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Abstract

Nigeria is a secular state with diverse social cultural and ethnic divisions. The political process of the present fourth republic came to a reality on May 29th 1999 after thirty years of military entanglement. Since 1999-2011 the political landscape has fallen below par, from violence to greater violence. The magnitude of electoral violence has risen and the political elites have converted poverty ridden unemployed Nigerian youths into readymade machinery for perpetuating violence. The electoral process has been alternating power between ruling party and opposition parties. The usurpation of power incumbency has relegated good governance to the background in Nigeria, this has deprived the electorates their franchise in the electoral market due to aggressive quest for political power among political actors. The paper examines the concept of electoral process, good governance, the evolution of elections and challenges affecting electoral process and good governance as meted by some political class to jeopardize the political system. The genuine reform of our electoral institution and national re-orientation programme as recommended by Justice Uwais panel was applauded by Nigerians as a panacea to stabilize the dilemma of our electoral process and enhance good governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Elections, Good Governance, Electoral Malpractice, Reforms

Introduction

Elections in Nigeria from 1999 till date have continued to recycle in a vicious violence and unimaginable manipulation especially from the political elites; this has attracted the attention of local and international community (Onu, 2005, Suberu, 2007). The challenges in restructuring the dilemma of electoral process in Nigeria from transiting power from ruling party to opposition parties peacefully has relegated good governance to the back pew (Rakner and Svasand, 2002). The history of elections in Nigerian state has been characterized by threats to statehood based on the manipulation of ethnicity as divisive mechanism for the acquisition of political power by political actors, the fragile nature of political cum democratic institutions is acquainted with poor democratic culture among Nigerian citizen (Omodia and Egwemi, 2011). The electoral process in first and second republics was terminated with coup d’état from the
military juntas (Adegboyega 1981; Kurfi 1983). This tied good governance in the stagnant hands of political leaders and the saboteurs from the opposition parties on the basis of government in power to reconcile cracks in statehood due to electoral contest (Azelama, 2010).

Dr Okwesilieze Nwodo aptly captured the concept of election thus:

> Election is the birth of the future not the glories of the past, he stated this at 2011 People’s Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential convention, Eagle square Abuja during his inaugural speech after series of litigations that restrain him from parading himself as the national chairman (PDP news, 2011).

Nigeria has witnessed four general elections in this fourth republic from 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, with 2015 election around the corner, it appears that incumbency factor from the holders of power is a stumbling block to good governance. This electoral process is on the purview of the Independent electoral body known as INEC in Nigeria (Chukwu, 2007, Ajayi, 2006, Amucheazi and Ibeanu, 2008). The high handedness in manipulating the 1999, 2003 and 2007 electoral process by the ruling Party (PDP) and other political parties in all the polling centres nationwide is alarming, this has led to political killings, religious bigotry, industrial actions, insecurity and other socio-economic malady (Ayoade, 2008). The election was rigged with bitterness full of rancor, the ruling party (PDP) acted with desperation to ensure winner-takes-all syndrome with “do or die” affair for the interest of their party (African Report, 2007). Similarly, the 2011 elections were a beehive that democracy is a pre-condition for good governance, from what we experience before and after the elections this exercise move Nigeria to a greater height for instance the governorship and Senatorial elections that brought Governor Rochas Okoracha of Imo state and Senator Chris Ngige of Anambra Central senatorial district in 2001 is a clear testimony that peoples vote can count in Nigerian elections at all odds(Vanguard, January 10, 2012). The umpire body under the headship of Professor Attahiru Jega came with the reform to overhaul Nigeria electoral body and remove all the bad eggs especially the state resident commissioners who are bent on collecting “Fat-Brown-Envelops” to pronounce their pay master as winner of the election to jeopardize good governance. The services of academic Professors were employed in all the polling centers nationwide as collation and returning officers to sanitize the rot in the electoral body. After the total cleansing of the electoral body, the losers in 2011 general elections especially from the opposition parties decided to plunge the nation in a collapsed state because of their parochial and personal interest. In other words, one could convincingly say that there is hyphen and buckle between the quality
of election that takes place in Nigeria and the quality of governance that emanate from such an electoral process on one hand, as well as poor governance on the other hand, especially in a heterogeneous state like Nigeria. The paper will examine power incumbency, insecurity as a challenge derailing electoral process and good governance in Nigeria.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Electoral Process**

According to Elekwa (2008:30), the electoral process relates to the entire cycle ranging from the provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. According to Akamere (2001), electoral process refers to all the activities and procedures involved in the election of representatives by the electorates. It refers to all the pre and post election activities without which an election is meaningless. These include the registration of political parties, review of voters’ register, delineation of constituencies, resolution of electoral disputes, return of elected representatives, swearing elected representatives. In addition, electoral process is the rules that guide the conduct of election, and important activities that make up an electoral process. Any conduct that threatens the electoral process is a subversion of the peoples’ sovereignty (Akamere, 2001). Similarly, INEC (2006) deposes different phases of the electoral process as follows:

(i) Delimitation of electoral constituencies
(ii) Registration of voters
(iii) Notice of elections
(iv) Nomination of candidates
(v) Election campaigns
(vi) Elections, announcement of results and completing tribunal sittings
(vii) Participation of other organizations
(viii) Resolution of electoral conflicts from the participation and other organizations or groups.

The electoral process is a complex process that encompasses the good intentions and undesirable outcomes of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. In Nigerian case, the truth remains that the electoral process is immensely characterized by a culture of electoral malpractices. Electoral malpractices refer to illegalities committed by government officials responsible for the conduct of elections, political parties, groups or individuals with sinister intention to influence an election in favour of a candidate or candidates (Ezeani, 2004:145). Intense electoral malpractices lead to electoral violence which in every polity must be
considered undesirable. Reynolds, et al (2005:5) describes an electoral systems translate the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates. The key variables of the electoral formula (plurality/majority, proportional, mixed or other system), ballot structure (voter-votes for a candidate or party and voter makes a single choice or series of preferences) and district magnitude (how many representatives to legislature the district elects). Electoral process commences with the announcement of intention to conduct elections, till the elections have been won and invariably lost.

Good Governance

Good governance is a mechanism through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and meet their obligations to mediate their differences (UNESCAP, 2013, Dahal, et al, 2002). Good governance is a state fulfillment of expectations and the achievement of societal well-being by the mandated authority (African Leadership Forum, 2000: 4). Good governance is effective in fulfilling the social contract, empowerment of citizens through participation in decisions affecting them. It is what a citizen has the right to demand from his/her government in four dimensions as rule of law, participation, human rights and sustainable development (Izueke, 2007, Mo Ibrahim foundation, 2011). Oyovbaire (2007) declared that good governance is the use of power and authority to affect human condition; this will enable the society to sustain and improve the quality of life and transform the physical environment. Hyden and Court (2002) describe governance as the formation and stewardship of formal and informal rules that regulate public realm, the arena in which state economic and societal actors interact to make decisions. Lutz and Linder (2004) assert that good governance is participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and equitable to promote rule of law. Good governance differentiates the ruling groups from contributing to the prosperity of their subjects (Chabaal, 2000:67). Eyinla (2000:22) states that good governance includes security of human rights, devolution of powers and respect for local autonomy pivot to successful democracy and development. Good governance is the management of socio-economic development in an environment devoid of rancor, ill will, strife, struggle and disdain; it is a sine qua non to achieving selected goal (Davis, 2003:1, Madhav, 2007:33). Good governance ensures maximum participation of the citizenry, transparency, accountability and rule of law and that the views of minorities are taken into account that the voices of the vulnerable are heard in decision-making (UNESCO, 2005:123, CIDA, 2002). Lutz and Linder (2004), assert that when there is participatory relationship in governance other element of good governance will always manifest at the local level. Potter (2000) defines good governance as the means by
which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development. The tenets of good governance are broad participation, inclusiveness, decentralization of power and popular empowerment, based on legitimacy, rule of law, due process and respect for human rights, managing the collective will of the people associated with qualities of leadership (Pryor, 2000).

**History of Electoral Process in Nigeria**

The Nigeria political independence of 1960 was championed by leaders like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, S.L Akintola, Anthony Enahoro among others. The post independence government was parliamentary type while the politicians were busy fanning the embers of disunity because the regions were collectively managed to weaken the centre. When the electoral violence of 1954 and 1959 erupt with its regional hegemony via Northern People’s congress (Northern bloc); National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (South east bloc) and Action Group (South west bloc), this resort to tribalism and assume a pathological character (Awa, 1964:93). In an attempt to secure foothold in regions outside their control they strove to the opposition creating a tensed political environment which led to conflagration. In 1962-1964 thugsbery, crossing of party loyalties, corruption and intimidation was injected in the electoral process of south west Nigeria. The elections came with many political alliances like Nigerian National Alliance an offshoot of Northern People’s Congress under Saruduana of Sokoto and Nigeria National Democratic Party of Chief Akintola, NCNC by Dr. Okpara, NEPU and UMBC, Action Group of Alhaji Adegbeniros in the aegis of UPGA. This proceed of 1964 general elections, incumbent regional governments quench the opposition parties to campaign at their jurisdiction (Nnadozie, 2007).

The 2nd Republic of 1979 came with five registered political parties, Great Nigeria people’s party (GNPP), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Nigeria People’s Party (NPP), People’s Redemption Party (PRP), Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Nigeria Advance party (NAP) all are reincarnation of 1st Republic political parties. UPN emerge from the Action group with dominance of Yoruba enclave under Chief Awolowo, NPP emerge in two political families GNPP and NPP from the political base of NPC. PRP was a reincarnation of NEPU, Nigeria Advance party has no regional garage but attempt to experiment what could not succeed in Nigeria. “The NPN as the ruling party followed by other parties contrary with the spirit of constitution was not national party (Kaur 2002:8). All the parties registered with FEDECO has formal requirement as reflected in the election results, for instance UPN clinch south west, NPP secured south east, PRP takes slot in Kaduna while GNPP emerge victorious in Bornu and
Rivers (Osaghae 1998:118). The political violence cross over 1979 and 1983 general elections, the 1993 general elections acclaimed to be free and fair was nullified by General Babangida on allegation of irregularities from umpire body National Electoral Commission (NEC) against all odds from the electorate (New breed 1993:35).

In 1999, the Nigeria electoral process was on the march again with President Obasanjo and PDP cohorts implanting violent in the polity, at the expiration of the first tenure from 1999-2003, Uncle S-h-e-e-g-e-e as fondly called came with PDP rigging machinery to buy INEC, Judiciary and security agencies over for sit tight in governance even seek for 3rd term to maintain the status quo. There are cases of inter-communal clashes, political uprisings, sharia-induced unrests and economic sabotage, ethno-based organizations from Afenifere, Arewa, Ohaneze, Ijaw union became pronounced. The 2007 election was a repeated violence, the level of killing and intimidation was high and ones aspire as a candidate for any political office result to assassination and other unprecedented scale of violence (IFES-Nigeria, 2007). Human Rights report that there has been violent in Nigeria’s April 2007 elections, campaign in many areas is beset with political killings, and bombings armed clashes between supporters of rival political factions (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The 2011 elections present an opportunity for Nigeria commitment to credible and transparent elections, the election is by and large a potential time bomb for further conflict in Nigeria. Aside the PDP, other parties like Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change CPC, All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Labour Party (LP) are showing no signs of relenting and are all fired to challenge PDP at all levels. And with the candidacy of former chairman of the anti graft commission (EFCC) Mallam Nuhu Ribadu and the former Head of State General Buhari set for a decisive period in its electoral history (Africa Report, 2007). A close look of political parties especially the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) reveal high level intra-party strife, disintegration and violence. Campbell (2010) argued that the party has no internal discipline, political platform or principles, and this generates unpopular enthusiasm. Some faction of the political elite mostly from the North are very disgruntled with the power equation in PDP and are not willing to compromise for the incumbent President Jonathan as the PDP flag bearer. This formation persuaded General Babangida to step aside for former Vice President Atiku Abubakar to improve northern chances of wrestling power out from the incumbent Jonathan. The current intra-party crisis is unavoidable and there are chances of anti party activities in days and weeks to come. However, as Campbell assert that a divided PDP pose problem to security and stability of Nigeria (Campbell, 2010:2).

Theoretical Framework
Structural Functionalism theory was adopted as the framework for this paper. The basic assumption of the theory is a building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (Talcott 1975). Structural Functionalism is an important approach to study electoral process and good governance in Gabriel Almond's explanation and application of the structural-functional theory; it fits into nation building paradigm. According to Anifowose and Enemuo (1999), in Easton's analysis as a starting point, Almond looks for the functions which include the input and output of all political systems. The input side are interest articulation and interest aggregation which impact on nation building if such views and ideas adequately reflect the interest of the masses. Almond states that the function of rule making, application and adjudication as it relates to electoral process is the function of political communication undertaken to inform all within and outside the political system of diverse activities. Since every system ensures its sustainability, it is imperative that there should be system maintenance and adaptive functions through political socialization and recruitment of people to ensure the workability of electoral process for good governance. The performance of political system unit in nation state shapes that state and how the state is shaped by the political system. In other words, a functional electoral process would ensure good governance and nation building. The critics of Almond contend that the system cannot distinguish between the aims of participants, what takes place and their complete objective because interpretation of analysts based on observed developments and that the approach is culture bound modeled on western political systems. Despite these, Almond's structural functional approach is a major tool for genuine comparative analysis of political system.

**Power of incumbency and Electoral Process in Nigeria**

The sad scenarios of 2011 elections indicates that almost all the serving governors designed ways to muscle out opposition in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The intense heat led to loss of lives and properties roping opponents into political crimes. The incumbency trend of some governors has not given a breathing space required for political actors to campaign and sell out their manifestoes. In Abia-state, the apparatus laid a siege on the house of immediate past governor of the state and was turned upside down in search of arms and kidnap victims, two former deputy governors who are aspiring to be governor in 2011 was allege to be sponsoring kidnappers for the elections. The political thugs believe to be acting on the sponsorship of incumbent governor of the state was in a political rally but opposition group came and brutalize party supporters who attend the events. In Ebonyi-state the serving governor place an embargo on All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) campaign rally on a Friday but the
intervention of federal government resuscitate the planned rally live on Monday the following week. In Bauchi state, there was a law prohibiting opposition party from pasting posters in state capital and local council headquarters or else they incur the wrath of the law under state terrorism act. The Congress for Peoples change (CPC) campaign rally in Niger state was stopped as the chief servant kept denying having master minded the ugly trend, in Suleja near Abuja the ruling party (PDP) met bomb blast at the venue of their political rally which claim six lives and many others injured. In Oyo-state, it is no longer a news that former governor and serving governor are rubbing shoulder over act of media jingles on state own radio, where the immediate past governor was asked to pay triple charge to air their campaign jingles. In Lagos state the opposition parties was barricade from displaying their candidate poster on a bitter note but the publicity secretary of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) denied that such act never took place. In Kwara state the political colony among two small elephants from the same biological offspring fought for governorship seat as incumbent and successor, a blood brother and his sister in a political field of play on the likes of south- American football titans “Brazil and Argentina team” with their father as “Big elephant” serving as a centre referee and match commissioner, unleashing mayhem to its citizen at the expense of one political family, now the grass is suffering it but the national assembly and security agents from Abuja wade into the matter and caution them over such mayhem. In Enugu state, it was war between the PDP national chairman and serving governor on who lords party machinery in the state, this ignite some cognitive melodrama in the field of PDP presidential primary on 13th January 2011 with legal battle of interlocutory injunctions but unlucky for the PDP national boss he was barred from the convention ground not to preside over the ceremony and at last he was quizzed out from Wadata plaza office by the south east caucus of the party, this led to impromptu resignation and his deputy takes charge of the party on acting capacity for onward development. In Bayelsa state, it was the same business as usual in Otuoke-ogbia kingdom the terrain of Mr. president, the chieftain of Labour party Chief Timi Alaibe is eyeing the seat of governor on the aegis of bombing, assassination and all sorts of killing. Imo state was a movie to watch as the serving governor and political philanthropy show case their popularity in the scene. There was less brutality in Sokoto, Adamawa, Cross River, Bayelsa and Kogi state because of court of jurisdiction on the completion of their tenure as state chief executives while Anambra, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun states was in a relax mood for the seat of governor, all other political seats were contested in court. INEC boss described the attitude of power tussle, brutality among political party groups as inimical to democracy (Bamidele, 2011:5).The assumption that the challenges to realize free, fair and transparent elections are opportunities to improve on the
quality of April 2011 elections to mitigate violence and challenges of electoral malpractices (Okoye, 2011).

The tables analyze the data of eligible voters in 36 states in Nigeria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tentative Announced</th>
<th>Duplicates</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>1,481,191</td>
<td>17,522</td>
<td>1,524,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adamawa</td>
<td>1,714,860</td>
<td>9,773</td>
<td>1,816,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akwa ibom</td>
<td>1,714,781</td>
<td>8,738</td>
<td>1,616,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anambra</td>
<td>1,758,220</td>
<td>33,747</td>
<td>2,011,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauchi</td>
<td>1,835,562</td>
<td>7,451</td>
<td>2,523,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayelsa</td>
<td>472,389</td>
<td>14,513</td>
<td>591,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benue</td>
<td>1,415,162</td>
<td>42,042</td>
<td>2,390,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borno</td>
<td>2,730,368</td>
<td>21,164</td>
<td>2,380,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross River</td>
<td>1,018,550</td>
<td>39,085</td>
<td>1,148,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>1,900,055</td>
<td>17,166</td>
<td>2,032,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebonyi</td>
<td>876,249</td>
<td>3,917</td>
<td>1,050,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo</td>
<td>1,412,225</td>
<td>6,277</td>
<td>1,655,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekiti</td>
<td>750,753</td>
<td>2,868</td>
<td>764,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>1,301,185</td>
<td>9,401</td>
<td>1,303,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCT</td>
<td>886,323</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>943,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gombe</td>
<td>1,266,993</td>
<td>18,730</td>
<td>1,318,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imo</td>
<td>1,611,715</td>
<td>11,082</td>
<td>1,687,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jigawa</td>
<td>1,852,698</td>
<td>23,148</td>
<td>2,031,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaduna</td>
<td>3,565,762</td>
<td>95,563</td>
<td>3,905,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>5,135,415</td>
<td>10,784</td>
<td>5,027,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katsina</td>
<td>2,931,668</td>
<td>132,062</td>
<td>3,126,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kebbi</td>
<td>1,603,468</td>
<td>4,960</td>
<td>1,638,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogi</td>
<td>1,215,405</td>
<td>7,003</td>
<td>1,316,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwara</td>
<td>1,115,665</td>
<td>2,631</td>
<td>1,152,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>6,247,845</td>
<td>13,932</td>
<td>6,160,969</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nasarawa</td>
<td>1,224,206</td>
<td>19,439</td>
<td>1,389,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>721,485</td>
<td>142,040</td>
<td>2,175,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogun</td>
<td>1,869,326</td>
<td>2,868</td>
<td>1,941,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ondo</td>
<td>1,558,975</td>
<td>14,761</td>
<td>1,616,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osun</td>
<td>1,293,967</td>
<td>14,762</td>
<td>1,293,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyo</td>
<td>2,577,490</td>
<td>14,720</td>
<td>2,572,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plateau</td>
<td>1,983,453</td>
<td>8,185</td>
<td>2,259,194</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>2,419,057</td>
<td>42,309</td>
<td>2,429,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>2,065,508</td>
<td>88,471</td>
<td>2,267,579</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taraba</td>
<td>1,308,106</td>
<td>41,069</td>
<td>1,349,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yobe</td>
<td>1,182,230</td>
<td>3,474</td>
<td>1,373,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamfara</td>
<td>1,746,024</td>
<td>4,062</td>
<td>1,824,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>67,764,334</strong></td>
<td><strong>870,612</strong></td>
<td><strong>73,528,040</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources: INEC 2011**

The table indicates that despite anomalies in the 36 states of the federation and Abuja, Lagos state is leading with 6,108,069 followed by Kano state with 5,027,297 voters, Kaduna states came behind Kano with 3,905,387, the three states of FCT, 943,473, Bayelsa 591,870 and Ekiti 764,726 is on the bottom table.
Factors Affecting Electoral Process and Good Governance in Nigeria

The electoral process has been marred with conflicts generated by ethnic chauvinism, sectional interest and religious divide, malpractices, violence from the political class to outwit one another in pursuit of their parochial interest and this makes the process undemocratic.

Ethnicity and Communal Tensions Since the colonial era, ethnic, regional, religious divisions constitute the form of expression of social cleavage in Nigeria. In Nigeria, political parties and candidates are representatives of a particular ethnic or religious group and voters support parties and candidates. The voting pattern in Nigerian elections followed the configuration of ethnic and religious cleavages. At local and national levels, tensions arising from communal identity conflicts have a major influence on electoral contest and political process. In Nigeria’s political landscape, it is difficult to draw a line indicating where communal tensions end and where political conflicts begin. It is difficult to separate communal tension and political conflict is because of the nature of Nigerian politics which is known as ‘prebendal politics’ (Joseph, 1991). The concentration of resources in the state makes the possession of state powers a means to end control of state resources. The system of prebendal politics spurs individuals, groups, communities and constituencies to capture state power in order to control state resources. The 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 for power, individuals employ ethnic, communal and religious symbols and sentiments in order to outwit their rivals. This drags an entire ethnic, regional or religious community into political competition which is squarely between political parties. Each time candidates and political parties are identified in a particular ethnic, regional or religious group, victory or defeat in the electoral contest is defined in communal terms. Thus, electoral violence is triggered by individuals and political groups to use all available means, like the use of violence to defend their communal honour.

Ethnic and Religious Divides: In Nigeria, since the colonial era, ethnic, regional and religious communities engaged one another in violent confrontations. In their studies on ethnic relations in Nigeria scholars like Plotnicov (1971) and Nnoli (1978) presented that inter-group clashes, years of violent confrontations by some communal groups in Nigeria have eroded trust and social capital existing in the communities, making the communities vulnerable to political manipulation. The communal tensions not related to elections can degenerate into bloodshed during elections. In Nigeria, people who live outside their state of origin are most times
The electoral process is defined by the state’s capacity to enforce law and order. Sadly, the monopoly on use of violence, and the culture of impunity promotes electoral violence. The Nigerian legal system and law enforcement agencies are not able to arrest, prosecute, and convict offenders; as such, victims of violence normally receive little or no redress. Members of the 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 continuation of those acts. Reports indicate that more than 11,000 people were killed in hundreds of separate outbreaks of politically motivated communal violence in Nigeria between 1999 and 2007 (Aniekwe and Kushie 2011: 18). During the same period, the country recorded several high profile cases of politically motivated assassinations (Ladan and Kiru 2005). In all these, no one was convicted (ICG 2011: 1). The tendency of political actors to use violence in the electoral process is defined by the state’s capacity to enforce law and order. Sadly, the capacity of Nigerian State to enforce law and order is undermined by the erosion of the states’ monopoly of the use of violence. The state’s monopoly of use of violence in Nigeria is gravely challenged by the activities of ‘cult gangs’, ‘area boys’, ethnic militias, unlicensed vigilante groups, and armed bandits that operate in rural and urban areas (Adewale 2005, Pratten 2006, and Fourchard 2008). The armed operations of these groups are aided by the illicit and unrestrained flow of small arms (Hazan and Horner 2007). As Nigeria’s experience demonstrates, political actors can sometimes take control of these armed groups and use them to perpetrate electoral violence (HRW 2005). The political elite and state officials armed groups to achieve political ends, are the greatest beneficiaries of the erosion of the support state’s monopoly on use of violence, and the culture of impunity promotes electoral violence.

**Economic Vulnerabilities:** The high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty is a sign of
underdevelopment. In Nigeria, a large section of the people lack access to opportunities and resources to actualize their potentials. This situation breeds a class of economic marginalized people (mostly youths) who are used to perpetrate electoral violence. This group of people is enticed by the wealthy violent entrepreneurs who sponsor most of the violent political encounters. The electoral violence in Nigeria is mostly carried out by gangs whose members are recruited, financed, and sometimes, armed by state and party officials or their agents. These gangs are mostly illiterate, 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 (Aniekwe and Kushie 2011: 20).

Confidence in Electoral Tribunal: 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 reduces their inclination to seek legal redress to allegations of election fraud. The situation in Nigeria relates to Kenya’s experience during 2007 election, where Raila Odinga out-rightly rejected the advice by the US 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 (East African Standard Nairobi, 30 December 2007). 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 legally challenging election outcomes did not yield any meaningful result. In Nigeria, the 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 the Federation and the President of the Court of Appeal4 (Ajaero 2011, Abimboye 2011). The disclosure by the President of the Court of Appeal that the Chief Justice of the Federation tried to influence the Sokoto State governorship election appeal indicates that the judiciary is prone to corruption and vulnerable to 4 In response to attempts by the Chief Justice of the Federation 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 interference. This is, perhaps, why many politicians find it more rewarding to seek redress through violence rather than the judicial process.
No Internal Party Democracy: Political parties are a major building block of democracy, but the inability of many political parties in Nigeria to operate in a democratic manner introduces tension and violence in the electoral process. In Nigeria, political godfathers control the parties at local and national levels (HRW 2007, Omobowale and Olanrewaju 2007). These godfathers select the delegates who elect party leaders and candidates through control of the delegates; they decide who gets the party’s nomination and leadership positions. The activities of these godfathers create so much dissatisfaction in the political process because they disregard formal procedures for party nomination of candidates. Ibrahim (2007: 5) identifies tactics used by these political godfathers to eliminate popular candidates from party primaries:

- Declaration of a candidate as “consensus candidate” and the insistence that those entitled to vote must support the candidate that other aspirants must withdraw.
- The use of zoning to exclude unwanted candidates by moving the party zone for a particular position to an area where the excluded candidate is not local
- The use of violence by thugs or security personnel to harass and intimidate candidates and supporters of candidates who oppose the godfathers.
- The use of money to bribe officials and induce voters to support particular candidates.
- Application of results by declaration, an aspirant wins a nomination, but polling officials disregard the results and declare the loser the winner.

In some instances, the result of primary elections are overturned by the party godfathers for instance the 2011 general elections, Olu Agunloye was replaced as candidate for Ondo State senatorial seats by the party leadership. This forced him to defect from Labour Party to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Also, Mohammed Abacha’s victory to CPC gubernatorial primary for Kano State was rejected by the party leadership; he was replaced by Lawal Ja’afaru Isa despite the case filed in court (ICG 2011: 14). The party members express mafia-style political process in the parties and this normally engage in ‘anti-party’ activities suspension or expulsion from the party. The capacity of the disgruntled party members to fight back, serious intra-party crisis and violence often follow each episode of party convention in Nigeria.

Electoral Malpractice: The transparency and fairness of the electoral process, credibility of election authority, neutrality or partisanship of election management authority, lack of faith in the electoral body, non independent of the electoral commission, and rigging play a major role in instigating electoral violence. The integrity of elections can create frustration among
stakeholders in the electoral process, this can transform into violence (Barnes 2006). The issue of election integrity is even more problematic in countries where ethnicity is salient in politics. In such societies, the victory or defeat of a particular candidate or party is perceived as defeat of an entire community. Any form of irregularities that would prevent a candidate community from clinching electoral victory is opposed violently by the entire community (Orji 2010).

**Media Inflammatory Statement:** The message on election or its outcome could trigger of electoral violence (Campbell 2010, Ofili 2011: 3). In the Nigeria, several unguarded utterances were attributed to the candidates; some politicians were accused of using innuendoes to incite the public to violence (William, 2011). The social media worsened the tensions created by religious and ethnic campaign by supporters of President Jonathan and Buhari. There are text messages that stir up Muslims against President Jonathan, some northern Muslim governors perceived to be supporting him. The anti-Jonathan rhetoric in north hardened the stance of many southerners against Buhari, setting up inevitable clash between followers of Buhari and Jonathan. The local and foreign media have been accused of fanning the inflated discourse by reporting partisan stories with sensational headlines for instance a sensational headlines by the Nation newspaper captioned “The North is against Jonathan” (Omondi, 2011). These provokes stories during election charge the tempo and incite supporters of violence.

**Power Sharing Problem:** The institutional changes result to opposition and violence; this has been illustrated in Nigeria’s experience where the relegation of the power-sharing arrangement which guide the previous election resulted in vigorous opposition and violence. The 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria reflects regional, religious divisions and simmering tensions over power sharing modalities in the aftermath demise of President Umaru Yar’Adua. Many Northerner believe that President Jonathan a Christian and Southerner should have conceded his presidential bid to a Northerner Muslim in honor of the unwritten rotation of power between North and South. Umaru Yar’Adua, a Northerner Muslim, succeeded President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southerner Christian ruled Nigeria for eight years from 1999. Unfortunately, Yar’Adua died untimely in 2010, midway through his term, paving way for Vice President Goodluck Jonathan emerge as president. The proponents of power sharing insist that Jonathan should not have contested the presidency because the North had not completed its slot. 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.
Security Challenges for Electoral Process in Nigeria

The quest for power in Nigeria among political actors has resort to acts capable of breaching security and peace. An assessment of election history in Nigeria reveals that the quest for credible elections in Nigeria had been marred by political assassination, political thuggery, ballot snatching, intimidation, arson.

**Political Assassination** has been observed that the elimination of political rivals is a common strategy for electoral victory by politicians in Nigeria. In this regard, Nigerian politicians tend to kill fellow politicians whom they perceive as threats to their political interests. Thus, the approach of general elections was usually characterized by the assassination of politicians for instance Chief Bola Ige, an Alliance for Democracy (AD) chieftain was murdered on December 24th 2001; Dr. Harry Marshall of defunct All Peoples Party (APP) Chieftain and national vice chairman was murdered on March 5, 2003; Chief Aminasoaru Dikibo, murdered on February 6, 2004; Mr. Jesse Aruku, a gubernatorial aspirant in the Plateau state murdered in June 2006; Engineer Funsho Williams, PDP5 gubernatorial aspirant murdered on July 27, 2006; Dr. Daramola, a gubernatorial aspirant in Ekiti state murdered on August 14, 2006; Ahmed Patagi, PDP state chairman, Kwara state murdered on August 15, 2002 and many others was assassinate (Chubah, 2009; Ayinla, 2005). Such prevalence politically motivated murders indicates that in Nigeria the opponent has usually become much more vulnerable and an easy prey depending on the extent to which his activities can be interpreted to truncate the political chances of the assailant’ (Ayinla, 2005). The inherent in this political assassination has serious implications for credible electoral system. It is worthy to note that the elimination of political rivals in this manner robs the electorate their right to choose from a multitude of candidates. The result is that the Nigerian electorates were often presented with a fate accomplish.

**Intimidation:** Nigeria politicians have often resorted to calculated acts of violence for the purpose of intimidating opponents and other perceived obstacles of their interests. Intimidation often takes the form of orchestrating mobs of supporters and parading the residences or vicinities of a political opponent in a threatening manner. Such mobs wield lethal and non-lethal weapons ranging from guns, cutlasses, sticks to stones and bottles. The sheer numbers of these mobs and the sight of the dangerous weapons they wield is enough to intimidate a political opponent. However, in some cases, such mobs have been known to use those weapons mainly to threaten opponents for instance the sporadic shooting at the PDP state
secretariat, Ilorin in September, 2002 by a mob of ANPP supporter (Ayinla, 2005). It is worthy to note that intimidation for the purpose of electoral victory is not orchestrated against fellow politicians alone. In this regard, Nigerian politicians have been known to intimidate electoral officials. The experience of Madam Ayoka Adebayo, the Resident Electoral Officer during the Ekiti State gubernatorial bye-elections is a good example; Madam Ayoka resigned her appointment midway to the collation of election results. She cited threats to her life and that of her family by undisclosed persons who demanded that she manipulate the election result in their favor (Odebode and Oni, 2010). Similarly, the director-general of the Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida Campaign organization, Chief Raymond Dokpesi alleged that his life and that of his family had been threatened by agents supporting the political aspiration of President Goodluck Jonathan (Tyem, 2010).

**Ballot Snatching:** is another common security challenge that characterizes elections in Nigeria, this has been the practice for some desperate politicians to invade polling booths and make away with ballot boxes. This is done when the politician concerned felt that the outcome of the election would not favor him (Ayang, 1988). Usually, such snatched ballot boxes are destroyed on the other hand; such snatched ballot boxes find their way to INEC offices. This ballot snatching is usually resorted to by unscrupulous politicians in constituencies they consider as hostile to their candidacy, by doing so, they nullify the support of such opponents.

**Arson:** refers to willful destruction of properties in order to advance a political cause. The history of elections in Nigeria is replete with frequent recourse to arson by politicians. In this regard, some politicians have been known to burn houses, vehicles, or campaign offices of their political rivals. A good example of this was the bombing of the Ilorin office of the National Pilot, a Kwara state based newspaper belonging to Chief Olushola Sarki, a former ANPP chieftain, by suspected PDP sympathizers (Ayinla, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2003). This they do in a desperate effort to cripple the logistical capabilities of such rivals. However, burning of properties is not the only manifestation of this electoral misconduct. Arson, as a tool of electoral victory in Nigeria, often manifests in the defacement of the campaign billboards of rivals, tearing of campaign posters.

**Thuggery:** connotes a systematic resort to brutality and violence to facilitate electoral victory. Nigerian politicians tend to resort to thuggery to promote their political agenda. This tendency is underscored by Omenazu’s observation that it is only in Nigeria that you kill and maim in election days and go about the streets unchallenged (Chubah, 2009).
Harassment of Election Observers: the foreign and local election observers have been physically assaulted by sympathizers of some politicians. The harassment of election observers is informed by the desire to discourage evidences of rigging and associated acts of electoral misconducts from being recorded published, or as evidence at election tribunals. The beating and detention of election observers during the 2003 and 2007 general elections is a case in hand (Falola and Ihovbere, 1985)

Conclusion and Recommendations
The abuse of power incumbency in Nigerian electoral process by those in power has been sustained due to the fact that they have the state apparatus to control the election machineries. The chances of the opposition forming government are on thin line, this distorts electoral process lead to malpractices in elections. We conclude this paper with the assertion that incumbency really impinges on the electoral processes and hinders good governance in Nigeria. This situation is prevalent in many other African countries and this has accounted for low level participation of citizenry and exposed the country’s democracy to danger. Arising from this, we recommend that genuine and serious efforts should be made by the government to implement the recommendations of the Justice Uwais electoral reform panel which has been applauded by Nigerians.

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