

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA, 1999-2023

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Abstract

This paper is on the political economy of electoral violence in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023. It is informed by the fact that electoral violence has been a recurrent phenomenon in Nigerian politics since independence in 1960. However, the propensity of electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, which is occasioned by intimidation, fear of ethno-religious dominance, and imposition of candidates, has continued to plague Nigeria's electoral process and seems to have far-reaching implications for the corporeality of the country. Although there exists a body of literature on electoral violence in Nigeria, extant literature is anchored on the implications of electoral violence for ethno-religious relations and the country's internal security. The paper is therefore aimed at examining and adopting the political economy paradigm in underscoring the menace of electoral violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The paper employed the use of qualitative and quantitative sources of historical data. The study established that elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic are hardly free and fair. They are manipulated in favour of a particular person or group of persons so as to ensure the control of power and distribution of wealth among friends, political associates, and kin groups. To curtail the menace of electoral violence, the paper recommends a holistic restructuring of the 1999 Constitution to resolve issues of high wages and allowances of political office holders. The paper also recommends the dismantling of the country's current political party structure and the advance of the introduction of two major ideologically driven political parties.

Key Words: Elections, Violence, Manipulations, Rigging, Political Economy.

Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the democratization calls that herald the emergence of unipolarity in the international system, democracy and elections are synonymous with good governance. In fact, elections are said to be an aspect and hallmark of democracy.¹ Relatedly, periodic elections are the vehicle via which the legitimacy of government is gauged. However, the quality of elections, which is the mechanism for gauging legitimacy and democratic government, has shown evidence of progressive decline in most countries of the world. For instance, in Nigeria, since the return of democratic government in 1999, cases of electoral flaws have continued to increase. Thus, according to Saliu:

The 1999 elections that welcomed democracy after sixteen years of military rule were peaceful and devoid of sophisticated electoral fraud. The 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 general elections that followed were characterized by electoral fraud and violence. The 2003 and 2007 elections were particularly marked by dissatisfaction among candidates, voters, and observers.²

The 1999 general elections witnessed minimal levels of violence. Howbeit, acts of electoral violence were predominantly featured during the 2003 general elections. The dissatisfaction with the 2007 general election was reflected in the barrage of litigations brought before the election tribunals and courts, as well as the number of election results that were nullified. Although the 2011 and 2015 general elections were adjudged to be free and fair, the post-electoral violence that greeted the results of the 2011 general elections, the 2015 pre-election and post-election violence in Gombe, Rivers, Taraba,

Akwa Ibom, and Plateau questioned the credibility of the elections.³ Similarly, the 2019 general elections were also characterised by pockets of violence in some states like Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Kano, and Kaduna INEC Report.⁴ The 2023 general elections also witnessed some sorts of violence in states like Rivers, Lagos, Kaduna, and Kano Olokor.⁵ Apart from general elections, off-cycle elections are also marred by violence. Omotola and Oyewole⁶ argue that elections in states like Kogi, Ekiti, Anambra, Ondo, Bayelsa, and Edo have clearly witnessed all forms of electoral violence in Nigeria.

As electoral violence has continued to plague the country's democratic practice, scholars like Azaigba⁷ and Saliu⁸ have written about the causes, origins, and impact of the menace on Nigeria's electoral process, ethnic-religious relations and internal security. These scholars traced the history of electoral violence to the unholy activities of political actors in the First Republic (1960-1966), which led to the collapse of that republic in 1966. Similarly, Campbell⁹ and Thurston¹⁰ provide insightful historical background to acts of electoral violence in Nigeria's electoral space. The authors argued that the cultural and political diversity has formed the bedrock for the exacerbation of violence during electioneering periods in Nigeria. Relatedly, other scholars like Nwolise¹¹, Omotola¹², and Onapajo¹³ have examined the patterns, nature, and character of electoral violence in each electioneering year in Nigeria. The attractive nature of public office, coupled with the weak regulatory framework in the use of money in politics and the investment mentality that governs parties and elections in Nigeria, are some of the root causes of turbulent elections as espoused by these scholars. The belief that political power, once captured, can lead to the distribution of wealth exacerbates electoral violence. Ake buttressed this point when he observed that:

Those who win state power can have all the wealth they want, even without working, while those who lose the struggle for state power cannot have security in the wealth they have made, even by hard work. The capture of state power inevitably becomes a matter of life and death. That is one reason why our politics is so intense, anarchic, and violent.¹⁴

Others like Peter and Abdulrahman¹⁵ have interrogated the economic effects of post-election violence on National development in Nigeria. The authors argued about how post-election violence disrupts economic activities in Nigeria. Despite these frantic efforts, more needs to be done, especially the need to adopt the political economy approach in examining the scourge of electoral violence. In driving this aim, the methodology employed by the paper is both qualitative and quantitative. The materials used were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Interviews, textbooks, journal articles, and newspaper reports were used. The analysis in the paper is anchored in Nigeria. This is because, since the return of democratic governance in 1999, the country has conducted seven general elections. During these electioneering periods, the political actors, together with their cohorts, engineer acts of electoral violence to capture and control the levers of power for political and economic gains.

Conceptual Analysis

The clarification of concepts is a scholarly ritual in historical scholarship. As such, the concepts that underlie or form the thrust of this paper, which are to be clarified, are elections and electoral violence. Elections have generally been defined as the process of choosing by voting a person or a group of people for a position, especially a political position.¹⁶ To this end, an election can be seen as a process of choice agreed upon

by a group of people. It enables them to select one or a few people out of many to occupy one or a number of authority positions. This process of choice usually involves rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. Corroborating this definition, Dunmoye¹⁷ defined elections as the process of selection of one or more persons to serve in public office. He stressed that an election is a government process in which people, whether opposed or unopposed, seek a party's nomination for election into public office. To this end, Odofin¹⁸ states that elections are central to the basis of parliamentary democracy. It is the mechanism for recruiting and circulation of ruling elites that provides regular and systematic succession in government.

According to Mutfwang¹⁹, elections, as a process, are part of the executive elements that form the political system in the ideological superstructure of the society. The hegemony of the dominant class is regularly reproduced and reinforced through the processes of acculturation and socialization. Within the context of class domination, differentiation, and inequalities, the political rights as expressed in elections, that is – the act of choosing- are meaningless and do not represent any choices for the dominated classes because the dominant class continues to reproduce and cycle itself. This explanation of elections has captured the nature, essence, and character of elections in post-colonial Nigeria, as elections are used by the political elites to control and dominate in governance. Apart from that, the overwhelming attachment Nigerian elites have to political office as a means of creating and distributing wealth and the penchant to consolidate their political offices leads to a lot of political struggles before and after elections. The paper defined elections as a process through which political leaders struggle and employ all manner of tactics to seize and consolidate state power so as to ensure the distribution of wealth among their cohorts, the concomitant effect of their struggles that often results in electoral violence.

Electoral violence is therefore difficult to conceptualize. The difficulty arises from the misinterpretation of the concept to mean political violence and physical violence. It is also compounded by early scholarly works like Remi Anifowose, who defined political violence as:

The use of treat of physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and or damage or destruction to property; and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance, that is, tend to modify the behavior of others in the existing arrangement of power structure that has some consequences for the political system.²⁰

Although the concepts of electoral violence and political violence share some common attributes, political violence, from Anifowose's definition, is more encompassing and broader in scope. As such, in an attempt to distinguish political violence from electoral violence, Ugoh²¹ argued that for violence to be political, there must be an intent to affect the political process, but violence arising mainly from the conduct of an election with the intent of influencing the outcome of the election can be described as electoral violence. Fisher, therefore, defined electoral violence as:

Any random or organized 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.²²

Arising from the above, the term electoral violence therefore means any act of violence perpetrated in the course of political

and electioneering activities that span from political consultations, party campaigns, primary elections, general elections, and post-election periods. It also means as any act of violence perpetuated in the course of political activities, including 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 use of dangerous weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral process or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person connected with the electoral processes Nnamani and Lloh.²³

Theoretical Framework

Several theories have been used to explain electoral violence in Nigeria. For instance, scholars like Igbuzor²⁴ and Onapajo²⁵ have used the Plural, Conflict, and Oil Curse theories to examine the malady of electoral violence in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, is tuned towards the use and application of the political economy paradigm in theorizing the scourge of electoral violence in Nigeria. The Political Economy is a theoretical assumption that seeks to explain social phenomena or events as they occur in society. It is the study of production and trade and their relations with the distribution on national income and wealth. The theory has its origins in the early works of scholars like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus. As a theoretical framework, political economy explains the interaction between the political and economic processes in society. It provides an understanding of the processes in the creation and distribution of power (political) and wealth (economic) between different individuals, groups and classes in a society.²⁶ Political economy, therefore, deals directly on the creation, sustenance and distribution of political and economic power and the transformation of the nature and character of the relationships between the various segments and institutions within a society as they relate in the process of power and wealth distribution.

According to Orngu, political economy is the interplay between the political and economic forces, on the one hand, and social forces within a given society on the other hand. The political and economic forces belong to a higher order – the superstructure – the social forces are largely couched in the subaltern order represented as the underdogs or the masses.²⁷ The frequent interplay between political, economic, and social forces in society and the struggle for control of political power, so as to have control over the economy, sometimes leads to violence. Ake²⁸ concisely stipulates that it is in the course of wealth acquisition and distribution that people or nations seek to acquire power because without power, wealth cannot be distributed. Political leaders desire to acquire power so as to distribute wealth, which often results in violence during elections.

Historical Background of Electoral Violence in Nigeria, 1960-1993

The elective principle of the Clifford Constitution of 1922 ignited electoral practice in Nigeria. However, the first elections based on universal adult suffrage in Nigeria were conducted in 1959 to usher in a post-colonial Nigeria. The elections, because of the high stakes, were rigged.²⁹ According to Achebe, the elections were rigged in favour of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) by the British. A young British civil servant named Harold Smith was designated by Sir James Robertson, Nigeria's Governor-General, to manipulate the elections in favour of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Belewa of the NPC.³⁰ The overwhelming support the NPC received from the British paved the way for their control of the central government. Be that as it may, the regional elections of 1961 and the Federal elections of 1964-5 were characterized by violence. The violence was premised on the ethno-regional nature of the political parties that contested during the

elections and the fear of ethnic dominance that accompanied Nigeria's independence in 1960.³¹

The quest for ethnic dominance resulted in civil unrest that resultantly led to the collapse of the first republic and the emergence of military rule in Nigeria in January 1966. The transition program of Generals Murtala Mohammad and Olusegun Obasanjo's regime paved the way for the 1979 General elections. Describing the nature of violence during the elections, Ugoh argues:

The general elections conducted under Obasanjo's era that ushered in the Second Republic were not devoid of malpractices. Various forms of electoral malpractice were also recorded. The manipulations ranged from victimization, use of thugs, manipulation of results by the polling agents, to bribing electoral officers as well as policemen.³²

The 1983 general elections that followed were equally marred by violence.³³ The violence that characterized the 1983 general election was anchored on the quest by the then ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) under Alhaji Shehu Shagari to increase its political scope and capture states in the western region. The western region of the country, which was dominated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), was, therefore, the theatre of electoral violence.

The Alhaji Shehu Shagari administration was ousted by the military coup of 31st December 1983. From 1983 to May 1999, Nigeria was under military rule. The transitional program of the military under the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida that ushered in the aborted third republic conducted elections at both the state and federal levels. The elections were characterized by violence in some parts of South West Nigeria. The annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election, for instance, was greeted with violence that led to the destruction

of lives and properties. Thus, from 1960 to 1993, electoral-related violence resulted in the deaths of Nigerians, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of lives lost in Electoral-related Violence during General Elections in Nigeria from 1964-1993

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Election Type and Year</i>	<i>Death Toll</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Federal Election of 1964/5	Over 200 lives were lost	The South West Region and Tivland were the hotbed of electoral violence.
2.	Western Regional Election 1965	160 civilians and seven government policemen were killed.	Operation Wet-i-e as the crisis was called, devastated Yoruba land. The crisis was between violent political factions: the Hausa-Fulani natives in Yoruba land and some members of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The main political actors were Samuel Akintola and Chief Obafemi Awolowo.
3.	General Election of 1979	15 lives were lost.	The election was characterized with violence in some Northern and South Western States. Precipitating factors were anchored on quest for dominance between NPN and UPN supporters.
4.	General Election 1983	Over 70 people were killed.	South Western and Mid-Western Nigerian were the hotbed of electoral violence. The attempt by the NPN government to make inroads in these regions occasioned violence.

5.	<i>The 1993 Presential Election</i>	36	<i>Again, South Western Nigeria was the hotbed of electoral violence. The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections by the military government was greeted with violence that not only led to the killing of innocent people, but also led to the destruction of properties worth millions of naira.</i>
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Source: Compiled and modified by the author using Newspaper Reports in Nigeria.

Feelings of marginalization, mutual suspicion, and fear of ethnic domination occasioned the electoral violence that characterized the Federal elections of 1964-5. It was also precipitated by the struggle for power between the North and the South and the short-changed feelings the southerners had over the results of the elections in Northern Nigeria.³⁴ The result showed the dominance of the north over the south not only in figures but also in numbers in the federal parliament.³⁵ A breakdown of the number of seats in the parliament shows that, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) a Hausa/Fulani dominated party had 162 seats, the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) an Igbo dominated party had 84 seats, Akintola's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) a party that had political alliance with the Hausa/Fulani dominated North had 38 seats and the Action Group (AG) a Yoruba dominated party had 21 seats. Figures that were rejected with vehemence by the Yoruba AG and Igbo-dominated NCNC leaders.³⁶ To Southern elites and politicians, the Northern region rigged the elections to have control of

power and dominate the socio-economic and political space of Nigeria.³⁷ Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC, for instance, queried the results of the elections. He accused the Hausa-Fulani-led government of rigging the elections. The displeasure of Zik was evident in his article in the *Foreign Affairs Newspaper* about the rigged nature of the elections that halted the formation of a new cabinet after the election in 1965.³⁸

The 1979 general election was also characterized by violence and led to the death of innocent Nigerians. Although supervised by the military, scores of violent incidents were recorded in states like Ondo and Bendel. The wave of electoral violence continued and assumed high heights during the 1983 general election. During this time, the electoral violence was orchestrated by the federal-controlled National Party of Nigeria (NPN) to remain in power, make inroads into the UPN-dominated South West Nigeria, and have a landslide victory. This was greeted with violence that led to the killing of 70 people, including the Speaker and the only female legislator in the Ondo House of Assembly.³⁹ The hostile political environment that violence created led to the military coup of December, 1983. After the coup, the military was in charge for nine (9) years. Thus, the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida conducted the 12 June 1993 presidential election. The election is adjudged by most scholars, like Fawole⁴⁰, as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria. As organized, free, fair, and credible as the election was adjudged, it was annulled by the General Ibrahim Babangida regime—a development that was greeted by violence especially in the South Western part of Nigeria. The annulment generated crises that threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria and led to the formation of an Interim National Government by General Ibrahim Babangida under the headship of Chief Ernest Shonekan. The interim government only lasted for three months as it was

ousted by General Sani Abacha in a palace coup in November 1993. Thus, from 1993, the military was in place as democratic governance was only returned in 1999.

Electoral Violence in Nigeria since 1999: Towards a Periscope

With the return of democratic practice in Nigeria in 1999, elections have become the platform via which leaders are elected to various positions of authority. Unfortunately, they are marred by violence that often leads to the destruction of lives and properties, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of lives lost in electoral-related violence during General Elections in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Election Type</i>	<i>Death Toll</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	1999 General Election	03	Ogun, Benue, Lagos, Anambra and other states in the South West.
2	2003 General Election	100	Violence was recorded in virtually all the 36 states of the federation. But the South west states of Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Delta, Ondo, Ekiti were most affected.
3	2007 General Election	300	In preparatory to the elections, violence began in the Niger Delta. It was followed by violence in North Central Nigeria and in states like Osun, Kano, Benue, Cross River, Borno, Adamawa.
4	2011 General Election	800	Violence was recorded in virtually all states. The most affected were Kaduna, Gombe, Kano, Bauchi and Adamawa.
5	2015 General Election	106	Rivers, Kogi, Akwa-Ibom, Kaduna, Delta, Cross River.
6	2019 General Election	629	Violence was recorded in virtually all the states of the federation. The most affected states were Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Kano, Benue, Lagos, and Kaduna.
7	2023 General Election	24	Electoral-related violence was recorded in Rivers, Enugu, Ebonyi, Kano, Zamfara, Kaduna, and Borno. Apart from the number of deaths, cases of kidnapping were also recorded in Zamfara, Kano and Jigawa.

Source: John Campbell, "Tracking Election Violence in Nigeria," accessed on <https://www.cfr.org> and the Author's 2023 fieldwork.

From the above table, the 1999 general elections recorded few cases of electoral violence and 3 deaths. However, the election results were predetermined and manipulated to favour Chief Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).⁴¹ The 2003 general election that followed was characterized by violence.⁴² The election, according to the European Union, was the worst to be conducted in the annals of Nigeria's post-colonial political history. In Imo State, for instance, supporters of the PDP killed members of opposition parties. This was evident with the killing of Hon. Ogbonnaya Uche, the All-Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) senatorial candidate.⁴³ In Delta State, the National Vice Chairman of the PDP, Aminasoari, was killed. In Rivers, Harry Marshall was killed. Amidst the killings in other states of the federation, the South West zone was the hotbed of electoral violence. This was because of the attempt by the PDP to dislodge the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in the region.

The 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections followed. Interestingly, the elections were all characterized by violence. During the 2007 general election, for example, violence was recorded in states like Katsina, the home state of the main opposition leader, General Muhammadu Buhari. Also, in Kano State, thugs brandishing cutlasses and swords invaded several polling booths, disrupting voting during the presidential election. In Edo State, Adams Oshiomohle, the Action Congress (AC) gubernatorial candidate, and his convoy were attacked at Auchi on 21st April 2007 by armed thugs sponsored by the PDP.⁴⁴ Still in Edo State, there were shootouts between armed supporters of different parties in Akoko-Edo, where soldiers arrested 10 people during a shootout between PDP and AC supporters that resulted in the death of innocent people.⁴⁵ Relatedly, in Delta State, several houses were burnt down, including the house of Hon. Evans Iwhurie who was a serving commissioner and four people were killed.

As if it was not enough, the 2011 general election witnessed the highest number of deaths occasioned by electoral violence. For instance, before the presidential election, there was a bomb explosion in Suleja, Niger State, that killed 11 people. Apart from that, people were killed in their numbers during the presidential and gubernatorial elections.⁴⁶ Worrisome was the post-election violence that claimed the lives of hundreds of persons in some northern states of Kaduna, Kano, Gombe, Katsina, Adamawa, Taraba, Niger, Gombe and Bauchi. The violence was carried out by rioters who protested the results of the presidential election as announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), declaring Goodluck Jonathan as the winner of the 2011 presidential election. Thus, the protesters burnt places of religious worship, public buildings, and the houses of politicians from the ruling PDP and religious leaders considered to be related to the party. Relatedly, they targeted INEC buildings and killed its personnel, including the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members serving as INEC ad hoc staff. In Sokoto State, the Palace of the Sultan of Sokoto, the highest Muslim authority in the country, was attacked. Protesters clashed with the security forces. In all, the violence resulted in the death of 800, and the displacement of 65,000 people.⁴⁷

The 2015 general election had its fair share of electoral violence-related deaths. Violence was recorded in states like Enugu, Rivers, Imo, Kaduna, Edo, and Kogi. Although, the election was generally considered peaceful, the 28 March presidential election recorded 19 deaths.⁴⁸ In some other states of the federation, like Akwa-Ibom, inter-party clashes between the supporters of PDP and the All-Progressives Congress (APC) resulted in the killing of 30 people, including the gruesome assassination of a House of Assembly candidate of the opposition APC and former Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Mr. Okon Uwah Onuegbu.⁴⁹ In Rivers,

political skirmishes in local governments like Tai, Asari Toru, Ghokana, resulted in the death of 19 people. The tense ethno-religious climate that was created during the 2011 elections returned during the 2015 elections. Party campaigns during the election were done along ethnic lines.⁵⁰ Although the election was unique as the ruling PDP was dislodged at the national level after sixteen years in power, the violence that greeted pre- and election-day activities led to the death of 106 people, as shown in the above table.

Electoral violence did not stop with the 2015 general election; it resonated during the 2019 general election. An estimated 626 persons were killed in the six months between the start of the election campaign and the commencement of the general and supplementary elections in Nigeria. The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room report revealed that the North-west region recorded the highest number of deaths, with 172 killed during the elections, while the North-east followed with 146 fatalities. The report also stated that the South-south and North-central had 120 and 111 fatalities, respectively. In the South-west and South-east, 63 and 14 people were killed, respectively. The just-concluded 2023 general election witnessed the death of innocent Nigerians. The election had a total of 238 cases of election violence, with 24 cases of electoral death, as seen in the above table.

A Political Economy of Electoral Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: An Analysis

Political economy is a theoretical assumption that explains the interaction between the political and economic processes in society. The theory underscores the importance of political power in wealth creation, distribution, and political patronage. Anchoring the theory on the scourge of electoral violence in Nigeria, the centrality of the state in the creation and distribution of resources, and in the dispensation of political

and economic patronage explains the phenomenon of electoral violence. Thus, the violence that characterized the 1999 general election was hinged on the desire of the military to have General Olusegun Obasanjo as the president of the country as against the wishes of political associations such as the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). The result of the election was manipulated in favour of General Obasanjo by the northern military cabal.⁵¹ This development exacerbated violence in South-west Nigeria. Be that as it may, political and economic patronage during Obasanjo's administration favoured members of the PDP, friends and political associates. Below is the list of people who enjoyed his political and economic benevolence from 1999 to 2007.

Table 3: Selected Number of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's Political and Economic Benefactors

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	Olusegun Agagu	Minister of Aviation	He was a member of Obasanjo's kitchen cabinet. Agagu was known for his role in Ondo politics.
2.	Haliru Mohammed Bello	Minister of Communication	Trained in veterinary medicine. He was so powerful in Obasanjo's government and in 2003 and was indicted in a bribery scandal involving the German telecom company Siemens AG
3.	Ojo Madueke	Minister of Transportation and later, Foreign Affairs.	The Abia born politician was an active member of Obasanjo's political empire. He was in charge of PDP Abia politics.

4.	Tonny Anneih	Minister of Works and Housing.	<i>The Mister Fix-it was in charge of Edo PDP politics. He was a key member of Olusegun Obasanjo political empire and was involved in a N300bn scandal involving FERMA and the Ministry of Transportation and Housing.</i>
5.	Ibrahim Mantu	Former Deputy Senate President	He was the promoter of the alleged 3 rd Term bid of Chief Obasanjo.
6.	General Olagunsoye Oyinlola	Governor of Osun State.	He was Chief Obasanjo's political arrow that dislodged AD in Osun state in 2003. He was reelected as Governor of the state following the electoral fraud of 2007.
7.	Professor Jerry Gana	Minister of Information & National Orientation.	He was Chief Obasanjo's political architect in Niger State and Northern Elders Forum.
8.	Mr. Julius Makajuola	Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence.	He was indicted of corruption but his case was withdrawn through a nolle prosequi notwithstanding public outcry. This particular development was part of the hypocrisy of the Obasanjo anti-corruption war.
9.	Ahmadu Ali	PDP Chairman.	He was a key player in Obasanjo's government and Kogi politics.

10.	General Tunji Olurin	Sole Administrator of Ekiti State.	The retired Army General benefitted from the fraudulent impeachment process of Governor Ayo Fayose in Ekiti State.
11.	General Christopher Alli	Sole Administrator of Plateau State.	The retired Army General also benefitted from the phony impeachment process of Governor Joshua Dariye in Plateau State.
12.	Mukhtar Shagari	Minister of Water Resources.	Olusegun Obasanjo political architect in Sokoto State.
13.	Broderick Bozimo	Minister of Police Affairs.	James Ibori and Broderick Bozimo controlled PDP Delta politics.
14.	Adebayo Alao-Akala	Governor of Oyo State.	He was the benefactor of the fraudulent impeachment process of Rashidi Ladoja in 2006.

Source: Compiled by the Author, 2023.

From 1999 to 2007, masterminds of electoral violence across states of the federation were supporters of members of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's Kitchen Cabinet and the supporters of leading opposition candidates in Nigeria. In the South-west, for instance, incidences of electoral violence were between supporters of PDP and AD.

During the 2011 general election that produced Dr Goodluck Johnathan, the Venom of electoral violence was spited between the beneficiaries of Jonathan's presidency and opposition parties and opponents. In southern Nigeria, for instance, Asari-Dokunbo a major supporter of Jonathan's

administration, played an important role in the violence that characterized the presidential and governorship election violence in the Niger Delta.⁵² In Ogun State, electoral violence was orchestrated by supporters and beneficiaries of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Gbenga Daniel's political and economic benevolence, and the supporters of Chief Ibikunle Amosun of the ACN.⁵³ In Northern Nigeria, the desire of the Muslims in the north to acquire power following the alleged marginalization claims by northern elders birthed the post-election violence. Thus, before the election, Jonathan's presidency was accused of using state power to distribute wealth amongst his kin & kith and political associates. The Concerned Elders of the North (CEN), for instance, argued that appointments from 10th May 2010 to 29th May 2015 were dominated by southerners.⁵⁴ This thinking formed the basis for the virulent nature of the 2011 post-election crisis. As if it were not enough, claims of northern marginalization resonated during the 2015 general election and formed the bulwark of the country's electoral behavior. For the Niger Deltans and the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria who had benefited from Jonathan's presidency, his reelection was declared a "do or die" affair. As such, money was mobilized across benefactors and security votes under the Office of the National Security Adviser for his reelection. Colonel Sabo Dasuki and Mrs Diezani Allison Madueke played key roles in the disbursement of these monies.⁵⁵ Apart from the mobilization of state resources, diatribe wars characterized the electioneering process. In Plateau State, violence between supporters of Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Senator Ibrahim Mantu (a benefactor of Jonathan's presidency) resulted in the killing and destruction of property in Jos. In fact, some PDP-branded campaign vehicles were burnt down by angry northern youth, as shown in Figure 1.

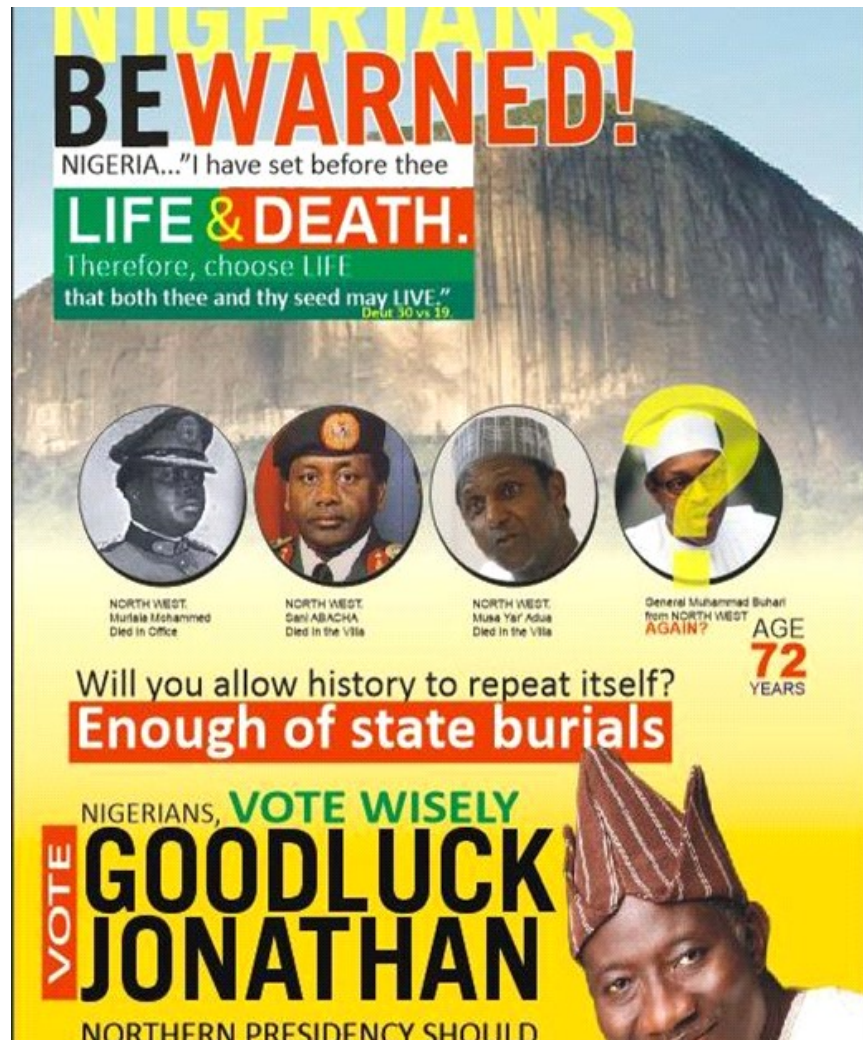
Figure 1 – Campaign Bus of Goodluck Jonathan burnt down in Jos, Nigeria.



Source: Nanlong, M. T. Plateau PDP condemns burning of Jonathan's Campaign buses. *The Vanguard*. January 11, 2015, p. 23.

Another benefactor of the PDP, Governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose's utterances fueled electoral violence during the election. The governor had questioned the health status of the APC candidate and proceeded on a hate campaign against Muhammadu Buhari. In fact, he had warned Nigerians about state burials, citing examples of leaders of northern extraction who had died in office, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Ayo Fayose’s sponsored Campaign of Hate against Muhammadu Buhari in 2015.



Source: M. Ibrahim, Outrage on Social Media over Fayose’s ‘Buhari May die in office’ Newspaper Advertorial. *The Cabal*. January, 19, 2015.

While the fears of Buhari's death in office if elected were expressed by southerners, in the northern part of Nigeria, Buhari was the best bet, as he eventually won the election.

The election of Buhari in 2015 witnessed the use of power, wealth distribution, and appointments. Thus, from 29th May 2015 to 29th May 2023, key government positions were held by northern Muslims. The security architecture of the country, for instance, was manned by northern Muslims. Apart from that, the President had approved the appointments of Babachir David Lawal from Adamawa State as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation; Abba Kyari from Borno State as his Chief of Staff; Col. Hameed Ibrahim Ali (retd.) from Kano State as Comptroller-General, Nigerian Customs Service; Kure Martin Abeshi from Nasarawa State as Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service; and Suleiman Kawu from Kano State as SSA on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives). During Buhari's first term in office, a 2017 Business Day report stated that 81 of 100 appointees were Northerners.⁵⁶

The re-election bid of Buhari in 2019 was therefore a platform for the struggle for political power between the north and the south. To most southerners, the president was an ethnic bigot who needed to leave the shores of power. The failure of the southerners to have a presidential candidate in the two leading political parties (PDP and APC) in Nigeria resulted in the monumental support Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP garnered in southern Nigeria. Thus, actors of electoral violence were politicians who were for Buhari because of political and economic interest, and those of Atiku and other southerners who believed in the rhetoric of a liberal northerner. In the South-south geopolitical zone, Rivers was the hotbed of electoral violence. Leaders of the region wanted control of its resources, while in the South-east, the craving for self-determination and the accommodation of the Igbo in Nigeria's

politics informed the support for Atiku.⁵⁷ The fatalities during the 2023 elections were low due to electoral apathy. Despite this, the aftermath of the election has since witnessed the distribution of appointive positions to politicians like Nyeson Wike, who used all available means to ensure the victory of Senator Bola Tinubu in Rivers. Interestingly, appointments so far in President Ahmed Bola Tinubu's administration are lopsided as the Yoruba have dominated and occupied key government positions.⁵⁸

Conclusion: Towards Mitigating the Scourge of Electoral Violence

The political economy theory is criticized because of its overemphasis on the interplay of political and economic factors as determinants of conflicts and violence. But the concise explanation of how this interplay and the issues of marginalization among groups lead to violence is appreciated by this paper. Nigerian politics constitute a highly and fiercely contested process among the elite given the fact that the control of state power is clearly equivalent to direct access to the country's resources (oil). It is against this backdrop that elections are overly monetized as politicians heavily spend and use money to manipulate the electoral process and hold on to power thereby leading to violence. The idea to hold on to power is informed by the desire to continually distribute wealth to associates and kinsmen. This has continued to feature predominantly in Nigeria's electoral journey since independence in 1999. Closely related to this is the fact that the "MUST WIN" syndrome during electioneering periods in Nigeria and the attractive nature of Nigeria public offices and the overriding influence of politicians in wealth distribution in Nigeria always throw the country into electoral violence. This perception of Nigeria's politics and elections was corroborated by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo when he asserted,

as quoted by Ukah (2008), that: We fight, and sometimes shed blood to achieve and retain political power since for us in Nigeria, the political kingdom has for long been the gateway to economic kingdom (Ukah 2008). This bitter truth, as espoused by Obasanjo, has been responsible for the widespread electoral violence in the country. As a way out of the current abysmal state of Nigeria's electoral practice, the paper recommends a holistic restructuring of the 1999 Constitution to resolve issues of high wages and allowances of political office holders. The paper also recommends the dismantling of the country's current political party structure and the advance of the introduction of two major ideologically driven political parties and a platform for independent candidacy during elections. If this is done, politics will be seen as a platform to serve and not as a means of creating and distributing wealth (oil) among kinsmen and political associates.

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