

Democracy and Violence in Nigeria: A Reflection on 2007 and 2011 Post-Election Violence

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Abstract

General elections in Nigeria are characterized by violence. The general elections of 2007 and 2011 are clear examples. Post-election violence in these elections are examined in this article. In doing this, the authors look critically at the causes of post-election violence in 2007 and 2011, analyse the 2007 and 2011 post—election violence, identify the perpetrators of the violence, the targets of the attacks, intensity and level of destruction and make recommendations.

Keywords: Democracy, election, violence, post-election violence.

1. Introduction

The objective of this presentation is to reflect or highlight the level of anarchy perpetrated on human lives and property following the aftermath of the 2007 and 2011 general elections in Nigeria – post-election violence. In doing this, the paper commences with definition of some terms.

The twin words in this presentation are democracy and violence. The concept of election is embedded in that of democracy. The terms or expressions worthy of exploration are democracy, election, violence, post-election and dispute.

Democracy is a system of government in which *all*¹ the people of a country can vote to elect their representatives. Democracy also means fair and equal treatment of everyone in an organization, etc, and their right to take part in making decisions.² “Election” is the process of choosing a person or group of persons for a position, especially a political position.³ The word “violence” means a behavior that is intended to hurt or kill somebody.⁴ “Post-election” is an expression used to describe events which take place after an election while dispute is a disagreement between two or more persons.⁵

Democracy and violence are two opposite words. They are not coterminous. To Abraham Lincoln, democracy means “a government of the people, for the people and by the people.” Analytically, this means a system of government which is formed on behalf of the people. The second triad of Lincoln’s exposition is that the system of government is formed to protect the people. And the third triad of the definition is that the system of government is actually formed by the people themselves.

Considering the above views in perspective, it is asserted that if the system of government is formed on behalf of the people, for their benefit and protection, and it is actually formed by them, there should be no basis to attack or disagree with the government. Thus, there should be no basis for violence. This is why democracy and violence are two words which contradict each other.

However, in practice, democracy as encapsulated by Lincoln is hardly practiced. The people are not usually allowed to freely choose their representatives.⁶ The people are either intimidated or their votes manipulated against their wish. So the system of government that emerges is not formed on behalf of the people or for their protection or benefit, neither is it formed by them. This is where the issue of violence comes to operation. It is, therefore, the thinking of the people that since the government is not formed on their behalf, for their protection or benefit, and or by them, it must be resisted with force and by all means. This underpins the escalation of violence whenever there is a change in the system of government through voting at elections.

This paper intends to discuss the causes of post-election violence, the key actors responsible for the violence, the victims of the violence and the level of physical destruction or damage. Conclusion and recommendations are made thereafter.

¹ This is a very wide definition. In practice not all the people in a country vote at elections. Only people who have attained voting age are allowed to vote to elect those who will represent them. All people therefore mean all people of voting age.

² A. S. Hornby Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. (Oxford University Press, 2000)

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ The people are either intimidated or their votes manipulated against their wish.

2. Critical examination of the causes of post-election violence in Nigeria in 2007 and 2011

(i) Financial investment and incentives derivable from politics in Nigeria

The level of financial investment and the incentives derivable from politics in Nigeria arguably makes it a fight for life agenda. Politics in Nigeria is an investment and Nigeria is one of the most expensive democracies in the world. The resources required to maintain the leaders are outrageously ridiculous scales of reckless spending and uncontrolled use of materialism is rife in Nigerian politics. That is often used as a means of persuading vulnerable and poor Nigerian electorates into all sort of election fraud and post-election violence. As a result of the heavy amount spent in an election, the losers scarcely accept electoral defeat. Instead of accepting defeat, losers at elections openly incite gullible followers to protest their loss at elections. This is one source of post-election violence in Nigeria.

(ii) Culture of impunity

There is a culture of impunity in Nigeria.¹ Electoral violence in Nigeria is most often carried out by gangs (commonly called thugs) whose members are openly recruited, financed and sometimes armed by public officials, politicians and party officials or their representatives. These gangs, comprised primarily of unemployed young men are mobilized to attack their sponsors' rivals, intimidate members of the public, rig elections and protect their patrons from similar attacks. Often, sponsors of electoral violence take time and again to the same criminal gangs, violent campus-based "cults" and other sources to recruit agents of political violence. Those recruited are paid, often very little, and sometimes armed for the sole purpose of carrying out violent abuses on behalf of their political sponsors.² The Nigerian legal system and law enforcement agencies are not able to arrest, prosecute, and convict offenders, as such, victims of post-election violence normally receive little or no redress. Members of security forces implicated in violations of civil and political rights, including electoral violence, are also not usually held accountable. The awareness of the possibilities of getting away with acts of violence has fostered unabated contamination of those acts.³ This is the culture of impunity as a source of post-election violence. The 2007 and 2011 elections provided a vivid illustration of the unshakable confidence of many Nigerian public officials and politicians in their culture of impunity.⁴

(iii) State institutions

It has been observed that state institutions through their acts of commission or omission promote electoral violence. They include the police, election management bodies and the judiciary. The actions and inactions of these institutions in one way or the other provide a hot bed for electoral violence in Nigeria.

In cases where police aid and abet the rigging of elections as well as intimidate voters, it means that the institution that should protect the electoral process has turned against it. Similarly, in cases where judges nakedly prevent justice, electoral violence is prone to occur.

(iv) Absence of institutional and legal solutions

There has been so much vacillation on the establishment of an Electoral Offences Tribunal. The absence of such a body resulted in the non-prosecution of violators. The Electoral Act makes provision for various offences relating to violence in the electoral process with a penalty for offenders who are liable on conviction to pay a fine of N1,000,000 or imprisonment for 3 years.⁵ There is no adequate machinery for the enforcement of this law. Moreover, considering what is at stake in Nigerian politics and desire to win at all cost by the politicians, N1,000,000 or 3 years imprisonment is not enough. All Nigerian politicians can easily afford the former option without having to work any harder. Therefore, in order to deter politicians from perpetrating or instigating electoral violence with impunity, tougher and radical law needs to be put in place with strong and independent enforcement mechanism.

(v) Ethnic, regional and religious factors and communal tensions

Since the colonial era, ethnic, regional and religious divisions constitute the main form of expression of social cleavage in Nigeria. In Nigeria, political parties and candidates are seen as representatives of a particular ethnic, regional or religious group and voters do most times support parties and candidates in these terms. As a result, the voting pattern in Nigerian elections has mostly followed the configuration of ethnic, regional and religious cleavages. At local and national levels, tensions arising from communal identity conflicts have had a major influence on electoral and the political process. Beginning from the early independence period, sectarian conflicts have mixed with political differences, resulting to electoral violence. In Nigeria's political landscape, it is difficult to draw a line indicating where communal tensions and where political conflicts begin. Part of the reason why it is difficult to separate communal tension and political conflict is because of the nature of Nigerian

¹ N. Orji and N. Uzodi "the 2011 Post-Election Violence in Nigeria." *Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre*. 2012, p.12

² C. C. Aniekwe and J. Kushie. "Electoral Violence Situated Analysis: Identifying Hot-Spot in 2011 General Elections in Nigeria." (Abuja: National Association for Peaceful Elections in Nigeria, 2011) p.20

³ Orji and Uzodi (above n.7)

⁴ Aniekwe (above n.8)

⁵ See s.131 of the Electoral Act 2010

politics that Richard Joseph describes as “prebendal politics”.¹ The concentration of resources in the state makes the possession of political power very lucrative and the competition for political positions very intense. As Richard Joseph observes, “Nigeria’s present and future depend upon a prior understanding of the nature, extent and persistence of a certain mode of political behavior, and of its social and economic ramifications.”² This mode of political behavior is the *prebendal* culture, which sees politics as the clearing house for jobs, contracts, and official plunder. In Joseph’s words:

Democratic politics and prebendal politics are two sides of the same coin in Nigeria; each can be turned over to reveal the other ... the system of prebendal politics enables divergent groups and constituencies to seek to accommodate their interest ... the system is often wasteful, unproductive, and contributes to the increasing affluence of the relative few, paltry gains for a larger number, and misery for the great majority of people. Since it is self-justifying system which grants legitimacy to a pattern of persistent conflict and since its modus operandi is to politicize ethnic, religious and linguistic difference, it serves to make the Nigerian polity a simmering cauldron of unresolvable tension over which a lid must regularly be clamped and just as regularly removed.³

Thus, the different factors causing conflict cannot be addressed in a fair and convincing way because of “prebendal politics” and so they may become deeper and more connected with one another. Religious factors become dangerous when they are linked to politics, but even more so when linked to ethnicity and North-South divisions. Invariably, politics then become a battle ground in which every weapon, and tactics is deployed for political victory through all forms of electoral violence.

The system of prebendal politics spurs individuals, groups, communities and constituencies to seek to capture state power in order to control state resources. Those who are already in control of state power often hold strongly onto it by suppressing their opponents. Under this circumstance, the democratic tradition of alternation of power among individuals and political parties is difficult to achieve. Once in control of state power, the incumbents try to retain it by all means, including use of violence. At the same time, those aspiring to take over power sometimes pursue their goal by employing extreme measures such as violence. In the context of stiff competition for power, individuals employ ethnic, communal and religious symbols and sentiments in order to drag an entire ethnic, regional or religious community into political competition which is supposed to be squarely between political parties. Once candidates and political parties are identified with a particular ethnic, regional or religious group, victory or defeat in the electoral contest is defined in communal terms. Thus, electoral violence is typically triggered by attempts by individuals and political groups to use “all available means”, including the use of violence, to defend their “communal honour”. This is what exactly happens after the announcement of the result of the presidential election in 2011. Some Northerners, mostly Moslems, felt the loss of their preferred candidate who is from the North and a fellow Moslem, was an affront and unleashed a rage of violence in the Northern part of the country which led to the death of innocent people including Youth Service Corps members, and destruction of property worth billions of naira.

(vi) Economic Vulnerability

High rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty is a vital sign of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, a large section of the population lack access to opportunities and resources to actualize their potentials. This situation breeds a class of economically marginalized people (mostly youths) who can be used to perpetrate electoral violence. This group of people is pliant and easily enticed by the wealthy violent entrepreneurs who sponsor most of the violent political encounters. Electoral violence in Nigeria is mostly carried out by gangs whose members are openly recruited, financed and sometimes, armed by politicians, state officials, and party officials or their representatives. Members of these gangs are mostly illiterates, unemployed and poor young men, who are mobilized to attack their sponsors’ rivals, intimidate members of the public, rig elections, and protect their patrons from similar attacks.⁴

(vii) Lack of trust in the electoral justice system

The electoral justice system involves the prosecution of offences and the resolution of petitions against election results. The belief by political actors that they cannot secure justice in election tribunal/courts reduces their inclination to seek legal redress to allegations of election fraud. The situation in Nigeria relates to Kenya’s experience during 2007 elections, Raila Odinga outrightly rejected the advice by the United States that “those alleging vote tampering may pursue legal remedies” maintaining that the election dispute was not a legal matter but a political conflict that required a political solution.⁵ Odinga’s party, ODM, also declared that it would not

¹ Richard Joseph. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1991)

² Quoted in *Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and UNDP, 2003*

³ Ibid

⁴ Aniekwe, kushie (above n.8,10)

⁵ East African Standard, Nairobi, 30 December 2007

go to court over the contested election results in Kenya's judicial system, an institution that has failed to resolve past political disputes, and this is controlled by President Kibaki's loyalists.¹

During Nigeria's 2011 elections, the leading opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, was reported by the national television as saying that he will not lodge petition regarding the outcome of the election since his previous attempts at challenging election outcomes did not yield any meaningful result. In Nigeria judiciary, which is central to electoral dispute resolution, enjoys a considerable degree of credibility at the federal level due to some landmark judgments it has given in the past. However, the credibility of Nigeria's judiciary was badly dented by revelations emerging from a dispute between the two most senior judicial officers in the country – the Chief Justice of Nigeria and the President of the Court of Appeal.² The disclosure by the President of the Court of Appeal that the Chief Justice of Nigeria tried to influence the Sokoto State governorship election appeal indicates that the judiciary is prone to corruption and vulnerable to interference. This is, perhaps, why many politicians find it more rewarding to seek redress through violence rather than the judicial process.

(viii) Integrity of elections

Doubts over the integrity of election can create frustration among stakeholders in electoral process, which can transform into violence. As Ethiopia's experience illustrates, delays by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) in announcing the 2005 election results triggered public protest which culminated in several days of violence.³

The issue of election integrity is even more problematic in countries where ethnicity is important in politics. In such societies, the victory or defeat of a particular candidate or party is perceived as victory or defeat of an entire community. As such, any form of irregularity that would prevent a candidate or his community from clinching electoral victory is often opposed, sometimes violently, by the entire community.⁴

(ix) Inflammatory language

The spread of rumour and inflammatory languages about an election or its outcome could be an immediate trigger of electoral violence. The electoral violence in Kenya's 2007 election and Nigeria's 2011 elections were attributed mainly to the inflammatory messages sent by supporters of different candidates.⁵

In the Nigerian case, several unguarded utterances were attributed to the candidates while some politicians were accused of using innuendos to incite the public to violence.⁶ Inflammatory rhetoric sent via the social media worsened the tension created by religious and ethnic campaigning by supporters of President Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. There were also SMS that attempted to stir up Muslims against President Jonathan and Northern Muslim governors perceived to be supporting him. North hardened the stance of many Southerners against Buhari, setting up an inevitable clash between followers of Buhari and Jonathan. Both local and foreign media have also been accused of fanning the already inflamed discourse by reporting partisan stories with sensational headlines. An example of such sensational headline is the one by the Nation, a major daily newspaper in Nigeria which carried the header: "The North is Against Jonathan".⁷ Publishing provocative stories during election periods when tempers are charged may incite supporters of different parties to violence. Even Muhammadu Buhari was alleged to have said in 2011 that if he was defeated at the elections, he would make the country ungovernable.

(x) Changes in institutional arrangements

Sudden shifts in institutional arrangements that guide election can result in opposition and violence. This is illustrated by Nigeria's experience where the relegation of the power-sharing arrangement which guided the previous election resulted in vigorous opposition and violence. For many analysts, the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria reflects the regional and religious divisions and simmering tensions created debates over power sharing modalities in the aftermath of the demise of President Umaru Yar'Adua. Many in the North believe that President Jonathan, a Christian and Southerner, should have conceded his presidential bid to a Northerner and Muslim in honour of the unwritten rotation of power between the North and South. Umaru Yar'Adua, a Northerner and Muslim, succeeded President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southerner and Christian, who

¹ Harneit-Sievers, A. and Peters, R. "Kenya's 2007 Genral Election and its Aftershocks". *Africa Spectrum*, 43(1): 133-144. See also Mutua, M. "Justice and Siege: The Rule of Law and Judicial Subsर्वience in Kenya", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 2001, 23: 96-118

² In response to attempts by the Chief Justice of Nigeria to remove him as the President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Ayo Isa Salami accused the Chief Justice of trying to influence the decision on Sokoto State governorship election appeal. The allegation made many people to suspect that some other judgments given by the judiciary may have been influenced. See Abimboye, D. "Anarchy in the Temple of Justice", *Newswatch Magazine*, 5 September, 2011. See also Ajaero, C. "Judiciary's Dubious Role". *Newswatch Magazine*, 21 February, 2011.

³ Barnes, C. "Ethiopia: A Socio-Political Assessment". A Report Commissioned by United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Status Determination and Protection Information Section (DIPS), 2006.

⁴ Orji, N. "Responses to Electoral Outcomes: The Aftermath of 2007 Elections in Nigeria and Kenya." 2010, *African and Asian Studies* 9(4): 436-41.

⁵ Harwood, A. and Campbell, J. "Opinion: Text Messages as a Weapon in Nigeria." *Global Post*, September 2010. See also Ofili, P. "Provocative Discourse and Violence in Nigeria's 2011 Elections," *Africa Portal*, 2011, No.17

⁶ Williams, A. "Jonathan and the Security Challenges," *The Guardian*, 24 April, 2011.

⁷ *The Nation*, 16 January 2011.

ruled Nigeria for eight years beginning from 1999. Unfortunately, Yar'Adua died untimely in 2010, midway through his term, paving the way for then Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan to emerge as President. The proponents of power sharing insist that Jonathan should not have contested the presidency because the North had not completed its "turn". The 2011 post election violence can therefore be seen as an expression of the frustration caused by the failure of Muhammadu Buhari, a Northerner and Muslim, to reclaim the North's control of the presidency from President Jonathan.

3. Analyzing the 2007 and 2011 post election violence

The 2007 general elections did not witness significant post-election violence. One reason for this was the election of a Northern Muslim in 2007 to succeed to the presidency after eight years of leadership by a Southern Christian president. This idea of electing Muslim Hausa-Fulani tampered the tendency of the losers to mobilize sectarian violence. Secondly, the PDP's landslide victory in the 2007 general election – an indication of its superior capacity to mobilize violence in many parts of Nigeria – probably sent clear signals to the opposition parties that it may be an uphill task to organize violent post election protests, and that such protests may not sufficiently alter the outcome of the elections. Even though the 2007 general elections did not witness significant post-election violence, the integrity of the result was seriously faulted because of brazen rigging. Ibeanu¹ characterized the 2007 elections as follows:

It does appear that government agencies and the ruling party pulled off one of the most brazen stealing of votes ever recorded in Nigerian history. While in the past, rigging was regarded as an illegal act to be carried out subtly and covertly, in 2007, it was direct, brazen and daring. Indeed, it was an unprecedented direct seizure of votes and mandates. The people's mandate could not have been more directly captured.

The flaws that characterize the conduct of the 2007 elections severely dented Nigeria's image and electoral integrity. This gravity of electoral offences committed during the 2007 elections led to soul-searching among the Nigerian leadership. This reflected in the public acknowledgement by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua that the election that brought him to office was fundamentally flawed.

In considering 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria, some assumptions are made. The core issue underlying post election violence in Nigeria is not necessarily the question of electoral integrity, but frustration arising from the inability of the "presumed dominant forces" to win political power. Secondly, assumption is post-election violence tends to occur in elections that emerge as a contest between two powerful political forces with relatively equal strength – the "actual dominant forces" and the "presumed dominant forces". Thirdly, post-election violence manifests in attacks on individuals/institutions assumed to have worked or to be working, against the victory of the "presumed dominant forces."

The 2011 post-election violence started in Bauchi and Gombe States, and quickly spread to other parts of Northern Nigeria such as Kano, Adamawa, Niger and Kaduna States.

The underlying causes of the violence have been considered. But who were the participants in the violence and who or what were the targets of the attacks? What was the degree of intensity of the violence? These are some of the issues to be considered.

The outbreak of the 2011 post-election violence owes such to the ripe opportunity for violence in Nigeria. The complaints by the CPC leadership appeared to have prompted youths suspected to be CPC supporters to embark on violent protests in some Northern states. The outbreak of post-election violence in the North can be seen as an expression of disappointment and frustration at electoral defeat by some CPC as the "dominant political force" in their communities were apparently frustrated that the party could not win the presidency. They were particularly aggrieved that the allegedly inflated vote figures recorded in South-South and South-East states prevented their candidate/party from clinching victory.

The underlying issue behind the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria is the frustration arising from the failure of the CPC candidate to win the presidency during the April 2011 elections.

The greatest challenge to the PDP's political dominance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic came during the 2011 general elections. PDP's predominance was defied by the Action Congress of Nigeria (CAN) which draws its support mainly from the Yoruba of South-West and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) which appeals mostly to the Muslim North. In the 2011 presidential election, the PDP lost the entire Muslim North (12 states) in the South-West to the CAN. PDP's control of 70 per cent of the presidential election vote in 2007 election was reduced to 58 per cent in the 2011 election, with the party getting as low as 32 per cent and 35 per cent of presidential votes in North West and North East zones respectively. The PDP also lost all gubernatorial positions in the South West, with the party retaining a majority in only one of the state assemblies.²

¹ Ibeanu, O. "Conceptualising the Specificities of Direct Capture in 2007 Elections" in J. Ibrahim and O. Ibeanu (eds), *Direct capture: The 2007 Nigerian Elections and Subversion of Popular Sovereignty*. (Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development, 2007)

² CAN controls six gubernatorial positions in six South-West states, while the Labour Party (LP) produced the Governor for the seventh state

The 2011 losses were the greatest electoral defeat suffered by the PDP in the party's history. The 2011 election results significantly shifted power relations between the PDP and the opposition party in ways that favoured the opposition parties, particularly the CPC, prompted the party's supporters to violently confront individuals and institutions that seemingly played a role in subverting the ultimate victory of the party.

Together, grievances over election outcome, existence of ripe opportunity for violence, increased salience of ethnicity in Nigerian politics, as well as the relative parity of power between the PDP and the main opposition parties provide the underlying causes for the outbreak of the 2011 post-election violence.

4. Perpetrators of the post-election violence

A group of people commonly referred to as "thugs" are often identified as the key participants in election related violence in Nigeria.¹ Statements released by Nigeria Police also indicated that the 2011 post-election violence was carried out by thugs. For instance, the Commissioner of Police in the Katsina State Command, Ibrahim Mohammed, blamed post-election violence in the State on "people, who I will call miscreants, arsonists, criminals and murderers."²

Furthermore, it was reported that thugs were behind the post-election violence that occurred in Kaduna, Adamawa, Bauchi and Niger States.³ The role of thugs in the 2011 post-election violence requires further examination since it is not clear who these thugs were, who mobilized, and how they operated. Illicit armed groups, including extremist groups are known to be key perpetrators of election violence.⁴ Northern Nigeria, like other parts of the country, hosts a number of these groups. In many Northern cities, unemployed youths who have little opportunity loosely organized violent groups and serve as willing protesters during civil unrests. It is members of these organized violent groups that are often identified as thugs.

One organized group that is quite notorious, especially in Kano State, is the *Yandaba*. The *Yandaba* are gangs of unemployed youths who reject the poor conditions to which their social background has relegated them and have taken refuge in groups criminal and violent activities.⁵ A variant group of the *Yandaba* is the *Yanbanga* made up of political party thugs. Although the role of the *Yanbanga* in the 2011 post-election violence is not quite clear, reports indicated that the *Yantauri* (thugs from knife cuts) actively participated in the attacks.⁶ Considering that the *Yandaba* have an extraordinary capacity to hijack a protest started by others and to turn it into their own, it is not surprising that the group is identified as participants in the 2011 post-election violence.

Another group that was identified as participants in the 2011 post-election violence is the *Almajirai*. *Almajirai* are people who migrate in search of knowledge. *Almajirai*⁷ is Hausa word for a pupil in a Koranic school. The *Almajiri* system has four important features.⁸ First, it involves children relocating from their family and friends in villages to the guardianship of *Mallams* in towns.⁹ Secondly, it is restricted almost exclusively to boys – the girls who attend these schools nearby their homes in the villages for relatively short period. Thirdly, the curriculum of the school is concerned primarily with learning the Koran. Finally, each school, consisting of between 25 and 500 pupils, is largely autonomous, thus making it difficult to regulate the practice.

The difficult condition in which many *Almajirai* find themselves after leaving their home is perhaps the most critical factor that predisposes them to becoming involved in violence. The *Almajiri* system breeds some of the individuals that end up as *Yandaba*. In his study of the *Yandaba* in Kano, Ya'u¹⁰ maintained that the *Yandaba* are "recruited mainly from primary and high school drop-outs", and that "a large percentage of these drop-outs are ex-pupils of traditional Qur'anic schools". The involvement of the *Almajiri* in incidents of violence has been well documented.¹¹ The most significant violent incidents involving the *Almajirai* were the *Maitatsine* riots in 1980 and the *Zango-Kataf* riots in 1993. During the 2011 post-election, there were reports that the *Almajirai* were involved in the protests. In one incident, it was reported that the house of Pastor Yussuf Ishaya of First

(Ondo State).

¹ Anifowose, R. "Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience" (Enugu, NOK, 1982). See also Barbarinsa, D. *House of War: The Story of Awo's Followers and Collapse of Nigeria's Second Republic*. (Ibadan: Spectrum, 2003).

² Larty, D. "Four Burnt Alive, 45 Prison Inmates Released in Katsina." *The Punch*, 20 April, 2011.

³ Liman, I. "We Lost Over 400 Southern Kaduna-Hausa/Fulani." *Daily Trust*, 25 April, 2011. See also Njoku, P. "Nyako Imposes Curfew in Adamawa as Police arrest 50 Protesters." *Daily Independent*, 19 April, 2011, Ade Kambi D. and Akintunde, W. "Presidential Poll –Political Thugs Clash," *Nigerian Tribune*, 18 April, 2011; Tsenzughul, A., Orintunsin, J. and Asishana, J. "10 Killed in Bauchi Post-Election Violence." *The Nation*, 18 April, 2011.

⁴ UNDP. *Understanding Violence in Asia*, Bangkok: *United Nations Development Programme*, 2011

⁵ Ya'u, U. Z. "The Youth, Economic Crisis and identity Transformation: The Case of the Yandaba in Kano," in A. Jega (ed), *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (Kano: Centre for Research and Documentatin, 2003).

⁶ Oyelere, K. et al. "Presidential Election Fallout: North Boils." *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 April, 2011.

⁷ The Plural for *Almajiri* is *Almajirai*. The Arabic origin of *Almajiri* is *Al-muhajir*, meaning a travelling student.

⁸ Awofeso, N. et al. "The Almajiri Heritage and the Threat of Non-State Terrorism in Northern Nigeria. Lessons from Central Asia and Pakistan." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 26(4): 311-325.

⁹ *Mallam* is the term for a Koranic instructor. The term is derived from Arabic word *Mu'allam* (or *Mullah*) meaning teacher/clergy.

¹⁰ Ya'u (above n.30)

¹¹ Awofeso et al (above n.33)

ECWA Church in Minna was burnt by suspected *Almajirai*.¹

However, like in the past, there were some who launched eloquent defense of the *Almajirai*, insisting that although some under-privileged *Almajirai* may be forced by economic difficulties to do menial jobs between school times, the *Almajirai* are under strict supervision of the Mallams.² They, therefore, argue that many of the allegations of misconduct against the group are based on stereotype, ignorance and prejudice. The targets or victims of the 2011 post-election violence will now be considered.

5. Targets of attacks

The riots, looting, arson and assaults associated with the 2011 post-election violence were focused mainly on PDP leaders and supporters, state institutions, government officials, traditional rulers, and individuals suspected to be non-muslims. Traditional rulers suspected to have supported the PDP were selected for the attack. Specially, the palaces of some of the most renowned and revered traditional rulers in Nigeria including the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar, the Emir of Kano, Ado Bayero and the Emir of Zazzau, Shehu Idris were targeted and destroyed. In Bida, Niger State, two irate youths who were so brazen to march to the palace of the Etsu of Nupe, Yahaya Abubakar, with intentions to attack the palace were shot and killed by security agents.³

The attacks on traditional rulers indicate a breakdown of the moral authority of these traditional rulers a decline in the social and political linkage between the traditional elite and the masses of Northern Nigeria. For some analysts, decline in the moral authority of traditional rulers in the North can be attributed to the involvement of the traditional rulers in partisan politics. According to one analyst:

The involvement of traditional rulers in partisan politics positions ... they are supposed to be custodians of values, beliefs, and cultural heritage, but rather, they veered off into politics. Their involvement is seen as means to amass wealth and to protect their thrones, to the detriment of their people. Before then, they were held in very high esteem because they advanced the interest of their subjects.⁴

CPC presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari supports the above argument contending that the violence against traditional rulers in the North was spontaneous and reflects similar occurrences in the First and Second Republics when traditional rulers that collaborated with the political elite to subvert the wishes of the people were attacked.⁵ It is pertinent to note that traditional rulers in Northern Nigeria have historically been involved in politics. The point therefore, is not about the involvement of traditional rulers in partisan politics, but whether or not the traditional rulers were on the side of the people.

Another group that was specifically targeted during the 2011 post-election violence was members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). To enhance the integrity of the elections in Nigeria, INEC recruited NYSC members to serve as ad hoc election staff in communities where they were deployed. The logic behind this was that since most of the Corps members are non-natives, they were likely to be non-partisan. This call to duty portrayed the Corps members as part of the election officials, in other words, as part of the result of the 2011 presidential election. This unfortunate perception of the Corps members as well as the fact that many NYSC members deployed to Northern States were non-natives and non-Muslims set them up as prime targets.

In Bauchi State, for example, about eleven NYSC members were killed in Giade, Itas Gadau, Katagun, and Alkalari Local Government Areas. According to reports, seven of these Corps members were brutally killed by rioters who set them ablaze in a police station at Giade where they had sought safety.⁶ Two female Corps members were raped and assaulted by protesters in Gadua village.

In Ilina, Niger State, protesters stormed a lodge occupied by members of the Nigerian Christian Corpers Fellowship (NCCP), forcefully locked in 50 Corps members in the building and set it on fire. They were able to escape after one of them forced the door open. An 18-seater bus and motorcycle belonging to the fellowship was also burnt by the protesters. The rape and sexual assault of female Corps members highlights the gender dimension of the 2011 post-election violence. The case of the female NYSC members reflects the assault experienced by several other women during the protests.

One distinctive feature in the 2011 post-election violence is that it took a religious dimension. Attacks during the 2011 post-election violence took a distinctive pattern when the protesters attacked individuals suspected to be non-Muslims or Southerners. These individuals were portrayed as PDP supporters and were

¹ Laleye, D. "Post-Presidential Election Violence: *Almajiris* Turned Against pastor Who Harboured them and Burnt Down His House." *Saturday Tribune*, 23 April, 2011.

² Dantiye, S. I., "In Defence of *Almajiri*," *Daily Trust*, 17 June, 2011. See also Kurawa, I. A., "C I Rani, *Almajiranci* and Security in Kano," in A. U. Adamu (ed), *Chieftaincy and Security in Nigeria: Past, Present and Future*. Proceedings of the National Conference on Chieftaincy and Security in Nigeria, Kano, 2011.

³ Ebiye, A. I., "2 Feared Dead Trying to sack Emir," *Daily Trust*, 20 April, 2011.

⁴ Ibrahim, H. J. et al. "Post-election Violence: Why Northern Masses Rose Against Their Leaders." *Weekly Trust*, 23 April, 2011.

⁵ Abbah, T., and Alao, O., "We Have Evidence that the Presidential Election Was Rigged," *Sunday Trust*, 24 April, 2011.

⁶ Michael, I., "Tears as Corpuses of Slain Corpers Leave Bauchi." *Sunday Tribune*, 1 May, 2011.

singled out for attacks. Armed youths mounted roadblocks and asked motorists to identify their faiths before being allowed to continue their journey.¹ The attacks on non-Muslims and Southerners triggered reprisal attacks in some Northern states and fear of reprisal attacks in many Southern states. The main targets of the reprisal attacks were Muslims and Northerners. In Kaduna State, for example, reprisal attacks were mobilized through text messages urging non-Muslims and Southerners who reside mainly at Sabo area in Kaduna to be “on the look out and prepare for any emergency.” Since they had become the main targets of the protests,² what can be categorized as perhaps the worst incident of reprisal attacks occurred in Zonkwa, Kaduna State, where men from the predominantly Christian Baiji tribe attacked Muslim residents of the area, killing several hundreds of people.³

Finally, serious incidents of attacks by security agents against civilians were also reported. Rights groups, including Human Rights Watch and Civil Rights Congress, alleged that the police and other security agencies were involved in the buses, including extra-judicial killings, as they sought to quell the post-election violence.⁴ The Chairman of the CPC in Borno State, Zana Shetima, also claims that supporters of the party were targeted and shot by security operatives in Maiduguri. Over 100 civilians, mostly women and children who were fleeing protests in Kaduna were reportedly stopped and arrested by soldiers and detained at an army depot in Zaria. They were detained for days in an area that lacked adequate ventilation and deprived of food and water for a long time before being released. Members of the special joint task force were accused of routinely rounding up suspects and even shooting at unarmed residents of violence-prone areas.⁵ Officials have repeatedly denied these allegations.

6. Intensity and level of destruction in post-election violence

The 2011 post-election violence was most intense in Kaduna where the highest number of deaths and destruction were recorded. Figures released by the Nigeria police indicate that 401 people were killed during the post-election violence in Kaduna State.⁶ Figures by non-governmental organizations like the Human Rights Watch point to higher numbers of deaths. The Human Rights Watch for example, noted that over 800 people were killed in the cities of Kaduna and Zaria, while attacks in predominantly Christian communities of Southern Kaduna State, including Zonkwa, Matsigra, Kafanshan, and Marabar Rido led to the deaths of more than 500 people.⁷

The gravity of the 2011 post-election violence also reflects in the sexual abuse and other forms of physical assault. Sexual violence is usually part and parcel of violent conflicts around the world.⁸ During the 2011 post-election violence, sexual abuse was reported. In one instance, Bauchi State Police Command announced that “unspecified number of female Corps members were raped, molested and assaulted by irate youths in Gadau village.”⁹ In another incident, a group of protesters reportedly invaded a female hostel at the Federal College of Education, Kano, but there were no report of sexual assault.¹⁰

Physical assault was a common and well reported aspect of the 2011 post-election violence. The media were replete with stories of individuals who were maimed, injured, and beaten by reporters. A large number of people suffered bodily harm inflicted with dangerous weapons such as machetes, cutlasses, and arrows. In one incident, a police officer was bathed in hot oil.¹¹ Gunshot injuries were widespread according to reports from various hospitals.¹² While there was no official figure on the number of victims that suffered assault and physical injury, figures from various sources suggest that physical assault was the most common form of violence experienced during the protests.

In addition to killing and physical assault, the 2011 post-election violence was marked by destruction of houses and other properties. In Kaduna State alone, the Niger Police reported that 1,435 private houses, 987 shops, 157 churches, 48 mosques, 45 police properties, 16 government properties, 437 vehicles, and 219 motorcycles were burned or destroyed.¹³ The figures indicate the gravity of destruction during the 2011 post-

¹ Ebiye, N., and Muhammed, G., “Kaduna, Katsina, Kogi, Yobe, Niger, Sokoto Boil,” *Daily Sun*, 19 April, 2011.

² Ibid

³ “Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800”. *Human Rights Watch*, Washington DC, 2011.

⁴ Agence France-Press, 2011.

⁵ Liman, I. (above n.28).

⁶ Kaduna State Government, 2011.

⁷ *Human Rights Watch* (above n.45)

⁸ Bastick, M. et al. *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector*. (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007).

⁹ Orude, P., “Corps Members Killed in Bauchi, Females Raped”. *Sunday Sun*, 24 April, 2011. See also Mohammed, A. “Corps Members Died in Bauchi Violence – Police.” *Daily Trust*, 25 April, 2011.

¹⁰ Mgboh, D and Ebiye, N., “Week of Blood”. *Sunday Sun*, 24 April, 2011

¹¹ Asemota, A., “7 Killed, 65 Churches Burnt in Katsina.” *Sunday Sun*. 24 April, 2011.

¹² Binniyat, L. “Post-Presidential Election Mayhem: On Sunday Alone, we had 300 Patients with Bullet Wounds”. *Saturday Vanguard*, 23 April, 2011.

¹³ Ogbuadu, F., “2011 General Elections Review: Experience Sharing, Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward – The Nigeria police

election violence. They also point to the targets of attacks of the protesters. The religious dimension of the violence equally explains why destruction was comprehensive affecting several houses and shops.

Added to the above deaths, abuses, assaults and destruction was the case of internally displaced people. Several thousands of people were displaced from their original and preferred abodes, and their properties were totally destroyed.

In fact, the post-election violence of April 2011 with widespread incidents of violence targeting Christians, churches, in Northern states of Nigeria, resulting in the destruction of over 700 churches and the systematic massacre of hundreds of Christians in 48 houses, was the largest single attack on christiandom in contemporary world history anywhere on the planet.¹

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has considered democracy and post-election violence in Nigeria, especially post-election violence in 2007 and 2011. Much of the paper dwelt on the 2011 post-election violence because there was no significant post election violence in 2007. In considering the topic, the paper defined some concepts such as democracy, election, violence and post-election violence. The paper then considered the causes of post-election violence in Nigeria, the perpetrators of the violence, the victims of the violence and the gravity and extent of the violence.

In the light of what had been discussed above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Politicians, especially presidential aspirants should inculcate the habit of accepting defeat at elections.²
2. Federal and state governments should embark on programmes, especially academic and economic programmes that would continually keep youths engaged.
3. Judicial and law enforcement agencies should display the highest level of transparency and honesty in all their official dealings.
4. Nigerians should have a change in their attitude and embrace democracy in its full ramifications.³
5. Development parties and donor agencies should support appropriate local and national conflict prevention and resolution initiatives aimed at dealing with election violence.
6. Civil society groups should initiate and encourage civic and voter education programmes that would promote peaceful democratic culture and mitigate electoral violence.
7. Civil society groups should closely monitor and support measures put in place to prosecute suspected perpetrators of post-election violence.

Perspective". Paper presented at a workshop on 2011 Nigeria Elections: Experience Sharing, Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward, organized by Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja, 2011.

¹ Alabo, p.120

² In 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan stunned the world when he timely conceded defeat thereby averting what would have been a bloody post-election violence. In Africa, Benin's former President, Mathew Kereku was hailed as helping to usher in multi-party democracy in Africa. Mr. Kereku had two spells as President totaling 30 years, first going to power as the head of a Marxist regime in 1972. But then he accepted the idea of multi-party democracy and organized elections, which he lost in 1991. He became the first West African leader to admit defeat in an election. The peaceful transfer of power in Benin in 1991 showed people in the Region that a change of president can be achieved without violence. The 1991 election was followed closely in West Africa and Mathew Kereku's willingness to step down – becoming the first regional leader to accept defeat at the ballot box was welcomed. Mr. Kereku stepped down in 1991 after losing to Micephore Soglo in multi-party election, but returned to power in 1996 having beaten Mr. Soglo at the polls and then went on to win a second and final five-year term in 2001. See *The Nation*, Friday, October 16, 2015, p.46

³ Guinea recently conducted presidential election on October 11 2015. There was no single act of violence or voter intimidation. Polls were extended from 6pm to 8pm to accommodate all voters. At the end, the people of Guinea demonstrated their love for democracy and peaceful election. The United Nations infact adjudged the presidential election in Guinea as one of the most credible and peaceful in Africa. See *The Nation*, Monday, October 26, 2015, p.46.