

## PEACE BUILDING BEYOND THE POLLS: THE ROADMAP TO DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria is a country with mosaic ethno linguistic groups and religious traditions that historically influence governance and stability of the polity. The constituent nationalities from time to time feel excluded and marginalized politically and economically by the corrupt Nigerian state. Apparently, the various ethno-religious groups provided a basis for zero-sum competition among the elite which consequently manifest during elections and beyond. Election insecurity is naturally related to broader insecurity which is usually exacerbated during elections. It is rooted in the evolution of Nigeria's political economy which shapes the character of the Nigerian state and its leadership. Many aggrieved and frustrated Nigerians need re-assurance and confidence building from the leadership. Building a positively peaceful, tranquil and progressive society is the fundamental objective of every responsible, responsive, and people-oriented government. How prepared is the Nigerian state to integrate all the critical stakeholders in the multi-track diplomacy spectrum so as to restore peace and ensure democratic consolidation? The paper examined peacebuilding beyond the polls as a sure way to consolidated democracy. Documentary methods of data collection were used. Marxian theory of neo-colonial state was adopted as our framework of analysis. We recommended the integration of the actors/parties that lose elections by the party that wins so as to build consensus, enhance proportional representation, improve and encourage development for a sustainable democracy and good governance.*

**Keywords:** Peace-building, Democratic consolidation, Election, Insecurity, State.

### **Introduction:**

Elections are a *sine-qua-non* for representative democracy as it is a legitimized way of enthroning a new regime or removing an existing leadership. It is a veritable tool for deepening democracy especially when it is credible. Elections are said to be credible when they are conducted with integrity and reflects the real will of the people as rightly observed by the former Secretary General of the United Nations and Chairman, Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security, Kofi Annan (2015). He noted that:

Elections with integrity is shorthand for elections that respect a range of global standards and norms enshrined in international treaties and good practices. Above all, they are elections that grant each citizen

the equal right to participate in the selection of his or her leaders and hold them accountable. Elections with integrity also have to guarantee fundamental freedoms like the freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association (Kofi, cited in Warisu, 2015).

The political and electoral environment in Nigeria is bedeviled by a high-risk of political and social contestation. Election insecurity is fundamentally rooted in a broader insecurity which are usually exacerbated during elections and related to the origin of Nigeria's political economy which shapes the nature and character of the Nigerian state and leadership. The political atmosphere is faulted by the dot lines of mosaic ethno linguistic groups and religious traditions that historically influence governance and the stability of the country. The various groups from time to time showcase the memory of injury or feelings of injustice, exclusion and political-economic marginalization by the corrupt Nigerian state. This apparently waters the ground for competition among the elite who often feel that the best way to tackle the problem is when one of them occupies the mantle of leadership especially the presidency. At this time, all the primordial sentiments are whipped up and the political field charged with electoral violence and acrimonies. Electoral violence can be referred to as the intended use or threat of force in the form of murder, arson, abduction, psychological intimidation, assault, rioting, violent seizure and destruction of electoral materials.

Election encompasses three major phases including pre-election, during election and post-election. It is natural that if the first two phases are properly managed, the post-election environment would most likely be peaceful; however, where they are poorly managed, the post-election environment is usually bedeviled by crisis. The begging questions therefore are: what are the critical issues? What is the nature of election in Nigeria? What is the impact and management of post election violence? How do we build peace after election? How do we restore healthy relationship between political actors after elections? Adequate answer to all these questions leads to the building of confidence by the leadership among the citizens. The lost confidence and hope of the citizens can only be restored if and when the leadership addresses these fundamental questions. An attempt shall be made to examine these puzzles, as well as proffer solutions to the identified challenges.

#### **Conceptual clarification:**

**Peace-Building:** The term peace-building is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to forestall the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, reconstruction or institutional building and political as well as economic transformation (Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, [www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/)). This consists of a set of physical, social and structural initiatives that are often an

integral part of post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Going by the above definition of peace-building, the Nigerian state is faulted as no efforts have been made to build peace even after the civil war. The three '3Rs' – Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation promised to be taken up have not been done. The affected states and individuals have not been considered. With this prejudice in mind, the elites compete in the electoral play ground as a 'do or die' affair to outshine the opponent and make sure power rests or remains with them. Politics of objectivity and fair play is thus sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and electoral violence. People are not pushed to show patriotism even after the election because of the feeling of alienation and marginalization both politically and socially. So what are those self-supporting structures that will forestall violence?

It was Galtung who noted that peace-building is "the process of creating self-supporting structures that 'remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where war might occur'". Furthermore, conflict resolution mechanisms "should be built into the structure and be present there as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon, just as a healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies and does not need ad hoc administration of medicine (Galtung in [www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/)).

For Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, peace-building involves addressing social and political sources of conflict as well as reconciliation. ([www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/)). Thus, how has the Nigerian state handled the socio-political problems plaguing her such as the problem of exclusion, electoral violence and the like? Do all the stakeholders participate actively in the decision making process of the country? If yes, what is the level of participation? Record shows that women and the youth in particular are severally excluded in the political affairs of the country. Politics seems to be men's, and in fact the older adult men, affair. Women and youths only serve as tools for the older men to climb the ladder of leadership. Furthermore, if we look at the issue critically from the perspective of the geopolitical zones, we find out that the South-East is severely marginalized. Even after the Nigerian-civil war and all the promises of "no victor, no vanquished" and the subsequent 3Rs of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. After more than forty-six years, no action has been taken to reconcile the states. Rather, the South-Eastern zone is further marginalized and excluded from the helm of affairs. There has not been south east president, no compensation for the properties destroyed during the civil war nor were they nominated for any crucial executive position. For any meaningful peace-building to take place, the following principles as enunciated by Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego has to be present. Thus:

- Peace-building is complex and has multiple actors.
- Peace-building requires goals, commitment to human rights and needs.
- Peace-building goes beyond conflict transformation.
- Peace-building cannot ignore structural forms of injustice and violence.
- Peace-building is founded on an ethic of interdependence, partnership and limiting violence.

- Peace-building depends on relational skills.
- Peace-building analysis is complex, underlying cultures, histories, root causes and immediate stressors are essential.
- Peace-building creates spaces where people interact in new ways, expanding experience and honing new means of communication.
- Peace-building heals trauma, promotes justice and transforms relationship.
- Peace-building requires capacity and relationship building at multiple levels.

Finally, Lederach (in [www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/)), would say that peace-building is understood as

a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct ([www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding](http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/)).

Certainly, peace transcends the converse of war to the elimination of all forms of structural injustice/violence. Apparently, the elimination of structural violence portends that every member of the society must be fairly treated. The right of all must be respected. Improper distribution of power and/or functions cum resources results in ethnic tension and issues of minority in Nigeria. People who feel excluded in the decision making process perceive it as a matter of importance to depend on their ethnic groups which will afford them the needed opportunity to compete with others for the national cake against domination. This leads to various crises, tension and mutual mistrust.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

We shall hinge our study on the Marxist theory of neo-colonial states. This tool of analysis comparatively analyses the post colonial political economy of African States that predicates the state security and violence within these states. Even though Karl Marx is the major protagonist of this theory, he never called it Marxist theory of neo-colonial states but advanced its qualities to include:

- ❖ The post-colonial state is purely an instrument of class domination.
- ❖ The primitive accumulation with the state power is done by domestic power and certain external forces.
- ❖ The post colonial states are rentier states parceled out in Patron-Client chains to those who use the state power for selfish ends.

Some Marxist theorists like Miliband, Ake, Lenin and Ekekwe have in their

various studies included to the advancement of the post-colonial theory of the state. Miliband (1977:109) for instance, posits that the post-colonial states are dependent on the foreign forces that colonized them and thus the state is both the source of economic power and an instrument of accumulation of economic power as the state is the major means of production. Ake, on his part, observed that it is the economic factor which is the most decisive of all the other elements (social structure, political structure and belief system) of the society and which largely determines the character of the others. Albeit not to say that, the economic structure is autonomous and strictly determines the others. All the social structures are interdependent and relate in complex ways. However, it is the economic factor, which provides the axis around which all the movement takes place, and imparts certain orderliness to the interaction (Ake, 1981:3-4). Consequently, the economic contact between the western capitalists and the African leaders led to the subsequent interaction of other aspects of social life that followed. Thus, by following the dynamics of the economic system, we see how it leads to the transformation of existing social structures and how it leads to the emergence of new social structures, particularly in African petit-bourgeoisie whose interest soon put it in opposition to the colonial system and overthrow of the colonial political system. The economic system which generated the changes is itself not overthrown. So, we have indigenous leaders who are in political office but with little economic base. By implication, the new rulers try to use the only tool they have, political power to create an economic base in order to strengthen their economic power. Thus, the political is influencing and even transforming economic structures and social structures despite the fact that the state is seen as the product of class struggle in the society. Meaning that the state emerged to mediate between antagonistic classes in order to maintain law and order in such a way that none of the groups will be consumed in fruitless struggle over the ownership of the means of production (Lenin, 1984:10-11). The neo-colonial states are parts and parcels of the class struggle it was supposed to moderate. Thus, the post-colonial states rather than maintain or moderate economic relations, became an instrument of domination, exploitation and intimidation of the subjects (Ekekwe, 1986:12 in Ezeibe, 2011).

Going by the above, we can deduce that state security covers all aspects of life including electoral security. Election insecurity is ontologically rooted in broader insecurity which are usually exacerbated during elections and related to the nature of Nigeria's political economy which shapes the character of the Nigerian state and its leadership. The creation of the Nigerian state necessitated the rise of political class of the petty bourgeois whose rule focuses social contradictions directly on the state weakening it from being independent from specific class of interests but presenting itself as though it is serving the collective interests of the populace. Consequently, the state is perceived and defined along ethnic, regional and sectional lines. And because it is through election that the leaders however privatized are elected; the electoral contests invariably become highly heated and prone to violence. The various ruling class sought to control the state and use the state resources for private/primordial interests even during elections. This further deepens insecurity in the state and even when people's rights are trampled upon in the process, no effort is being made to heal

and win back their trust and build confidence that will enhance development.

### **Political Violence in Nigeria**

Nowadays politics in Nigeria is being used as a tool to set confusions, scare people, create hostility, promote division and oppress the vulnerable in the polity rather than improve the lives of the people. Elections rather than bring positive change lead to loss of lives and property. The Nigerian political scene has experienced violence and thuggery in different magnitudes. Violence according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation” (WHO, 2014 [www.who.int/topic/violence/en](http://www.who.int/topic/violence/en)). This covers all forms of violence ranging from physical acts including threats and intimidation. Apart from death and injury, the definition also encompasses results of violent behaviour like psychological harm, deprivation and mal-development that comprise the good condition of life of individuals, families and the society at large. It also covers in particular, electoral violence which is an aspect of political violence. Electoral violence can be seen as any act that seeks to determine, delay or in any way, influence an electoral process through threat, hate speech, verbal intimidation, misinformation, and blackmail, and physical assault, destruction of property or assassination. Here, data, property, people and places can be electoral violence victims. Electoral violence is geared towards winning political competition or power or subverting the results of the electoral and democratic process through intimidation and disempowerments of political opponents.

Electoral violence can occur at various levels or stages of the electoral process, including before, during or after in the form of thuggery, use of force to disrupt political meetings or voting at the polling stations, or use of harmful weapons to intimidate voters and other electoral processes or to cause bodily harm or injury to any person related to electoral processes. Political violence encompasses snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, destruction of political opponents, riots and thuggery, forceful declaration of fake results even where elections were not held, refusal to swear-in the winner of the election or refusal to vacate the office after losing an election.

Elections are marred by different forms of election malpractices including double or multiple registration, the seemingly deliberate late arrival of election materials by the electoral officials, destruction or hijacking of electoral materials, snatching and/or stuffing of ballot boxes, intimidation and harassment of voters by armed groups, falsification of election results, delay in announcing results with for cogent reasons and so on. Electoral violence in Nigeria is often induced by financial, religious or ethnic cleavages/sentiments. Political violence can be caused by the following:

- Inadequate voters’ education: Nigerian electorates lack adequate voter education. They do not sufficiently understand what they should or should

not do before, during and after elections. The political parties and the election umpire – the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are lacking in this respect.

- Unemployment: Lack of job for the teeming and young graduates is also a factor as they are ready army in the hands of the immoral politicians.
- Failure of the judicial system: A situation where politicians who have been indicted for electoral violence in the past are still working freely till this day, tend to promote impunity among the political class.
- Corruption: This is like a cankerworm that has eaten so deep into the fabrics of Nigeria's system. Corrupt politicians tend to use money and gift items to entice the poor masses so as to influence their conscience. These ignorant and poor masses collect these and sell off their votes.
- Lack of internal democracy in political parties: Nigerian political parties have failed in their primary duty to re-orientate politicians within their fold on the need to play the game by the rules (naija.com, April 3, 2016).

#### **Assessment of Elections in Nigeria:**

The first ever conducted elections were held by the British colonial masters as a reaction to the nationalists demand for greater involvement in the colonial government. This maiden opportunity granted to Nigerians to occupy political offices in 1922 witnessed limited representation and restricted franchise. It was not until the 1959 general elections that the gateway was opened for Nigerians with a resultant independence in 1960. Ever since Nigeria became independent, she has conducted various elections for transition both for civilian and military governments. All the elections have been marred with some degree of electoral irregularity and malpractices leading to post electoral violence. Electoral violence could be pre or post.

The pre-independence political parties did not have national outlook. They were formed along ethnic and regional leanings; none cut across the various regions. Hence, regionalism and ethnicity came into the lexicon of Nigeria's politics as aptly noted by Nnoli (1980). Not only that ethnic differences and primordial sentiments were manipulated, they also formed the major platform for politicking notwithstanding Tafawa Balewa's policy of national broad based government. Intimidation, harassment, charges and countercharges were the order of the day. Kano riots of 1953 heralded the first recorded outbreak of political violence where Chief Anthony Enaharo moved a motion for self government as soon as practicable. This gave rise to rift and acrimony between the North and the South.

The first republic election and political violence of 1964/65 (the Action Group crisis of 1962/63; the population census crisis of 1962/63; the Tiv riots of 1964/65 and the Western region crisis of 1965 to mention but a few) characterized this period and unfolded the demonstration of all the centrifugal forces that nearly tore the country apart. The election of this period has been described as "the most perilous display of brinkmanship, fettered perilously on the brink of disintegration and bloodshed". According to Anifowose et al (1999), all the major political parties

in the country were engaged in the struggle not only to win and retain power but also to control the centre which was seen as possessing all the dominant resources even though it was weak politically. As a result, they use every means and all in their power including manipulation of census figures, blatant rigging of elections, kidnapping of political opponents, violence of all kinds including intimidation, threat etc, arson, corruption and acts of brigandage. This did not stop until the military took over power in January 1966, which further demonstrated that the political class had lost control of government affairs.

The military handed over to the civilians after thirteen years. The general election that ushered in the second republic in 1979 had pockets of violence but not as high as that of the first republic. The major contestation was the issue of two-third of the nineteen states which was ruled in favour of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) flag bearer by the Supreme Court. Due to past experiences, people were not excited about this election and so were apathetic leading to low level of recorded violence. However, the sound of the music changed in 1983 elections because both the national and state elections were said to be a resemblance of that of the first republic. All forms of electoral violence were employed to distort the election outcome in favour of the incumbent party (NPN). Consequently, the military intervened again. Meanwhile, they imposed a two-party system under which the third republic elections of 1992 – 1993 were conducted. Though, this process was truncated and aborted following the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections, assumed to have been won by Social Democratic Party (SDP) flag bearer, Chief M.K.O. Abiola. The elections were seen as the freest and fairest general election so far conducted in Nigeria. This action of the then Head of State, President Babangida, was opposed by so much agitations and criticisms. Hence, he inaugurated an interim national government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan.

The third republic collapsed following yet another military intervention. The military reigned till 1999 after the death of General Sani Abacha and General Abdusalam Abubakar took over the mantle of leadership that he decided to resume a democratic process that returned the civilians in 1999 giving birth to the fourth republic. Comparatively, the elections organized by General Abdusalam were relatively peaceful as there was little or no pre and post election violence. The 2003 elections that was a transition from one civilian government to the other again recorded serious allegations of electoral fraud and violence. As noted by the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) an umbrella for some of the registered political parties that participated in the 2003 presidential elections in their report captioned ‘Stolen mandate’ lamented that:

The 2003 elections were characterized by illegality, irregularity and malpractices. Some of the most starring irregularity are premeditated vote allocation, result swapping, forceful hijacking and diversion of election materials, the use of security agents the Army, Air force, Navy, Police and Paramilitary agencies to harass, intimidate, arrest, detain and even



kill opposition members, all in an effort to continue in office (Stolen Mandate, 2003:3 in Bitrus 2012).

The period under discussion witnessed an unprecedented increase in kidnapping of opponents, assassination of aspirants and other related personalities and other violent disruption of political meetings and campaigns of rivals. According to Adebo et al (2003), the political violence experienced in the 2003 elections was mostly inter party violence which happened at the state level and connected to the party primaries. The intra party violence was felt more in the ruling party (Peoples' Democratic Party, (PDP) than every other parties and subsequently influenced the violence occasioned by the 2003 elections. The elections basically show-cased the intimidation of voters and the selection of predetermined winners by the elites, caucus and political cabals. Moreover, Human Right Watch (2004), reported that in April and May 2003, not less than one hundred people were killed and many more injured during the federal and state elections in Nigerian and most of the violence was perpetrated by the ruling party (PDP) and its supporters. Human Right Watch, (2004:1). In fact, the same thing happened in the local government elections the following year being 2004. There were massive electoral ballot manipulations with unprecedented electoral violence all over the country. Some local government areas did not have election but election results were announced; thugs and hired machineries snatched ballot boxes, took them to an unknown destination and thumb printed the ballot papers and stuffed the ballot boxes with that in favour of their candidates. The Institute for Democracy in Southern Africa (IDASA, 2003 in Bitrus, 2012) in its weekly report captioned IDASA Weekly Updates on Election Related Violence and Conflict reported the under listed incidents of political violence in Nigeria. Thus:

- Progressive Redemption Party (PRP) supporters in Niger State launched an attack on the governor's convoy.
- Mohammadu Buhari, the All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP) presidential candidate, was attacked in Adamawa State, which is a PDP stronghold.
- The campaign convoy of Chief Gani Fewehimi, presidential candidate for the National Conscience Party (NCP) was attacked in Ondo State.
- In Oyo State, seven people were injured in a gunshot and machete attack on the state Governor, Alhaji Lam Adesina.
- In Abuja, six gunmen raided the house of the spokesperson for the PDP Presidential Campaign, Osuntokun, though; he was not at home during the raid.
- In Plateau State, suspected raiders from Chad, influenced by the ongoing ethnic tensions between the Fulani and the natives, attacked the indigenes of Dei village between Langtang and Wase Local Government Councils. The rift and intimidation between ANPP and PDP gubernatorial candidates became so intense that President Obasanjo decided to withdraw the security officials attached to both candidates and further threatened to use other punitive measures against them.

- In Zamfara State, religious leaders were warned by the police to desist from giving sermons that has political undertone. Consequently, the political parties in the state met, and resolved to suspend all political rallies throughout the state so as to forestall further violence (Adebo et al, 2003:37-38 in Bitrus, 2012).

The 2007 general elections did not fare better as a repeat of the previous experiences was made. The country was like a market thriving on political violence. The election results were seriously criticized, rejected and credibility questioned by the opposition parties as they claimed that the election was highly rigged in favour of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua whom they claimed was hand-picked by the outgoing President, Obasanjo when he could not succeed in his third term bid. He picked Yar'Adua to continue his political domination and influence. Some of the aspirants sought for justice in the law courts based on the allegations of fraud, threats of violence and inability to cast their votes. There were claims of irregularities including late opening and early closure of the polling stations, or not opening at all but results announced, errors on the ballot papers; underage voting, vote buying; ballot box snatching, stuffing and theft as well as falsification of result sheets. The media also reported widespread incidents of thuggery and the use of force at various polling stations. The research Project carried out by IFES-Nigeria on the 2007 elections aimed at collecting, documenting, reporting and mitigating incidences of electoral violence in Nigeria, recorded a widespread level of violence. IFES reported a total of 967 incidents of electoral violence including 18 persons killed between January 13 and April 30, 2007 (IFES-Nigeria, 2007). Again, about three hundred were estimated to have been killed according to Human Right Watch report.

The 2011 general elections and in particular the presidential election was a radical departure from the previous experiences in relation to transparency, voting procedures, result collation and declaration. The involvement of the academia in the process recorded a great feat. Apart from the pre-election violence recorded in some parts of the country, the elections themselves were largely peaceful, well-organised and in many instances and opinion of Nigerians and International observers; fair and reflective of the will of the people. The media played an active role in this process. Intimidation, thuggery, corruption, god-fatherism were at the minimum. The period ushered in a new breath of fresh air. Individuals who were hitherto apathetic became involved with the expectation that their votes count following the electoral reforms and they indeed counted.

Though, the political wave then was that the former President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan should not run because the northerners have not concluded their two term in office. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's political power has alternated between the predominantly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south, an informal strategy to forestall the country's polarization. Jonathan assumed the presidency when President Umaru Yar'Adua, a northern Muslim, died in 2010 while in office. The northerners claimed that Jonathan should not run to allow the north complete their tenure according to the zoning procedure. Hence, when President

Jonathan was declared the winner of the election, it generated a lot of upheavals and disapproval from the north and the consequent claim that they will make the nation ungovernable for Jonathan. There were accusations of election rigging. Riot broke out across the north resulting in the greatest bloodshed since the 1967-70 civil war (Campbell, 2015). Simply put, there was widespread protests from the supporters of the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari degenerating into violent riots or sectarian killings in the northern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfars as well as leaving more than a million citizens displaced. To buttress this, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the umbrella organization representing the majority of Christian churches in Nigeria claimed that at least 170 Christians were killed in the post-election riots, hundreds more were injured and thousands displaced. They also reported the more than 350 churches were burnt or destroyed by the Muslim rioters across the ten northern states of Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

According to the tabulation presented to the conference by the representative of the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), “the post-election violence in some parts of the northern Nigeria claimed the lives of 514 civilians, and six policemen (perhaps the 10 innocent youth corps that were brutally murdered); 75 civilians were injured; 165 churches and 53 mosques; 444 vehicles and 1,442 houses were either burnt or destroyed”. Further, 22,141 persons were displaced, 45 police properties, 16 government properties and 987 shops were burnt (Daily Independent, 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2011). Different people perceive this post-election attack differently; some view it as a premeditated attack while others see it as having political, social, and ethnic and/or regional undertone. The political terrain indeed was hot. Many of our youths who ordinarily would have become useful to the development of the country in various capacities and levels lost their lives simply because one man somewhere wants to win a political seat. Some of the youths have taken to arms and ammunitions, becoming harmful and dangerous even to themselves for a political position that may/may not even influence their lives positively. The Boko Haram activities also increased in an alarming scale robbing the nation of peace, unity, progress, growth and development.

For the 2015 general elections, it did not fare any better. There were still records of massive violence and thuggery in some states like Rivers, Bayelsa states re-run elections. We commend the action of the former President, Goodluck Jonathan for conceding defeat which in fact saved the nation from anarchy and doom.

Electoral violence has serious consequences for democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. It affects the credibility of the democratic system, basic safety of lives and property as well as human security. It also erodes the credibility of the rule of law and impacts negatively on democratic activities. Apart from death, injury, displacement and property loss, the most widespread impact of electoral violence relates to increased fear and heightened perceptions of insecurity among the people. Electoral violence has also disrupted socio-economic activities all over the country as well as scared foreign investors. Most victims of electoral violence lose their businesses to looting and their homes are often destroyed and many sink into poverty. This attitude traumatizes the victims long after the violence occurred. The

trauma sometimes may be permanent on the victim and the nation at large. Now, how does the party that won the election integrate the other parties and/or actors in the decision making process? How do they build peace after elections? How do they restore healthy relationship between political actors after elections?

### **An Interface between the Winner and the Loser as an Approach to Peacebuilding**

It is obvious from the foregoing that the do or die politics in Nigeria is as a result of the fact that some politicians feel that losing election translates into loss of everything. If politicians are aware that they could be part and parcel of governance whether they lose or win election, electoral violence would reduce, cordiality, co-operation and cohesion would reign. Winner takes it all (zero sum) approach are generally demonstrated by the indisposition of the winners and losers towards compromise and consensus building. The zero sum politics encourages electoral violence as all primordial sentiments are whipped; politicians do everything within their resources and power to win the election. Rather than the centripetal factors the centrifugal is on the increase because there is a high degree of ethnic, religious and regional tension that further consolidates crises and conflicts. The desperation of the politicians comes from the premise that nothing comes to them when they lose and that they have no stake in the preservation and stability of the political system.

The federal constitution during the first republic was designed in such manner that the region is more attractive than the centre. But the events that unfolded especially in the western region and the consequent backing of the federal government to the Akintola faction against Obafemi faction clearly showed that the winner takes it all and the loser gets nothing. Moreover, the seed of zero sum politics was also sown by the military in the prescription of presidential system of government in a weak federal state. However, the antidote for zero sum politics is consensus building and/or proportional representation where all political parties are vested with the interest in the preservation, survival and stability of the political system. The zoning formula and the rotation of power were in a way introduced to reduce the zero sum politics and ensure a more integration of other zones to foster and sustain political consensus. It was predicated on a time frame for the rotation of the presidency among the six geo-political zones. It represented the semblance of an assurance that within a specific time frame, all the zones would be winners. However, the zoning formula committed the sin of omission as it could not anticipate the non-completion of two terms tenure for any incumbent president – either by reason of being defeated at the bid for re-election or exit by reason of incapacitation and death. This unfolded during the demise of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

Finally, the seeming best approach to heal the wounds and build-up confidence of the populace is by integrating the parties that lose elections in the decision making body. This approach will minimize electoral and/or political violence as well as ensure good governance, equity and development.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

We have attempted an examination of peace-building beyond the polls as a roadmap for democratic consolidation. We noted that Nigeria's diversity has historically posed a daunting challenge to governance and stability considering that many people feel politically and economically excluded by the weak and corrupt nation. Hence, violence is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It started since the pre-independence election, including the 1959 elections organized by the colonial masters though the frequency, ramifications and intensity have changed over the years. The zero sum game of the winner takes it all further divides the country along ethnic and religious leanings and heightens the level of electoral and political violence. We therefore recommend, the integration of the actors/parties that lose elections by the party that wins so as to build consensus, enhance proportional representation, improve and encourage development for a sustainable democracy and good governance. On the other hand, the losers should lend hands of fellowship when called upon. The judiciary should be relatively independent and the rule of law takes precedence. The party that won the election should also ensure that all the geo-political zones are duly represented so as to forestall tension and mistrust.

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