



## Research Article

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# The South-South Presidential Election Experience: A Retrospect View of 2015-2019 Elections

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**Abstract:** This study examined Electoral Violence and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, comparing the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in south-south. The study examine the electoral violence associated with election/rigging which has been a threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria and also to investigate the extent to which ethnic politics was affiliated to electoral violence in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections relying on qualitative approach, using data gathered from secondary sources. Electoral violence in Nigeria have dealt a huge blow to the development and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria's elections so far has not lived up to expectations due to various forms of electoral manipulation which have denied the country credible, free and fair elections in her body politic. This study is anchored on the political economy theory which is based on dialectical materialism and the need for using it lies in the fact that the fierce struggle or violence to secure political power is a sure means for the allocation of National wealth. This paper provides some important recommendations that would sum as a panacea to the problem of electoral violence like the political parties should respect party constitution and particularly allow democratic candidate selection. And also the civil societies should engage more actively with youth leaders especially in poor urban and rural areas, strengthen participatory elections early warning and early response system, and raise timely alerts against possible violence.

**Keywords:** Elections, violence, south-south Region, and Party Politics.

## INTRODUCTION

Election is the process of selecting leaders or representatives of the people through the vote of eligible electorates. Elections by and large are expected to be competitive, free and fair both substantively and procedurally, and in which the ability of the elected representative to exercise decision making power is subject to the rule of law and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedom of individuals. (Bamgbose, 2012:205). Credible elections guarantee the sovereignty of the people who in true sense of the word, hold the destiny of political contestants in their hands.

Credible elections devoid of irregularities and violence are therefore crucial for democratic consolidation. However, inspite of the centrality of peaceful, credible, free and fair election and the legal as well as constitutional machination, put in place to enthrone credible election process, experiences overtime have to enthrone credible election process, experiences overtime have shown that elections in Nigeria have been riddled with violence.

Elections in Nigeria have been generally described as a do or die affair, where every contestant tries at all cost to undo his perceived political rivals. Consequently, cases of arson, high profile killings of opponents, maiming of unsuspecting electorates, snatching of electoral materials and general destination of properties always become the order of the day. In other words, anarchy and chaos reign supreme. Thus, the electoral process in Nigeria is characterized by vote

buying, vote rigging and outright violence remains incapable of producing a leadership imbued with the spirit of public accountability. Indeed, all these are attributable to the inherent unbecoming experimentation of the electoral system.

It is important to emphasize here that though violence has been a long-standing feature of the democratization process in the past colonial Nigeria, its recent manifestation especially since the birth of the fourth Republic has assured an unprecedented magnitude thus constituting a major threat to the survival of democracy. Fundamentally, there is no doubt the fact that electoral violence remain a major source of political instability in a democratic society with palpable threat of deconsolidation. Scholars among which were Adigun Agbaje (2007) and Said Adejumobi (2002) have argued that violence has become infused in political processes in most new democracies in Africa especially with respect to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, according to the 2000 Amnesty International Report, the violent struggle for power, even in states which do not descend into armed conflict, still remains an important component of political life in Africa.

Nigeria, having survived decades of military dictatorship which was characterized by despotism, violation of fundamental human rights, financial profligacy among others, eventually returned to democratic rule on May 29, 1999 which culminated in the birth of the Fourth Republic. The republic which started amidst great hope and expectations is yet to

significantly convince to generality of the Nigerian populace its democratic success especially with respect to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections. In fact, both at national and state levels, transition from one civilian administration to another since 2003 in particular has been very rough. This is noticeable in the various cases of electoral violence which has claimed several lives, displacement of innocent people and wanton destruction of property. The conduct of election since the birth of the Fourth Republic up to 2015 has been retrogressive rather than progressive.

Violence ridden situations have historically featured in all elections conducted in Nigeria and the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections are no exceptions. An example is the 1964 general election which was contested by two broad coalitions, the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progression Grand Alliance (UPGA). The election was horrible. Unimaginable things happened. Then came the western regional election of 1965, then election were marred by violence and terrible malpractice's as the NNPP was bent on retaining power despite its unpopularity. This is so because the issues surrounding the electioneering processes potentially relate to violence and violation of rights of individuals. Thus, rather than serve as a means and a process of exercising legitimate political rights, election in Nigeria have since independence, turned out to be serious political liability, causing serious political turmoil and threatening the survival of corporate Nigeria. Thus, whenever election period draws near, there are usually palpable fears engulfing the well-meaning citizens of the country over the serious dangers that may trail the processes. This is because there are always cases of high incidence of political huffer and uncontrollable violence characterized by wanton destruction of lives and properties; elections in Nigeria can best be described as warfare. (Aurel, 2006:142).

The 2011 and 2015 presidential elections were characterized by a handful of propaganda by competing parties and hate speeches that cost aspersion on political opponents especially during the periods of electioneering campaigns. All these ugly development have been implicated to have collectively undermined democratic consolidation and equally threatened the foundation of Nigeria. Democracy is currently characterized by immense experiments in Nigeria. In other words, the usual procedures of enthroning democratically elected government in Nigeria are still marked by administrative and executive trials and errors. This scenario also implies that the electoral process is seriously on trial. Hence, a survey of the history of election in Nigeria shows that it has been characterized by massive frauds, the intimidation and even assassination of political opponents. The Economist (2011) opines that in Nigeria, results of elections came in two separate columns. One records the vote cast at polling stations; the other, the number of

people killed around the time of the election; as violence is an integral part of Nigerian politics.

The aftermath of rigging and other forms of electoral violence by desperate political office contenders to office manifest in bad governance, failure of democracy and extension of poverty. Often time, social and economic infrastructural development are neglected, there are lapses on security of lives and properties. Nigeria's 2015 general elections, the fifth since 1999, was scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015 respectively and later changed to 28<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2015 respectively. All 36 states held presidential, federal parliament and House of Assemblies (state parliament) elections. Gubernatorial polls were held in 29 states. General elections in Nigeria have always been turbulent and violent affairs. However indeed, the 2007 election poll was widely condemned as the most violent, poorly and massively rigged in the history of Nigeria, electoral history. Even the winner of the presidential pool, a person of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, conceded flaws. Some analyst and observers considered the April 2011 election as the most credible since the return of democracy, unlike 2007 poll where over 1,000 people were killed in post-election protects.

Nigeria has had a checkered electoral history with successive elections being marred by serious irregularities and controversy particularly in the conduct of its electoral commission. This has led in some cases to the collapse of democratic experiments as occurred in 1966 and 1983. The 2007 general elections in Nigeria provided a good opportunity to occasion on a break with the past and rekindle public confidence in the electoral and democratic process of the country. However, this was not to be as the elections, according to several local and international observers turned out to be the worst in Nigeria's political history (European Union: 2007, Human Rights Watch: 2007, Transition Monitoring Group, 2007). Like its predecessors, INEC was accused of not being able to engender public confidence in the electoral process or organize transparent and credible elections. Unfortunately, this position has scarcely been demonstrated in a systematic manner. Nigerian's struggle for democratic consolidation have been so daunting that all previous attempts at democratic transition have been futile. Thus, after prolonged military rule characterized by the wanton violation and repression of the political, economic and social rights of the people, the re-democratization process which begun in 1999 elicited renewed expectation for the consolidation of democracy in the country, these expectation lies the pertinent issue of election.

Elections are meaningfully democratic if they are free, fair, participatory and legitimate. This is possible when they are administered by a neutral authority; when the electoral administration is

sufficiently competent and resourceful to take specific precautions against fraud; when the police, military and counts treat competing candidates and parties impartially; when contenders all have access to the public media, when electoral districts and rules do not grossly handicap the opposition; when the secret of the ballot is protected; when virtually all adults can vote and under age are not seen anywhere close to the voting arena, when procedures for organizing and counting the votes are widely known; and when there are transparent and impartial procedures for resolving election complaints and disputes. Thus, the absence of the aforementioned characteristics of credible election in any political system as a result of electoral violence spells doom towards sustaining a country's democracy. It therefore seems like this could be the problem with Nigeria's nascent democracy because the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections which were supposed to promote and sustain the democratic values of the country were marred by electoral irregularities.

Election is a major feature of democracy and its malpractice or any violence associated with it is going to really affect the consolidation of democracy. The problem here is that electoral violence really affects the consolidation of democracy negatively. Another problem is that Nigeria have not really been able to find a way of curbing electoral violence in order to consolidate democracy because right from the beginning Nigerians focused their attention mainly on the emerging winners of election regardless of their means of winning or the due legitimate process of election. Finally, another problem is that the incumbent will always want to manouver his ways and also manipulate the election results to suit him so as to retain office.

Electoral malpractices in general and rigging in particular have been institutionalized in our electoral system to the extent that it has been said that there are some 333 or so ways of rigging election, and all but 33 of these were said to have been used in the general elections only on two previous occasions in 1964 and, 1983 have elected civilian government supervised general elections.

## **ELECTION RIGGING**

"Elections in Nigeria are neither free nor fair". This statement is often heard whenever issues on policies or elections are mentioned or being discussed. Suffice to say that politicians, political analysts, and the general public do not have an exact definition for election rigging, instead colloquial definition have been adopted.

However, the Collins dictionary defined election rigging as the act of dishonestly organizing an election to get a particular desired result through fraud and interferences with the election process. This definition sounds all too familiar with the political

scene in present day Nigeria. This unpleasant sound has continuously echoed in the political system far as long as most average Nigeria has come to expect whenever elections are around the corner.

This menace of election rigging has become a sure route to electoral victory in Nigeria, subverting freedom and fairness in the process. Election rigging involves activities such as ballot box snatching and stuffing, conflict between party agents and electoral staff, illegal printing and usage of voters' card, falsification of results as well as tampering with the voters register.

It should be borne in mind that the election conducted in Nigeria right from 1959 down to the 2015 election have been fraught with various irregularities hence it is not a thing of surprise that this scourge is one of the fundamental problems facing Nigeria today.

The somewhat sophisticated nature of the rigging activities shows that this rigging process, though reaches a crescendo during election period begins long before the election take place. It also shows that our political class tends to take the issue of election as a "do or die affair".

Election and election results have been problematic for the Nigeria society become of some reasons. First, the orientation of the Nigeria political elite is such that those who seek for power see politics as an avenue for making money, a sort of open source to wealth. To be in power is to control state resources that are often converted into personal uses.

To re-maintain incumbency, those in power use all sorts of strategies to ensure the election result favour them. In the process, an impasse often created as those who lose out cry foul, take legal and extra-legal steps to redress the injustice. The situation described, explains to a large degree the rigging, the violence, the confusion and chaos that have characterized most Nigeria election and the declaration of their results.

A government who rigged itself into power will not have any moral justification to perform hence it has no interest to satisfy anyone. A government is instituted to promote fundamental human rights but where a government does not care about the welfare of her citizens but dwells in accumulation of private wealth, democratic consolidation suffers as government responsibility and her accountability to the electorates would have been rendered useless. Democracy as Abraham Lincoln defined it is for the people. This means that government cannot exist without the people. Unfortunately, electoral violence over the years have aided to the violation of the principle of fundamental human rights which A.V. Dickey advocates as the right to life for every citizen born in a country. Many

political conflicts in Nigeria which claimed citizen's right to life have emerged via election riggings.

Since the birth of the fourth republic in 1999, four general elections were said to have been conducted under a civilian administration in the country in which none can say that democracy was actually consolidated, because various elections conducted during the period were not devoid of different kinds of electoral malpractices which led to a number of electoral violence culminating in the killings and displacement of many innocent lives and destruction of properties worth billions of naira. Nzongola-Ntalaja (1989) asserts that it has always been argued that one of the fundamental problems facing majority of past-colonial African state is that of how to sustain and consolidate their democracy through credible elections. The Human Rights watch also highlighted incidence of pre-electoral violence in the run-up to Nigeria's April 2007 elections which was beset by political killings, bombings and armed clashes between supporters of rival political factions (Human Rights Watch, 2007). Instances of irregularities in the conduct of the election which invariably engendered electoral violence were noticeable in the recourse to courts by aggrieved parties as well as the reports of various local and foreign observers, electoral scholars and even in the speech of elected president.

Late President Umaru Yar'Adua also at his inaugural speech admitted that the 2007 general election were flawed. The evidence of this was seen in the various steps he took subsequently after its assumption. First, he inaugurated twenty-one members of Electoral Reform Committee, headed by Justice Uwais to see to the problem of electoral process in the country. Second, he ensured the independence of judiciary which was noticeable in the various judgements dispensed at both Tribunal and Appeal courts over electoral irregularities. Examples of these were the loss of Edo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo States to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Labour Party (LP), which were initially declared to have been won by PDP according to INEC.

Though the 2011 general election were generally acceptable by both local and foreign observers to be partially fair when compared with the 2015 general elections, the election witnessed two major stages of electoral violence, the pre-election period (that is the period of registration, campaign, election day) and the post-election period (that is after the announcement of results). The announcement of the April 2011 presidential election result by INEC in which President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP was declared winner led to violence (Post electoral violence) especially in some parts of Northern Nigeria, such as Bauchi, Yola, Maiduguri, Kaduna etc.

The intense nature of competition for political power especially in the fourth republic has made

violence to be associated with democracy in Nigeria. Alemika (2011) acclaimed that Nigerian politicians, over the years have become more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power and more intolerant of opposition, criticism and efforts of replacing them. Obasanjo the first president in the fourth republic from 1999-2007 asserted that "we fight and sometimes shed blood to achieve and attain political power because for us in Nigeria, the political kingdom has for two long been the gateway to economic kingdom". (Obasanjo, 2002:50-51).

### **Ethnic Politics**

Nigeria has divergent ethnic groups. Similarly, Salawu (2010) noted that Nigeria has over four hundred (400) ethnic groups, belonging to several religion sects, thus, Nigeria since independence has been grappling with the problem of ethnicity on one hand and religions conflict on the other hand. Haliru (2012) contended that the ethnic and religious composition of Nigeria and its manipulation by the political elite poses a lot of threat to governance and security of Nigeria.

The inability of the state to perform its constitutional duties of maintaining law and order, justice and providing social sources for the people has culminated in the emergence of ethnic militias in several parts of the country such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Bakassi boys, Egbesu boys and the emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. Salawu (2010) opined that the emergence of ethnic militias and the deep divides between the various ethnic groups; makes religious intolerance more violent and bloody with more devastating consequence using the ethnic militias as the executors of the ethnic religious agenda. Adagba (2012) have equally noted that the interplay of ethno-religious conflict and politics in Nigeria boils down to perceived or real loss of power by an elite stratum, the quest for political power among those who won it before, those that lost it and those who want it back. And politicians are known for playing ethnic cards for their selfish political gains that is, inciting their own ethnic group against their opponent's ethnic group.

The violence that trailed the release of the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria, in the northern parts of the country, (the home of the major presidential candidate General Buhari that lost out in the election) buttresses this fact. Added to the insecurity baggage is the Boko Haram insurgency in the north that has left not less than 16,000 policemen, soldiers, civilians and politicians dead. However, the issue of ethnicity has triggered electoral violence which has hampered hugely on the consolidation of Nigeria's nascent democracy.

In most of the emerging democracies it is often difficult to organize free and fair election without violence. Why is the emphasis on violence? Unlike in

developed democracies where there is a distinction between the state and the government, in developing liberal democracies the thin line is smeared by the contradiction within the society. The concept of state is variably contested but generally defined in liberal democracy by the assumption that it has dominant power standing above both the ruler and ruled. Secondly, it is an independent geographical entity with jurisdiction. Thirdly, it has maximum control over its resources and legitimate monopoly of the use of violence and fourthly, it fundamentally promotes the common goods of the society.

However, every epoch defines the nature, structure and organizational management of its own state and society. In this case there are two approaches to understanding the concept of the state. The first which is agreed by both the liberal and radical scholarship is the primary view of the state as independent and standing above all in the society. The second view which views the state as the agent of the dominant class in the society. It is in this line that Alavi (1979) noted that in western societies we witnessed the creation of the nation state by indigenous bourgeoisie, in the wake of their ascendant power, to provide a framework of law and various institution which are essential for the development of capitalist relation of production. In colonial societies the process is significantly different. The experience with the empirical function of the state in post-colonial societies as clearly noted by Goulborne (1979:119) is that:

“The high degree of unity that was achieved around the issue of independent during the nationalist struggle could not be easily maintained in the immediate post independent period. Generally speaking, organized labour which had joined forces with the nationalist party in the independence struggle was blamed for threatening an apparent unity by making legitimate demands for workers. This was generally interpreted a threat by those who held state power and who wished to use this power to provide the dominant classes with secure economic basis.

### **Election Rigging and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria between 2011 and 2015**

Critical investigation in the incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria exposed some sub-factors that triggered election rigging between the 2011 and

2015 presidential elections. These are situation that on regular basis fuel various levels of violence which are inimical to democratic consolidation. The sub-factors include among others:

**Corruption:** A proportion of Nigerian population is corrupt: They do not adhere to rules and regulation serving as guides to the conduct of any government business. Most of the regular staff and the adhoc staff of the electoral umpire see their appointments as great opportunity to enrich themselves especially during election periods. They, in most cases, connive with desperate politicians after financial inducement to rig election results in their favours. The outcome of this phenomenon is always a burning anger on the part of the electorates who perceive the result of the election as not reflecting their choices. Thus, they resort to violence to vent their bottled anger as well as express their displeasure. **Inordinate Political Ambition:** Politics in Nigeria has been perceived as a gold mine where any aspiring billionaire should venture to satisfy his quest for wealth. This has been unarguably responsible for the huge number of persons who go into politics in the country. Thus, in order to achieve their ambitions they go extra miles to truncate the rules of the game so as to succeed at all cost. This explains why politicians keep and maintain armed thugs who are deployed as ready instruments to wreak havoc on perceived political opponents before, during and after elections.

Nigerian governance under civilian rule has been characterized by power alternation between the predominately Muslim north and the predominately Christian south. Though enshrined in the governing People Democratic Party (PDP), power alternation was a matter of practice, not of law. In 2011, it was the north's turn. Jonathan's decision to run, and his subsequent victory, broke from the power sharing principle, contributing to the alienation of many in the north. As in 2015, the two presidential candidates in 2011 were the Christian Jonathan and the Muslim Buhari. The campaigns were disfigured by appeals to ethnic and religious identities. Buhari won all of the predominantly Muslim states, Jonathan won the rest (with one exception).

#### **2011**

S/N	Party	Candidate	Votes
1.	PDP	Jonathan	22,495,187
2.	CPC	Buhari	12,214,853

**Source:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian\\_presidential\\_election\\_2011](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_presidential_election_2011)

## 2015

S/N	Party	Candidate	Votes
1.	APC	Buhari	15,424,921
2.	PDP	Jonathan	12,853,162

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian\\_presidential\\_election\\_2015](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_presidential_election_2015)

So, the election results seemingly bifurcated the country between a Muslim north and a Christian south. Nigeria's constitution requires a successful presidential candidate to win 50 percent plus one vote of the total cast. It also requires the successful candidate to win 25 percent of the vote in two thirds of the states. Otherwise, there is a runoff between the top two candidates. Since the establishment of civilian rule, no presidential incumbent has been defeated, and there has never been a run off.

Rigging has long been a characteristic of Nigerian elections. In 2011, it was less obvious. Polling was better than it had been with more polling stations open on time and supplied with ballots than ever before. However, ballot box stuffing remained. Nigerian civil organization saw electoral fraud at the collating stations, where individual's polling station results are collated. In 2011, the goal of the rigging appears to have been ensuring that Jonathan met the two constitutional requirements for electoral victory.

When Jonathan's victory was announced in 2011, there was rioting in the north, accompanied by the greatest bloodshed since the 1967-70 civil war (Nwolise, 2006). The rioting initially appeared directed against those in the Islamic establishment who had supported the Jonathan candidacy, and later degenerated into ethnic and religious killings.

In 2015, once again the contest pits Jonathan against Buhari. This time, however, the political class is fractured, making election rigging more difficult as a practical matter. There is anecdotal evidence that, once again, there are appeals to ethnic and religion identities. Hence, the results of 2015 are not fore-ordained, as they have been in previous elections. In that sense, the 2015 elections are "real" in a way elections have not been in the past. Wild cards include how elections will occur in the three states under a state of emergency and how the estimated one million internally displaced persons can vote. And then there are the refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. In the past, these populations would likely have supported Buhari, but if they are unable to vote, Jonathan may have an advantage. On the other hand, many observers are surprised by what seems to be widespread support for Buhari in areas outside the North.

No matter which candidate is declared the winner, there would seem to be plenty of grounds for the loser to reject the results. Hence, anxiety about the upcoming elections is not misplaced.

The 2011 general election was a significant improvement in the country's political history as the election represented the fourth election since the return of the country to democracy in 1999. Despite logistical problems. Complaints and skirmishes of electoral fraud, the elections were described by both local and international observers as "successful" compared to previous elections in the country, hence, rejuvenating hopes of democratization (NDI, 2012). Conducted in April and May, 2011, the elections set a new standard for democratic consolidation fair participation, improved political environment for peaceful competition and rising hopes of free and fair democratic struggle in the country (NDI, 2012). David et al (2014) asserted that the 2011 general elections, though endorsed by local and international observers credible, had some problems. The problems includes: controversy about presidential zoning between northern and southern Nigeria, underage voting, intimidation and harassment of voters/opposition candidates, ballot box stuffing/snatching and falsification of election results. These lapses were admitted by the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) (2012), NDI (2012) and Think Africa Press (2013) in their final reports on the organization, conduct and declaration of the 2011 general election results.

However, the 2015 general elections was the fifth election conducted in the country since 1999, and the elections conducted in March 28 and April 11, 2015 recorded significant democratic land marks. The 2015 general elections conducted by INEC was historic for two reasons. First, the introduction of an electronic accreditation process called Card Reader and Permanent Voters Card (PVC). Despite the challenges encountered in the new voting policy, it seemed to have remarkably increased the efficacy of Nigeria's election administration processes. Secondly, it was the first time in the political history of the country that an incumbent president lost to opposition party and conceded defeat (Movch, 2015).

Election rigging according to Nwabueze (2003) refers to electoral manipulations which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent or sinister motive to influence an election in favour of a candidate by way such as illegal voting, bribery, treating and undue influence, intimidation and other form of force exerted on the electorates, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as the winner (without altering the recorded results). Election rigging connotes any form of undue authority or power that influences and manipulate election result in a dubious way to protect a

particular interest against the interest of the generality of the masses. When the interest of the people are articulated in a free and fair election, the government in power tend to enjoy the sovereign legitimacy of the people but election rigging can thwart the interest of the people hence the dubious imposition of an unpopular candidate. The sad end is governments' lack of people's support which is one of the basic principles of democracy. Election rigging has taken many dimension in Nigeria. Observers have identified some ways by which elections are rigged in Nigeria. In his observation. Ibrahim (2007) identifies some forms of electoral fraud as follows:

- Illegal printing of voters' cards
- Illegal possession of ballot boxes
- Stuffing of ballot boxes
- Falsification of election results;
- Illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers;
- Infant voting;
- Announcing results in places where no elections were held;

Added to the above, some politicians who have upper hand in the government, in an attempt to win an election by all means may call for an illegal arrest and detention of their opponents on or before the Election day. Democratic consolidation implies a democracy that can last for the test of time. This can be assured if those values that made democracy worthwhile are fully institutionalized. Kaur (2007) states that democracy become sustainable when there is credible opposition capable of replacing an incumbent government by offering an alternative outline of politics and strategies that is likely to appeal to the electorate. By the concept of democratic consolidation, it connotes a deliberate political process in a polity by which democracy is "so broadly and profoundly legitimized among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down" (Ouyary 2006). To consolidate democracy, it needs behavioural and institutional changes that normalize democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty. Democratic consolidation is an off-shoot of good governance which encompasses accountability, security of human rights and civil liberties, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy, which all constitute a challenge to democratic regimes (Eyinla, 2000:22). Infact, democratic consolidation can be measured by the percentage of voters in a country who consider democracy as an indispensable way of life and are ready to go way length to protect it. Democracy can be consolidated if there exist popular participation. Participation is meaningful when the votes of these participants count but not when their votes are subverted for the interest of the few. When the majority did not participate in choosing who should represent them, it is not democracy but the government of the few (oligarchy). Where elections are rigged by the few, it does not represent democracy and consolidating democracy in such an environment is very difficult.

Election rigging since independence in 1960 has delayed Nigeria's hope for a consolidated democracy. For democracy to be consolidated, the government in power must be legitimate. Legitimacy is the belief in the rightness and appropriateness of the ruling regime and the government and their policies by the populace (Dahrendorf, 1996). The ruling government cannot command legitimacy through the use of force; it's the right of the people to grant or withdraw legitimacy from governments (Nwosu, 1996:6) and this varies from time to time depending on how satisfied citizens enjoy from the government in power (Dare, 1975). In Nigeria, election riggings have failed to produce a government that will be popularly acceptable. This is because some of the leaders that emerged victorious in her elections as we analyzed in this work found themselves in the corridors of power using all forms of manipulations and this restricted the chances of true candidates from winning the election even though they are people's choice. When this unpopular candidate is elected, the people will be reluctant to support his administration as they feel that the government is a stolen mandate. Any government that assumes office against the majority votes lacks the legitimacy of the moral authority that popular mandate enjoys. Democracy cannot be consolidated where a candidate is imposed against the choice of the people and a government instituted without people's acceptance will not succeed.

#### **Ethnic Politics and Violence in Nigeria's Election**

The history of political development in Nigeria is replete with ethnic politics. For instance, the first Republic's political parties were formed along ethnic lines, hence NCNC was seen as an Igbo party, NPC was perceived as the northern party aimed at the propagation of the interest of the north and Action Group (AG) started as a Yoruba cultural organization known as Omo Oduduwa. Scholars are in agreement that strong ethnic attachment was a machination of the colonialist aimed at dividing and ruling the indigenous people of Nigeria.

Therefore to understand the effect of ethnic politics in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections, there is need to review the violent activities perpetrated during the elections. However, about 14 political parties participated in 2015 compared to 21 political parties in 2011 that contested the election. Nevertheless, in the course of the presidential campaigns, former president Goodluck Jonathans campaign trains were petted with stones at Kastina State when he and his entourage paid a courtesy call to the family of his late boss/principal. Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua, in the area. Also, during presidential campaign rally of PDP in Bauchi State, the youth who were earlier on in peaceful mood suddenly turned angry before the arrival of the former President (Dr. Goodluck Jonathan) and his entourage. In this rampage, they destroyed canopies and other campaign materials. In Nigeria, it is this ethnicity that is being exploited by

ethnic chauvinist when politics is involved. It is however sad that owing to the fact that democracy has not been deepened, development is a mirage. The above therefore may not be unconnected with ethnic colouration being given to virtually all matters thereby necessitating the ethnic question in Nigeria. This human attitude manifest inform of prejudice and tribalism (ethnic communalism and conflict). The aspect of prejudice that is relevant to our study here is the one that has to do with group solidarity. (Peil, 1977) claims that group solidarity provides scarcity in situation of potential conflict and informal support when official agencies cannot or will not help. Prejudice can be turned to discrimination. If this happens, there will be strong pressure to exclude outsiders in the sharing of scarce resources such as political power. 16 April 2011 Presidential Election; Registered Voters 73,528,040. Total votes (voter turnout) 39,469,484 (53.7%). Invalid/Blank votes 1,259,506. Total valid votes 38,209,978. 28 March 2015 Presidential Election; registered voters 67,422,005. Accredited 31,746,490 (47.08%). Total votes (voter turnout) 29,432,083. Invalid/Blank votes 844,519. Total valid votes 28,587,564 (97%). The 2015 presidential elections and the eventual outcome were in many ways different from other elections, especially the 2011 election.

**Table 1.** Nigeria Presidential Election Regional voter’s turnout

ZONE	2015 Approximate	2011 Approximate
North Central	43.47	49
North east	45.22	56
North West	55.09	56
South East	40.52	63
South South	57.81	62
South West	40.26	32

In pre-independent era, party politics in Nigeria was based on ethnic factor. One can say without mincing words that it was during this period in question that the seed of ethnic politics was sown, germinated in the first Republic and the products started spreading during the third and fourth republic. However, it was in the second republic that regionalism played down a bit. And it was because the 1979 constitution stipulated that for a political party to be registered, it must be national in outlook. The new political parties that were registered had their leadership replicated along ethnic lines as in the first republic. Therefore, ethnic colouration and affiliation played out in political parties formation and operation during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. Voting patterns equally followed ethnic lines in the elections (James, 2011).

In the current political dispensation of the Fourth Republic, ethnic colouration has reared its ugly head. The All Nigerian’s People Party (ANPP), Alliance for Democracy (AD) can still be traced to

Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups. The ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) is being perceived as to have deviated a bit from the usual ethno-religious dominated party politics of the past with their membership and formation cutting across the clime of Nigeria. However, in the 2011 general elections, inspite of change of names of some political parties and registration of new ones, ethnic and regional politics played itself out. The death of Alhaji Umar Musa Yar’Adua changed the power configuration to the south and the north is insisting on producing the presidency come 2015. The merging of parties as well as re-alignment of forces in this regard cannot be divorced from either the contest for power or/and resources. The political instability occasioned is borne out of who gets what, when and how. The link between ethnic politics and democratic consolidation is especially crucial in view of the popular assumption that democracy engenders development.

Much historical evidence shows, however, that development has not been possible where there are marked divisions or intense ethnic politics between groups in a given society. Therefore, ethnic politics negates the development function of democratic consolidation and may ultimately attack the roots of democracy in a society. (Edlyne, Opcit).

Undoubtedly, there is a nexus between good governance which is synonymous with development and democratic consolidation. Democratic consolidation should be the foundation upon which good governance rests. Owing to so many factors, ethno-religious factor remains one of the forces that contribute greatly to the socio-political instability in the country.

Judging from the above analysis, it can be stated that ethnic politics has adverse effects on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. So I hereby validate my earlier hypothesis which poses that ethnic politics contributed to the electoral violence in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections between Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and Mohammadu Buhari.

## CONCLUSION

The cornerstone of competitive elections and democracy is free and fair elections. The credibility and legitimacy accorded an election victory is determined by the extent to which the process is free and fair (Garuba, 2007; & Bogaards 2007). Free and fair election serves the purpose of legitimizing such government.

In fact the quality of elections is part of the criteria for assessing the level of consolidation of new democracies. Elections are therefore considered as vital and indispensable for determining the democratic nature of a political system. When election is not managed quite satisfactorily, it can pave the way for deeper

ethnic and regional divisions, lost of legitimacy of elected authorities, protest, violent contestation, social explosion and doubt about institutions, violence, and instability or even threaten the entire democratization process. In fact, poor management of elections is a real and prolific source of conflicts, violence, insecurity and instability (Hounkpe & Gueye, 2010).

Low turnout in the 2015 compared to 2011 may be attributed to some factors. First, it might be an indication that previous election results were inflated. Second, there was a heightened sense of insecurity among Nigerians, with causes such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the North, the possibility of the incumbent not willing to accept the outcome of the election should it not be in its favour, the effects of the election postponement, also, there is the perception that 'votes do not count' and that the outcomes have been pre-decided by an elite minority.

### Recommendations

Nigerians still have a chance in 2019 to right the wrongs as another general election will be conducted. Forums have to be created to re-orient the electorate on the need to embrace political culture that will help to eradicate all forms of electoral violence considering the ugly effects of it in our body politic. It is high time we stopped hiding from exercising our civic right, Nigeria is ours and we must do everything to protect her interest. We need a free and fair contest, and when all these factors are in place, the people are likely to obey laws, respect the rights of others, accept conventional means of political participation and more importantly, accept the principles and values of democracy which will institutionalize democratic consolidation.

Whatever may be the postulation of ethnic chauvinist, power brokers and cynics, one thing is certain. And it is that inspite its tortuous journey, the democratic experiment since 1999 to date is the longest in Nigeria's political history, an indication that all hope is not lost. Taking a line of thought that bothers on democratic consolidation connotes that, to a reasonable extent some foundation has been laid for democracy to flourish. Making it enduring is the next major pre-occupation. It is in the light of this that the following recommendation are made to assuage the daunting challenges of democratic consolidation. These are:

- Leadership with commitment.
- The electoral body (INEC) should be overhauled and strengthened so as to be in a better position to perform their constitutionally assigned function without fear or favour. This singular recommendation requires strong political will on the part of the leadership of the country to ensure its realization.
- To sustain ongoing capacity building programs for major institutions involved in the elections, particularly INEC and the police, the government

should increase technical and financial support to relevant civil society organization.

- The Electoral body should deploy observer missions for longer periods before and after the votes to monitor the process more comprehensively.
- The civil societies should engage more actively with youth leaders especially in poor urban and rural areas, strengthen participatory early warning and early response system, and raise timely alerts of possible violence.

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