



# An Analysis Of Corruption in Multi-Party Politics, Government Legitimacy, and Manifestations Of Democracy in Nigeria From 1999 to 2023

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**Abstract.** *This study examines the impact of political and public official corruption on Nigerian democracy and government legitimacy between 1999 and 2023. The research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, supported by documentary analysis, with the elite theory framework as the basis for gathering and evaluating relevant data. The study argues that the pervasive corruption within Nigeria's democratic system is largely driven by the ruling elites, who control both political power and wealth. The elites are able to appropriate state powers and utilize them to amass resources and build networks of patronage, which are crucial for maintaining their dominance and subjugating the un-elite majority. Through the lens of power relations, the study highlights how these corrupt practices have led to the entrenchment of the elites' control over political and economic systems. The study concludes that political corruption has significantly undermined the government's ability to provide essential public goods and services, which has, in turn, contributed to a decline in public trust in Nigeria's political institutions and democratic processes during this period. As the political landscape has become increasingly dominated by corruption, citizens have grown disillusioned with the system. The study recommends that Nigeria's political leadership reassess its current, money-driven and self-serving political approach, and adopt a more service-oriented model. Strengthening the rule of law, promoting public involvement in governance, and ensuring governmental accountability and legitimacy could help prevent Nigeria's slide toward political authoritarianism and reverse the democratic decline.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Government, Legitimacy, Multi-party elections, Political corruption.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has reached a malignant level in Nigeria, and to argue otherwise would be an understatement. This pervasive issue has spread across the African continent and has become a serious threat to democratic processes, effective governance, and fair economic dealings. In the context of Nigeria, corruption has deeply affected the political and economic landscape, impacting the country's ability to function as a democratic society. According to the World Bank (2019:271), corruption is fueled by the unique political and economic circumstances of each nation, and its causes are as diverse as its forms. The harmful effects of corruption are not limited to Nigeria but extend throughout developing countries. Corruption has played a pivotal role in financial crises in emerging nations after gaining independence, with Nigeria's military intervention in January 1966 being a notable example.

Nigeria's vast population continues to live in extreme poverty, with the nation's wealth and resources failing to improve the quality of life for many. Mimiko (2018) argues that the

institutionalization of corruption in Nigeria can be traced back to the Babangida military regime. During his eight-year rule, corruption became more ingrained in the system, as the government embraced what became known as the “stability” syndrome. As military leadership partnered with civilians in government, corruption became a part of the norm, further cementing its place in Nigeria's political fabric. Today, the influence of corruption continues to pervade all levels of society, affecting governance, the economy, and the daily lives of ordinary Nigerians.

The issue of corruption in Third World countries, particularly in Nigeria, has gained significant global attention. Organizations like Transparency International have been vocal about the need for greater accountability, transparency, and adherence to democratic ideals. Despite these calls, Nigeria continues to struggle with rampant corruption due to poor leadership and ineffective administration. Both the public and private sectors are plagued by corrupt practices such as bribery, nepotism, fraud, and favoritism. These corrupt activities permeate the Nigerian system, damaging the economy and undermining public trust in government institutions. The situation is dire, as corruption impacts every aspect of life, contributing to a breakdown in society's moral and ethical standards.

In response to the increasing corruption in the country, the Nigerian government established anti-corruption bodies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). However, despite these efforts, the results have been far from satisfactory. High-profile cases such as the convictions of former governors, including Senator Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State, highlight the ongoing struggle to combat corruption. Yet, corruption remains rampant, with deep roots in Nigerian politics, making it challenging to eliminate. The persistence of corruption continues to undermine the government's ability to provide for its citizens and has led to a lack of accountability, which in turn affects governance quality and national development.

This study explores the pervasive nature of corruption in Nigerian governance, examining its manifestations and the reasons why anti-corruption efforts have largely failed. The study is structured into four sections: Section 1 introduces the problem statement and context of the research. Section 2 provides the theoretical framework and conceptual clarifications, addressing key terms like corruption, democracy, and government. The third section, as noted by Sulaiman (2023), delves into the manifestations of corruption in Nigeria and why efforts to combat it have not been effective. Finally, the study concludes with a

discussion on the consequences of corruption, drawing on the findings of Ajiteru (2023) and suggesting potential solutions to mitigate its impact on Nigerian society.

### **Problem Statement**

The corruption in Nigeria is one of the biggest problems affecting the country's democratic system. Sulaiman (2018) claims that despite Nigeria's abundance of natural and human resources needed for growth and advancement, its people continue to live in poverty as a result of corrupt behaviors. For many years, Nigeria's socioeconomic and political development has been hampered by corruption. Similar to this, corruption impedes the country's progress by causing poor educational attainment, little investment, and sluggish economic growth. Procurement, fraud, nepotism, favoritism, lack of transparency, and bribery are the main ways that corruption appears in the Nigerian state's public sector today. Corrupt practices, according to Ajiteru (2023),

An ethical and criminal issue that has been debated throughout history. Haruna and Zamfara (2016) states that it is a crime against humanity. In Nigeria, widespread corruption usually indicates that the state is not working well and represents both poor leadership and poor governance. It is undeniable that societal tension, the brain drain of educated individuals, administrative incompetence, and unfairness are all consequences of Nigeria's current corruption. Ajiteru (2023).

### **Corruption in politics**

Political corruption has grown to be a prominent aspect of Nigerian politics, and it has been utilized as a means of gaining and holding onto political power in addition to obtaining wealth and prestige. In essence, Nigeria's multiparty system, which has existed since 1999, has brought Abalaka (2023) adds a fresh dimension to the extent of corruption in Nigeria. After decades of military rule and a failed transition program, former President Olusegun Obasanjo made audacious pledges in 1999 that marked the beginning of the democratic transition. However, there have been multiple elections and changes of administration since 1999, all of which have been characterized by scandals, pervasive corruption, and anomalies in the democratic process. The degree of political corruption may be hard to quantify, but according to Charles (2020), there are a number of indicators that can show how much corrupt behaviors hampered the shift to a more transparent, competitive, accountable political and economic system. He claims that political instability is the outcome of a crisis of legitimacy that has deterred investment, according to Abalaka (2023). More concerning these days is the fact that

vote-buying, election rule violations, and egregious misappropriation of public funds and resources for party campaigns have grown commonplace in Nigerian democracy. In a similar vein, exchanging monetary presents for political support has become commonplace, with voters waiting in line with cash during election hours. The majority of former Nigerian presidents, governors, and members of the National Assembly are currently either the subject of an EFCC investigation or are involved in legal proceedings related to corrupt acts. The Dasukigate scam, Diazzani A. Madueke's theft of \$20 billion in oil income, the Maina saga, and numerous other incidents are not surprising. Politicians in Nigeria frequently switch parties to the ruling one these days with the propensity to avoid being prosecuted by anti-graft organizations. This situation has raised questions about the government's sincerity and desirability in combating corruption. Ajiteru (2023).

### **Corruption in the bureaucracy**

Fundamentally, a broad view of Nigerian bureaucratic corruption must start with knowledge of the nation's structural design, which was preoccupied with the extreme centralization of political and economic authority. Despite being a federal state, it functions as a unitary state because the central government controls the majority of its resources. As a result, corruption, wastefulness, and many sorts of office abuse were fostered. Accordingly, the Nigerian administrative system is said to resemble an elderly ox that will not move unless prodded with bribes (Charles, 2020). Public employees are highly tempted to gain themselves by questionable ways given the recent lamentations about the nation's deteriorating economic predicament. It is hardly hyperbole to say that Nigeria's corrupt practices have altered under democratic leadership. The amount of bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria's public service has increased due to the politicization of bureaucracy by previous administrations. Political appointments and considerations have also profoundly penetrated the bureaucracy, influencing its operations (Charles, 2020). He added that political corruption, which is the foundation of the government in such a system, will inevitably permeate the bureaucracy (Ajiteru, 2023). For example, it was disclosed that the EFCC found \$9.8 million from Andrew Yakubu, a former NNPC GMD from a Kaduna state slum in Abalaka, (2023). Another example of the extent of bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria is the removal of Babashir Lawal, the former Secretary to the Federal Government, for misusing his position.

## **Corruption in elections**

Nigerian politics have been characterized by electoral corruption for many years. It has been utilized as a means of gaining and maintaining power as well as for the accumulation of money. Bribery is a common tactic used by politicians to purchase votes both during and after elections. Voting for politicians is one thing, but collecting money from them is quite another for most voters. Actually, Humphrey Nwosu, the previous chairman of INEC during the military government of former President Babangida once bemoaned the corruption of Nigerian voters, claiming that they would steal money from one candidate and cast their ballots for another, Ajiteru (2023). In order to influence election outcomes, they (politicians) offer bribes (Abalaka, 2023). One instance of INEC personnel reportedly tampering with election results during the 2015 general elections is Rivers State. According to the Nigerian Daily Post on July 27, 2015, the EFCC actually detained Rivers State's Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for accepting #650 million in bribes to rig the election results. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that accusations of fraud, corruption, and other abuses of authority at all levels of government plagued the start of the Fourth Republic. There were purported instances of electoral fraud in the recently concluded governorship elections in Osun and Ekiti States vote buying, fraud, and falsification of election results. This unsightly situation has shown the scope and pattern of corruption in the Nigerian political system. Sulaiman (2023).

## **Conceptual Structure**

The application of fundamental theoretical ideas that support the explanation of trends in Nigeria after 1999 will be strengthened by an integrative theoretical framework that examines the dynamics of uncontrollable political violence. This framework will also help us better understand the multidisciplinary correlates of democracy and political violence. The study presents theoretical analysis of political violence in Nigeria at both micro and macro levels in light of contemporary discussions on democracy and political violence (Ajiteru, 2023). To adequately describe the concept of political violence and its connections to democratic politics, two theoretical frameworks were chosen: frustration aggression theory and theory of group violence. Both theories offer contextual evaluation and connections while reflecting some of the fundamental problems with political violence in respect to Nigeria's current democratic administration. Sulaiman (2023).

The same frustration-aggression has also been seen in the Niger Delta situation. Minority issues in Nigerian democracy have not been addressed since the Willinks Minority Report was published in 1958 to soothe the anxieties of minority ethnic groups (Ajiteru, 2023).

This is demonstrated by the Nigerian State's incapacity to use the derivation principle as the foundation for allocating money, which has caused unrest over resource control. Once more, the Niger Delta's growing poverty clashes with its oil wealth and explains why young people's restlessness and hostility are mirrored in militancy and the twisted increase in local cult. Post-amnesty militant groups like the Niger Delta Avengers (NDAs) and Ugbesu Sea Lions, among others, have resurfaced in the Niger Delta as a result of the inability to successfully reintegrate or rehabilitate former combatants.

Despite the aforementioned drawbacks, the frustration aggression hypothesis is helpful and could be applied to explain political violence in Nigeria and throughout Africa (Abalaka, 2023). Nigerian politics, in particular, are a game of promises. These unmet promises can cause frustration and have historically or now resulted in violence. Ajiteru (2023). On the other side, the collective violence theory maintains that one must go beyond the individual to comprehend violence. According to the notion, comprehending violence entails understanding Sulaiman (2023) discusses a society's social framework. Supporters of the critical mass or mass action theory contend that cumulative oppression, victimization, and human rights violations by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) result in popular uprisings involving civil society, such as the Arab Spring (Amadi 2018) and the October 2020 "end SARS" protest in Nigeria.

In order to comprehend the origin of violence, the group violence hypothesis highlights the significance of power struggles among different social groupings (Rummel 2016). Ethnic, religious, racial, ideological, and other multiple lines are used to identify these groups. This school of thought's central premise is that understanding political violence requires both social context and collective action any community. These theoretical investigations are appropriate since current discussions of political violence have not sufficiently connected the state's and individuals' reactions to violent acts that threaten or appear to threaten the state's hegemony or the individual (Ajiteru, 2023). Reactions to this kind of violence are typically driven by—and thus closely linked to—the degree of danger that is deemed acceptable to preserve regime control in relation to the actual or perceived violence.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The broad subjects of political violence and democracy have a wealth of literature. Ajiteru (2023). In their definitional analysis of political violence, Morrison and Stevenson (1971) contended that political violence is action that involves the willful subjection or bodily harm of people or property in order to change the way the political system is organized. Ted Robert Gurr highlights the definitional differences between forms of violence that are classified

as "structural," which are defined by more widespread patterns of denial, and "physical," which are distinguished by the use of force, in his groundbreaking work on political violence. Sulaiman (2023).

Some academics have connected political violence to specific "predetermined" actions against a dictatorship. Political violence is defined as "violence directed against the regime (the structure of political authority) and/or against particular authorities occupying positions within the regime," according to Edward Muller (1972). However, the "government" or its "authorities" are not the only targets of political violence. It is evident from the division of political violence into micro and macro levels of violence that political violence such as while macroviolence, like terrorism, primarily targets the government or its agents, assassinations, election fraud, etc., do not directly target them. Given that terrorism is primarily driven by political motivations, Alex Schmid (2016) offers several interpretations of the phenomenon that appropriately intersect with political violence.

A democratic government encourages non-violence, according to the literature on democratic governance. This has been included in the core argument of those who support democracy in developing nations. Sulaiman (2023). Therefore, freedom and violent free polity are tied to some of the fundamental problems with democratic administration. This serves as the foundation for evaluating the relationship between democracy and political violence in a contextualized manner. Freedom, equality, political involvement, and consent are all aspects of democracy governance (Bratton 2007; Joseph 1997). According to Ajiteru (2023), scholars of democracy in plural societies offer persuasive arguments that prioritize democracy over all other types of governance. Different views on the legitimacy of a given system of government and structural patterns of power sharing among competing spheres of opinion and interests were seen to have challenged the growth of modern governance, vacillating between "unity" in racially or ethnically divided societies. In order to convince different groups, classes, opinions, religions, and social affinities that a liberal democracy was appropriate, the questions of race, origin, ethnic identity, religion, and so forth were frequently brought up. Abalaka (2023).

The aforementioned review is unique and specific. The purpose of this review is to give insightful information about the connections between Nigerian democracy and political violence, as well as the contexts in which our theory fits into the larger research. Does Nigeria's version fit into the fundamental democratic model, taking into account the tenets and components of both the group violence and frustration-aggression theories? According to Ake (1996), Africa—including Nigeria—should develop a democracy that is very dissimilar from the Western model. In what ways has Nigeria's democratic pattern offered a workable yet

violent example of freedom? According to Sulaiman (2023), these are a few of the queries that will direct the remainder of the argument.

### **Nigeria's Issue with Political Corruption**

Since democracy was restored in 1999, Nigeria has struggled with a number of issues, including political corruption. Corruption is common among Nigerian public officials and political leaders (Ajiteru, 2023). In Nigeria, political leaders are known to commit election fraud, embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, cronyism, awarding bogus contracts, inflation of contract sums, theft of public assets, stealing of government funds, and extortion (Aliu, 2013; Adesina, 2016). Transparency International (TI), a global anti-corruption organization, regularly ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world in its annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from 1999 to 2015 due to the country's high level of governmental corruption. The claim that "in Nigeria it is not only that officials are corrupt, but that corruption is official" (David-West in Aliu, 2018: 145) encapsulates the widespread nature of corruption in the political system.

The prosecutors' and investigators' actions of Nigeria's anti-corruption body, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), has led to shocking disclosures about the status of political figures and public officials from all levels and branches of government, as well as party affiliations, who have been found guilty of embezzlement and those who have been found guilty of stealing public funds. For instance, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo, the daughter of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, was arrested and charged by the EFCC in 2008 for obtaining N10 million (10 million Naira) from the Senate Committee on Health's unspent 2007 budget (Alabi and Fashagba, 2010; Aliu, 2013). The Honorables Ndudi Elumelu, Paulinus Igwe, and Mohammed Jibo were also detained and charged by the EFCC in 2009 for their alleged involvement in N5.2 billion (five billion, two hundred million naira) power contract fraud while carrying out supervisory duties as lower house representatives, Ajiteru (2023).

In 2005, former Bayelsa State Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was impeached and found guilty of misappropriating \$55 million in public funds, while in 2008, former Edo State Governor Lucky Igbinedion was found guilty of embezzling over \$25 million in public funds, according to a report by Human Rights Watch (2011). James Ibori, a former governor of oil-rich Delta State, was also found guilty in Britain of embezzling about £50 million from the state, according to a 2012 BBC article. Bode George, a leader of the People's Democratic Party, Nigeria's former ruling party, and the former chairman of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA),

was found guilty in 2009 together with five other individuals for N100 billion in fraud, and they were given a two-year sentence at Jail Ajiteru (2023).

Some alleged corruption issues that occurred during the former President Jonathan's administration were resolved by the President Muhammadu Buhari administration on May 29, 2015. One example is the prosecution of Sambo Dasuki, the former president's National Security Adviser (NSA), and four other individuals for allegedly laundering and misappropriating \$2.1 billion (N546 billion) intended for military arms purchases to fight the Boko Haram insurgency and other national security threats (Adesina, 2016). Additionally, Patrick Ziadeke Akpobolokemi, the former Director-General of the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), and five other agency employees were taken into custody and charged jailed 2015 for embezzling N2.6 billion that belonged to the EFCC. In a similar vein, Alhaji Abdurashied Maina was listed as wanted by the EFCC in 2015 on suspicion of embezzling and mishandling a N195 billion pension fund (Adesina, 2016).

It's crucial to remember that different Nigerian public officials are said to have lost different amounts of public funds due to corruption. Since gaining independence in 1960, corruption has cost Nigeria between \$300 billion and \$400 billion in public expenditures, according to Amundsen (in Adesina, 2016). Nigeria lost an estimated US\$380 billion between 1960, when it gained independence, and 1999, when the military government ended, according to former EFCC Chairman Nuhu Ribadu (Adesina, 2016). Similarly, it was said that Nigeria had lost between 1999 and 2007, corruption cost an average of \$4 billion to \$8 billion (Mustapha, 2010; Aliu, 2013). Similarly, political leaders in Nigeria looted an estimated US\$89.5 billion from the state coffer between 1970 and 2008, according to a report by the Global Financial Integrity (GFI), an international watchdog on illicit financial outflows (Adesina, 2016). Without a doubt, there may be detrimental effects on democracy and development from the massive losses of public monies due to corruption (Sulaiman, 2023).

### **Nigerian Political Violence Since 1999's Multi-Party Elections: The Background**

This section partially aims to explore the causal relationships and motivations for political violence that occurred after 1999, which further supports the plausibility of our theoretical model (Sulaiman 2018). Threat or violence of violence is a common occurrence. Violence or the possibility of using it as a political action tactic has been used by people and organizations throughout history in one form or another. Power-hungry groups, power-seeking groups, and power-retaining groups have all employed violence. According to The Global Human Rights Regime (2012), the oppressed have used violence in the name of justice, the

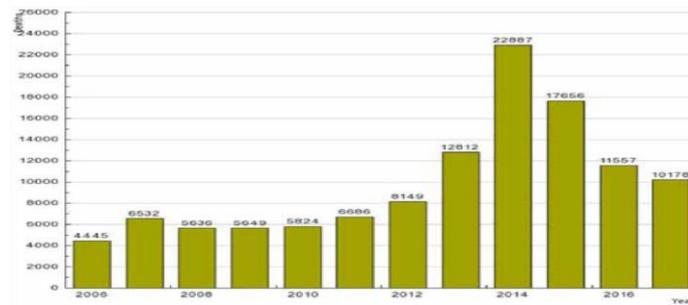
wealthy have used it to defend order, and the threatened have used it out of fear of being uprooted. As a result, political violence has a variety of causes and reasons. Ajiteru (2023).

Following Nigeria's restoration to democracy in 1999, the intricate patterns of political violence and the inquiry into potential causes, motivations, transformational dynamics, and Democracy has brought about changes that have not been sufficiently reflected. What circumstances have led to political violence, and what recent developments have resulted from the emergence of embryonic democracy? Examining the different causes of political violence and how it may be changed to support Nigerian democracy is essential to capturing current trends and the impact of political violence on the country's democracy. Sulaiman (2023).

When discussing the origins of political violence, it is reasonable to say that these origins have been complicated and controversial. The bulk of modern scholars likely share Arnold Forster's (1966) opinion that political violence cannot be explained by straightforward causes. Political violence has so many different and intricate reasons that Some academics even contend that attempts to develop cross-national hypotheses are thwarted by the inherent uniqueness of every conflict. Scholars have therefore offered a plethora of explanations for political violence. This does not, however, mean that a broad conclusion cannot be made about the diverse range of political violence that has occurred recently (Ajiteru, 2023).

Accordingly, the discussion of the reasons and drivers of political violence highlights a number of factors, including relative deprivation (Gurr 2011), greed and grievances (Sulaiman 2018), and poverty (Ajiteru 2023), which argues that deprivation is the catalyst for violence. In his book on "why men rebel," Gurr (2011) cited social anomy including local cultism, protests, and mass violence as examples of how deprivation is fundamental to war (Amadi 2012). The prevalence of political violence in Nigeria is a result of a number of factors, including pervasive marginalization, violations of democratic norms, and relative destitution that irritates a sizable portion of the populace. Sulaiman (2023).

The issue of power is central to any study of violent politics. Abalaka (2023). Tension is still largely caused by the deeply ingrained patrimonial and rent-seeking politics that are common throughout Africa, where political leaders are clinging to power and secretly giving away public funds to supporters in violation of the constitution. According to scholars of the "logic of political violence," "weak institutional polities" are mostly to blame for political violence (Ajiteru, 2023).



**Figure 1: Political Violence and absolute Number of Deaths 2006 to 2017.**

**Source: Nigeria Watch, Seventh Report on Political Violence in Nigeria, 2017**

Poor arms control that results in ongoing violence and armed conflict in the form of civil war, rebellion, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), etc., is the most obvious example of such a weak institution (Asuni 2019).

In violent confrontations, ethnicity has played a central role. Political violence may be sparked by a sense of ethnic conflict in cultures that are extremely divided, like Nigeria. Ajiteru (2023). Such "interpretations" of political violence in ethnically split nations have been offered by Kathleen Cavanaugh. Given that Nigeria is home to over 235 different ethnic groups, this particular situation is intriguing (Sulaiman, 2023). Conflicts and acts of ethnic violence have been on the rise. This takes many forms, including rivalry between and among ethnic groups, which increasingly deviates from democratic standards. Ethnic violence is motivated by a sense of belonging to ethnic or sectoral identification as opposed to a sense of patriotism (Nnoli 1978). In Nigeria, this has also been a major cause of political violence. Political violence has also been sparked by structural disparities in the representation of different ethnic groups and patterns of political appointments (Mustapha 2019). Table 1 displays the National Assembly's ethnic makeup from 1999 to 2023.

Resource agitation in the Niger Delta region in the early 2000s was prompted by ethnic minority unrest because the region's oil resource-bearing communities were treated lightly by the region's power brokers. Essentially, these villages' young people joined the creeks as insurgents and fought the Nigerian State. In essence, the historical portrayal of ethnic minority agitation that led to insurgency in the Niger Delta during the political period after 1999, implies that these young people were local street cult boys who were dropped after being used as thugs by the political elite to further their political goals (HRW 2008). The early 2000s saw a rise of militancy as a result of these young people turning into armed rebels and agitators who took to the waterways. These youth groups include the Outlaws, the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Strike Force (NDSF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The Niger Delta Avengers (NDAs), a post-amnesty

militia group, have formed, suggesting that ethnic minority militia agitation has not subsided despite the federal government's 2009 amnesty of the militants (Ajiteru, 2023).

One important aspect of political violence in the Local cultism has been on the rise in the Niger Delta since the late 1990s. The most well-known of these cults are Deebam and Deewell, whose violent activities and inter-cult rivalry have threatened human security in the Niger Delta (Ajiteru, 2023).

Community crises are another source of political violence. This is widespread in Nigeria and can take many different forms, including chieftaincy titles and land/border disputes. Nigeria is known for its community crises, including the Ife and

**Table 1: National Assembly Ethnic Composition, 1999–2023.**

Ethnic Group	% in population (1963 Census)	% in Senate	% in House of Representatives.
Hausa/Fulani	29.5	28.4	30.3
Igbo	16.6	14.7	13.8
Yoruba	20.3	20.1	21.3
Southern Minorities	15.1	15.6	13.8
Northern Minorities	18.5	21.2	20.8

**Sources:** Information on National Assembly members computed from data on 109 Senators and 356 Members of the House of Representatives, in Chris Anyanwu, *The Law Makers, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999-2023*, Startcraft International, 1999. Mustapha, 2023

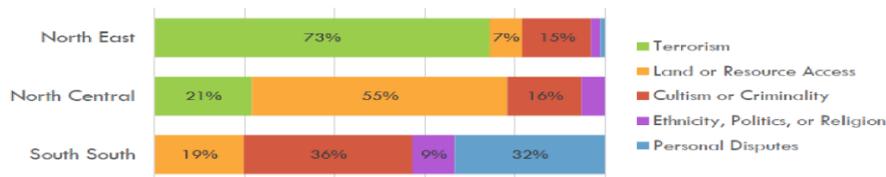
**Table2: Some Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic.**

Date	Type	Nature of Conflict	State
May 30 to June 9 1999	Ethnic	Oodua People’s congress and Hausa traders clashed in Sagamu	Ogun
July 18,1999	Ethnic	Communal clash between Oodua People’s Congress and Hausa trades	Ogun
November 25,1999	Ethnic	Communal clash in Brass Local Government Area	Rivers
Jan 25 1999	Ethnic	Communal clash in Etseko Local Government	Edo
February 2,2023	Ethnic	Sharia Riots	Akwa Ibom & Cross River
February 21,2023	Religious	Religious Riots in Aba reprisal killings from the Kaduna mayhem	Abia
Feb,28,2023	Ethnic	Ife-Modakeke war of attrition	Osun
March5,2023	Ethnic	Renewed hostilities between the people of Eleme and Okrika	Rivers
March 16,2023	Religious	Religious Riot in Damboa	Borno
March 28,2023	Religious	Communal clash in Ovia South Local Government	Edo
April 8, 2023	Ethnic	Local farmers and Fulani herdsmen clash in Saki	Oyo
May 18,2023	Religious	Renewed religious riot in Kaduna	Kaduna
May 23,2023	Religious	Epoch of the Owo mayhem	Ondo
June 5,2023	Ethnic	Communal clash in Isoko north local Government	Edo
June 12,2023	Ethnic	Communal clash between the people of Ikot Offiong and Oku -Iboku	Cross River

**Sources:**2023 Annual report on the Human Rights situation in Nigeria, *Tell Magazine*, September 24,2023 and the *Nigeria Tribune* September 19,2023, the *Punch* November 22,2024:14, Ajiteru, (2020).

Sulaiman (2023) lists several crises, including the Eleme and Okrika conflict in Rivers State, the Aguleri and Umulei dispute, the Zango Kataf issue in Southern Kaduna, the Itsekiri and Urhobo crisis in Dela State, and the Modakeke crisis.

**Figure 2** lists a number of reasons for political violence in Nigeria's North East, North Central, and South-South regions based on the causes of the most recent violent conflict event that affected a household member by zone between 2010 and 2017. According to the research, the North East had the greatest prevalence rate of terrorism, at 73%. Cultism had an incidence rate of 1.5%, whereas land and resource access had a 7% rate. Access to land resources was a primary source of political unrest in the North Central the incidence of terrorism was 21%, cultism or criminality was 1.6%, and violence was 55%. Criminality or South cultism in the South was



**Figure 2: Nigeria 2020–2021, by zone, causes of the most recent violent conflict incident that affected a household member.**

**Source:** Conflict and Violence in Nigeria:

Findings from the North East, North Central, and South-South Zones (Azad A, Crawford, E., & Kaila H., 2018) the leading cause of political violence, accounting for 36% of all cases. Additional factors contributing to violence were ethnicity (9%), land or resource access (19%), and personal conflicts (32%), according to Sulaiman (2023).

According to the religious perspective, political violence in Nigeria has been largely motivated by religion (Ajiteru, 2023). According to the argument against religious violence, the northern Nigerian aristocracy aims to Islamize the country. In Nigeria, this idea frequently leads to conflict. Following President Olusegun Obasanjo's inauguration in May 1999, the Sharia issue in 2000 took a twisted turn, resulting in bloodshed and the deaths of numerous people. According to Egede (2007), a region in northern Nigeria proclaimed itself a "sharia state" with rigorous adherence to the Sharia Penal Code. According to Abalaka (2023), this led to violence between Christians and non-followers of the sharia practice.

One of the main causes of political violence in Nigeria has been religious extremism (Achunike 2018). This includes Boko Haram (Jama Atu Ahlis Sunnalidda Anatinal Jihad) terrorism in Nigeria's northeastern states, such as Borno, Gombe, Adamawa, and Yobe, as well as Shiite protests and skirmishes with government forces in portions of northern Nigeria. Deaths and the majority of internally displaced people are in the local government areas of Bama, Kala/Balge, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Jere, Konduga Kukawa, Mafa, Maiduguri, and Ngala. The state capital, Maiduguri, is the scene of frequent and fatal attacks (Nigeria Watch 2017).

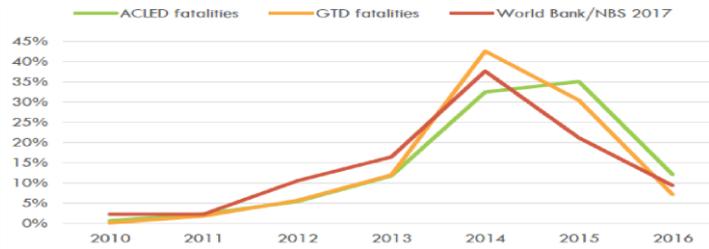
It swore allegiance to the international terrorist organizations ISIS and Al Qaeda in 2015. Since the early 2000s, there have been several attacks, murders, and internal displacements, endangering Nigeria's democracy. According to Abalaka (2023), the Boko Haram insurgency is primarily thought to be motivated by both political and religious problems. As a result, according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI 2019), Nigeria was the third most terrorized country in the world in 2019. This status has been held since 2015, according to Ajiteru (2023).

Mohamedou, Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould (2018) highlights the misunderstandings and complexity of international terrorism while foreshadowing the imminence of political bloodshed brought forth by Islamist extremism in the global order. The ongoing Fulani herdsmen and the murder of rural farmers in several regions of rural Nigeria are examples of related political violence (Amadi and Anokwuru 2017). Abu-Nimer (2020) offers a model of interreligious conflict resolution connected to peacebuilding, despite the complexity of the conflicts.

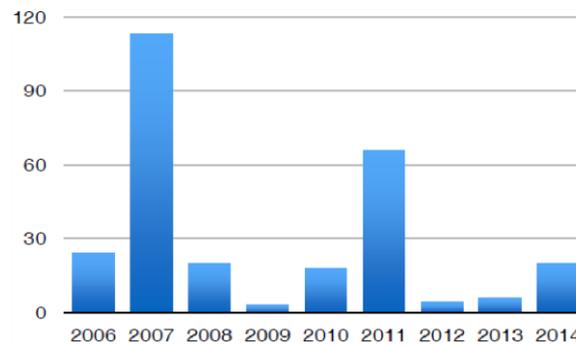
The Odi killings in Bayelsa State under the Obasanjo administration, the Gbaramatu killings in Delta State by the Joint Military Task Force (JTF) under President Yar'Aduah's administration, and political violence in Zaki-Biam in the Benue State Middle Belt, Nigeria, are all evidence of state terrorism (Abalaka, 2023). This led to bloodshed as it spread fear on innocent people. In addition, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra's (IPOB) post-civil war rebirth of separatist agitation took a more aggressive turn as a result of state repression after the Federal Government clamped down on the group and banned it in 2017 (Sulaiman, 2023).

Crucially, since 1999, one of the most common causes of political violence has been elections. There is documentation of such occurrences (HRW 2016). Democracy cannot exist without elections. But since 1999, elections have been conducted in a generally subpar manner. Pre-, during-, and post-election violence are the three categories of electoral violence. These are linked to deaths along political party lines or among party personnel. This includes mass

murder, gunfire, and the removal of ballot boxes, as well as the deployment of political thugs the voters, party leaders, temporary employees,



**Figure 3 shows the distribution of violent deaths in northeastern Nigeria from three sources.**



**Figure 4: Annual number of fatal incidents associated to parties (2006–2014). Cohen (2015) is the source.**

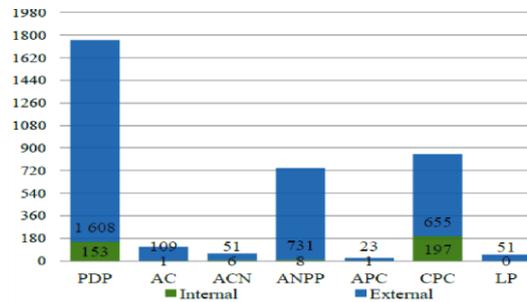
**Sources:** Azad A, Ajiteru, (2023). Conflict and Violence in Nigeria Results from the North East, North Central, and South-South zones, World Bank, ACLED, National Bureau of Statistics, 2018

kidnappings, politically motivated killings, rigging, and other anomalies of prominent political people and their followers Sulaiman (2023). Since 1999, Nigerian elections have been plagued by pre-, during-, and post-election violence, according to Human Rights Watch (2016). All of these factors have contributed to the continuation of political violence.

Election results are essentially challenged in court through tribunals. According to Human Rights Watch (2016), violence and irregularities have plagued Nigeria's elections. Less than half of Nigeria's fatalities take place during general elections, according to data from Fig. 4. According to the figure, there have been varied degrees of party-related fatalities from 2006 to 2014.

Elections for the presidency, governorship, and national assembly are frequently tainted by violence in several Nigerian states. Election rivalry is typically conducted as a zero-sum game, according to Suberu (2016). Political opponents face death threats, violent displacement, harassment, and intimidation. The possibility of violent contestation of election results is increased by the fact that the victor of an election has authority over almost every element of

the governmental apparatus. According to Ajiteru (2023), stated that "more than 70 people died during and after the exercise, making the 2019 general election in Nigeria one of the most violent post-election processes ever witnessed in the history of the country."



**Figure 5: The number of deaths linked to each party between 2016 and 2023. Cohen (2022) is the source.**

**Table 3: Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for Nigeria, 2016–2023.**

Year	Total Number of Country	Nigeria's Ranking
2016	178 countries	130
2017	178 countries	134
2018	183 countries	143
2019	176 countries	139
2020	177 countries	144
2021	175 countries	136
2022	168 countries	136
2023	176 countries	136

**Source:** Transparency International adapted longitudinal data 2016 to 2023

He goes on to say that "in addition to the number of fatalities documented during and following the general election, ballot box snatching, burning of properties, including the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission housing sensitive and not sensitive content meant for voting, the consuming of houses of top candidates for office and people affected with various kinds of injuries described the elections...and supplementary elections Abalaka, (2023)"

The high level of political violence linked to Nigeria's electoral process can be attributed to a number of factors, such as deeply ingrained informal patronage systems, politics of exclusion, poor governance, a desire to hold onto power, weak electoral institutions, election fraud, and the general lack of transparency of elections and electoral rules, which all contribute to various forms of violence in Nigeria's democracy. The core is corruption of violence in politics. Nigeria has been one of the world's most corrupt countries since 1999. There are several ways that corruption can lead to political violence. This involves a lack of accountability and transparency, which could lead to a marginalized group rebelling against the government

(Ajiteru, 2023). The Niger Delta has demonstrated this. Nigeria's ranking of 146 out of 180 nations in the Transparency International 2019 Report paints a dismal image (Transparency International 2020).

Another factor that contributes to violence is poverty. The Brookings Institute designated Nigeria the world's capital of poverty in Abalaka (2023). This can take many different forms, such as kidnapping or armed robbery and pillage. A major portion of this violence has been attributed to poor leadership. In opposition to the overall absence of definite leadership,

Political violence had continued due to nationalism and patriotism. According to Sulaiman (2018), the law rarely prosecutes those who are at fault. This is demonstrated by the attacks and murders of farmers in Nigeria's Middle Belt state of Benue between 2017 and 2019, in which the herders were neither detained nor charged. As a result, both the State (state security agencies) and non-state actors, including organizations or individuals, engage in widespread political violence. Given that the promises of transformational democracy are still unclear, the aforementioned illustrates how inconsistent "third wave democracy" has been (Ajiteru, 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

Nigerian democratization is seriously threatened by the pervasive corruption among political leaders and public servants (Abalaka, 2023). According to the document, the actions are essential to comprehending the concerning extent to which corruption has taken over the political system. The ruling elites view the abuse of state power, offices, resources, funds, legislation, and institutions as the primary way of acquiring, utilizing, and consolidating political power in the framework of the power relations that are inherent in society. Therefore, it is easy for public officials and political leaders to adopt a culture of appropriating state power and resources for private benefit in order to maintain their networks of connections and gather the resources required to solidify their hold on state power that is, political power through any means necessary.

The political establishment must acknowledge politics as a unique chance to provide truthful and responsible services to the country. The deep introspection and understanding of how the other politics—politics motivated by avarice and greed—have left the nation behind and made it a laughing stock in the international community should be the primary source of the ruling elites' attitudinal regeneration. The ruling class must exercise purposeful leadership free from attitudes of piety and primitivism, based on economic growth, national renewal, and the promotion of democratic values. Abalaka (2023).

Therefore, the ruling class in Nigeria should no longer view politics as the exclusive source of income. This will significantly improve the quality of elite competition for political power, free from dishonest tactics and excessive financial influence. This will improve the internal democracy practices of political parties in the in the long term. By making sure that anti-corruption agencies' operations are fully supported and free from party meddling, the ruling class will need to cultivate the political will to redouble the nation's anti-corruption campaign Sulaiman (2023).

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