "Agbero boys" now become terrors and were legalised to collect certain amount of money from their fellow transporters. In Nigeria, vehicles and money distributed to thugs, before, during and after the elections by politicians are used to motivate the thuggery acts and promote their course.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The study examined electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and its attendant implication on democratic development. It is established from the study that election is a civic duty that is crucial to democracy and Nigerian elections overtime have been characterised by violence. This study discovered that electoral violence is pronounced in Nigeria's Fourth Republic as all the five general elections conducted so far have been characterised by violence. The study identified that violence is a major issue of concern and incidents increased as the elections drew nearer. It is evident from the study that about 1000 people, including candidates and the police, were killed in election related incident in 2011 elections alone, is an occurrence which is unacceptable in respect to the right to life and the democratic process.

In historicizing electoral violence from independence till the last 2015 elections in Nigeria, this study also discovered that there are three types of elections violence in Nigeria: pre, during and Post electoral violence. Causes of electoral violence as identified include: desperation for power and materialistic tendencies; North-South

power tussle; religion and ethnicity; manipulation of election process and results, misuse of incumbent power and imposition of candidate and suppression of the opposition's view. We also discussed in the paper the implication of electoral violence to democratic development in Nigeria and observed that electoral violence has adverse effect on the development of democracy in Nigeria.

The study observed that electoral violence is an obstacle to the conduct of free, fair and credible election in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Secondly, prior to the Fourth Republic, the military had overthrown the democratic government whenever the civilian government failed to maintain political stability as a result of electoral violence. This development thus hindered democratic consolidation in Nigeria overtime. Elections violence has also hindered the realisation of some cardinal attributes of democracy. Therefore, this paper concludes that democracy in Nigeria is wobbled and undeveloped. It is noted that the study provided a number of policy options on how to stem electoral violence in Nigeria so as to allow the country conduct free, fair and credible elections; to sustain the democratic system and develop democracy.

There is a strong sense in which elections have resulted in democratic deficits rather than the deepening of the democratic process since Nigeria's Independence. This development is majorly attributed to pronounced election violence experienced in virtually all elections in the country overtime. Egwu (2008) observes that the experiences in both 2003 and 2007 elections exposes tellingly the various ways in which the notion of democracy has been grossly devalued as a result of the activities of election management bodies and the prevalent level of violence that characterised these elections. Therefore, any reasonable and reliable attempt at finding an effective strategy to curb the incessant requires the following suggestions:

- a) Politicians should conduct their campaign on the basis of issues rather than attack on personalities or mobilising of religious, ethnic and regional sentiments. Campaign should focus on the implementation of the critical national economic, political, social cultural, educational and health objectives. The parties and politicians should articulate their programmes in these areas that add value to the lives of the electorates. Electorates are not interested in the 'dance of shame' being staged across the country by some of the parties in the name of political campaign.

- b) Nigerian law enforcement agents, most especially the police, should be proactive in curbing electoral violence. The Nigerian government should adequately equip the law enforcement and them to perform their duties efficiently. Erring parties should be punished appropriately.
- c) Political parties should evolve as instrument of democratic governance rather than servicing an organised criminal enterprise used for seeking, gaining and retaining power in order to rob the public treasury.
- d) Ethnic and religious leaders as well as politicians, including government officials should not make provocative and irresponsible statements that may evoke religious, ethnic and regional prejudices against other candidates and thereby incite electoral violence.
- e) Nigeria's judiciary is poised to play a critical role in resolving electoral disputes. Giving all necessary support to judges, including special training, must be a priority so that cases may be processed more efficiently. Community leaders should encourage citizens to recall the unprecedented number of judicially overturned election results from the 2007 polls. Having faith in the electoral redress may itself discourage citizens from taking justice into their own hands.
- f) INEC must be afforded every manner of support in its efforts to craft an independent and credible electoral management body and to handle the massive voter registration process. While the Electoral Management Body (EMB)'s role will undoubtedly be significant, its reform efforts must be supported in order to meet with comprehensive success. Nigerian government needs to set up a tribunal where electoral offenders would be speedily prosecuted to put an end to the seemingly unrestrained electoral impunity thriving in the polity. The absence of punishment for all previous cases of election rigging remains the foundation and incentive for the tragedy of the country's political situation. Variants of violation pervade the polity unchecked with the connivance of those entrusted to supervise the process. Efforts must be therefore geared towards bringing sanity and probity into the electoral process. This further illustrates the urgent need for an Electoral Offences Commission with professionals' adept in forensic electoral investigations and judicial officers that specialised in the electoral legislative framework to effectively prosecute electoral offences.

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