

*African Governance*

# **NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC, 1999–2021**

**A MILITARISED DEMOCRACY**

*Michael Nwankpa*



# Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999–2021

This book reflects on Nigeria's fourth republic, the country's longest democratic period since it gained independence from Great Britain. It argues that although constitutional or political democracy has lasted for over two decades in Nigeria and seen three successful democratic changes of power, Nigeria's democracy remains largely militarised.

During Nigeria's fourth republic, political and socio-economic affairs have been increasingly dominated by a pervasive military presence and ideology, which has seen a redistribution of resources and government funds away from social programmes into an increase in security budgets, weapons proliferation, and internal military interventions and occupations. This institutionalisation of violence has turned the country into a national security state where the rule of force and violence rather than dialogue and compassion reflect everyday reality. Whilst acknowledging the history of militarisation during colonial and military rule, this book makes a compelling argument for considering the distinct character of the Nigerian nation state's path to militarisation over the last 20 years of experimentation with democracy.

This book's fresh insights into the fourth republic's path to militarisation will be of interest to researchers of African politics, security and development.

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# Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999–2021

A Militarised Democracy

Michael Nwankpa

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I hope that this book will provoke a healthy debate on the type and prospect of democracy in Nigeria and the continent of Africa.

# 1 General Introduction

## Nigeria's Militarised Democracy

### Introduction

Nigeria is currently enjoying its longest democratic dispensation. Before 1999, 'military rule in Nigeria seems to be the norm rather than the exception' (Agozino & Idem, 2008, p.76). Nigeria, like many African states, experienced military interference in its politics. By 1975, more than half of the 35 independent states in sub-Saharan Africa including Chad, Burundi, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Togo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Madagascar, the Congo Republic, Uganda and Nigeria had military rulers (*New York Times*, 1975). The military ruled Nigeria until 1999, except the first six years of its political independence (1960–1966) and a brief return to civilian government in the Second Republic (1979–1983). The incursion of African militaries in the continent's nascent democracies, from Nzeogwu in Nigeria, Rawlings in Ghana, Sankara in Burkina Faso, Gaddafi in Libya to Idi Amin in Uganda, has produced devastating consequences that have stunted its democratic development and led to the militarisation of many African societies. Interestingly, the military in Africa emerged as an unlikely hero and protector of the newly independent states (and was viewed positively), even though it had played a minimal role in the anti-colonial struggle and fight for independence (Murray, 1966). For instance, Western governments tolerated the authoritarian government of President Museveni for his liberalised economic reforms (Diamond, 1999; Hauser, 1999). In Nigeria, President Babangida enjoyed external support for his World Bank (WB) and IMF-inspired structural adjustment economic programmes that were however unpopular at home and were the source of heightened uprisings and protests in the 1980s and the early 1990s (Jemirade, 2020). The positive view of the military in Africa as a bastion of security and political order in the continent of newly established states quickly diminished as the military became a symbol of human rights abuse and corruption. Yet the military's stranglehold on power increased due to the exploitation of the Cold War politics.

The end of the Cold War in 1991 and the emergence of the United States (US) as the sole superpower created an opportunity for the expansion of liberal democracy. Therefore, Western democracies' covert and sometimes

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overt support for African dictators and authoritarian governments reduced drastically (Clapham, 1996; Dunning, 2004). By 1990, there were only three democracies in Africa-Botswana, Gambia and Mauritius (Bailie, 2018; Diamond, 1999). The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s ushered in the Third Wave of democratisation in Africa marked by an increasing number of democracies (Huntington, 1991; Diamond, 1999). For example, between 1989 and 1994, the first wave of elections occurred in 29 African countries, and the second wave of elections occurred in 16 countries between 1995 and 1997 (Diamond, 1999). Many of these elections were apparently flawed and introduced pseudo-democracies. Yet, they inspired huge optimism and hope akin to the 1960s when many African states got independence from their colonial rulers. Despite these positive changes, African democracies remain highly militarised. The 2020 Freedom House report shows that sub-Saharan Africa contributed largely to the global decline in democratic governance and respect for human rights. Nigeria is one of the countries that regressed.

It is important here to define the concept of militarisation. Militarisation relates to the entrenchment of military philosophy and rule in a society. But the conceptualisation of militarisation is multidimensional and broader than that. It involves the

intensification of labour and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals. Militarisation is simultaneously a discursive process involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force.

(Lutz, 2002, p.723)

Some of the characteristics of militarisation are: ‘military coups and regimes, authoritative government, the dominance of patriarchy, powerful military and repressive state apparatuses, war and armed conflict, rising military spending and arms imports, and external military intervention’ (Luckham, 1994, p.27). Militarisation is simply the preference for the use of force as a default choice in solving differences (Agozino & Idem, 2008).

The Fourth Republic, despite its longevity and three successful changes of power through democratic elections and voting (a novel experience in Nigeria’s political history), is conspicuously militarised. There is a pervasive military presence and ideology in its political and socio-economic affairs, increase in the number of armed non-state groups and resistance movements, redistribution of resources and government funds away from social programmes into military-oriented security measures, increase in security budgets, weapon proliferation, increase in internal military interventions and occupations, and a general psyche and institutionalisation of violence. Essentially, Nigeria has turned into a national security state where rule of force and violence rather than dialogue and compassion reflect everyday reality.

Previous works have traced the expansion of Nigeria's repressive state power to its colonial and military rule legacies (Agozino & Idem, 2008; Fayemi, 2000). On the one hand, the long years of military rule in Nigeria have left

an indelible mark on the collective psyche. This psyche has been so militarised that it now embraces force and routine violence and instinctively shies away from debate and dialogue, the two all-important props without which a truly democratic edifice cannot stand

(Fayemi, in Agozino & Idem, 2008, pp.69–70)

On the other hand, the colonial legacy, including the arbitrary creation of states and state borders, the politicisation of ethnic and cultural identities and the use of violence, is cited as a source of recurrent conflict and militarisation of African societies including Nigeria (Falola, 2009). There is undeniably a clear link between Nigeria's colonial legacy, military history and militarised democracy. Nonetheless, this book engages with the distinct character of the Nigerian nation state that has emerged from its experimentation with democracy over 20 years, uninterrupted by overt military intervention through a coup d'état. The new democratic dispensation shows negative traits of the country's colonial and military legacies but also presents its own uniqueness that demonstrates progress as well as setbacks. Some examples of the contradiction include:

Increasingly illegitimate, but ongoing military intervention; regular elections and occasional transfers of power, but realities of democratic rollback and hybrid regimes; democratic institutionalisation, but ongoing presidentialism and endemic corruption; the institutionalisation of political parties, but widespread ethnic voting and the rise of an exclusionary (and often violent) politics of belonging; increasingly dense civil societies, but local realities of incivility, violence and insecurity; new political freedoms and economic growth, but extensive political controls and uneven development; and the donor community's mixed commitment to, and at times perverse impact on, democracy promotion.

(Crawford & Lynch, 2012, p.1)

To understand the militarisation of Nigeria's democracy, we must start from its foundation which is the 1999 Constitution that sets the stage for the new democratic dispensation. This is followed by an analysis of the local geopolitics and institutionalisation of violence across Nigeria's geopolitical zones. The next section will focus on elections and political violence. Next, the struggle for self-determination and secessionist movements will be analysed. This would be followed by Islamism and the rise of religious insurgency. Lastly, the sub-topic, environmental-related violence, will be discussed.

### **The 1999 Constitution and the Return to Democratic Rule**

Nigeria's transition to democratic rule began in the early 1990s but only materialised in 1999 following the sudden death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998. President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, IBB (1985–1993) and General Abacha (1993–1998) manipulated the military–civilian transition programmes in their bold attempts to elongate their military regimes and perpetuate themselves in office by transforming into civilian presidents (Falode, 2019). Following the death of Abacha, General Abdulsalami Abubakar was selected to head the transitional military government. One of the first tasks of Abubakar's transitional military government was the drafting of the constitution. Successive military regimes since 1983, when the 1979 Constitution was suspended, ruled by military decrees. General Abubakar constituted a 25-member deliberative committee hand-picked by the military to develop a new constitution from Abacha's still-born 1995 Constitution. Yet again, Nigeria lost the opportunity to create a constitution that derives from the sovereign will of the people of Nigeria. The 1979 Constitution, although much more democratic than the 1999 Constitution in terms of the process involved in its drafting and the composition of the drafters (including a 49-member Constitution Drafting Committee and a 230-member Constituent Assembly), still does not reflect the aspirations and experiences of the Nigerian people. The 1999 Constitution, just like the 1979 Constitution, suffers from a crisis of legitimacy (Ekeh, 2010; Arowosegbe, 2022; Ihonybere, 2000; Akinrinade, 2003). Both are military constitutions, despite the facade of public consultations and debates that supposedly guided their crafting. At the end of the day, the military Provisional Ruling Council altered the final drafts to protect their interest. Moreover, military-led transitions lead to new forms of militarism and rarely produce legitimate democracies (Bailie, 2018). The 1999 Constitution is therefore a major source of militarisation of Nigeria's Fourth Republic and dissatisfaction among the diverse ethnic groups who have been demanding 'true federalism', 'Sovereign National Conference (SNC)', 'restructuring' and, in some extreme cases, self-determination and secession (Arowosegbe, 2022; Osaghae, 1999).

The 1999 Constitution makes provision for amendments. Article 9 (1) of the 1999 Constitution states that 'the National Assembly may, subject to the provision of this section, alter any of the provisions of this constitution'. The alteration of the Constitution would however require the votes of two-thirds of the members of the House of Assembly. Yet, it remains doubtful that any amendment will resolve the fundamental flaw in the Constitution, which is its lack of popular representation both in content and process. Several amendments have been made already. For instance, on 26 July 2017, federal lawmakers voted to amend several sections of the Constitution in the fourth amendment bill of the 1999 Constitution (Channel TV, July 2017). Some of the amendments include the Fourth Alteration to Bill No 3 on

Devolution of Powers, which seeks to devolve some federal functions to the state by moving certain items to the Concurrent Legislative List, which is a list of items that both the federal and state governments can legislate on such as allocation of revenue and collection of taxes. Nigeria's federal system has three legislative lists: Exclusive, Concurrent and Residual. The exclusive list includes up to 68 items that are exclusively under the legislative control of the federal government. The sheer number of items exclusive to the federal government reveals the extent of the over-centralisation of Nigeria's federation. The 'powers that are not expressly listed in the constitution are under a residual legislative list' (Anya, 2021).

Despite the constitutional amendments, the question of legitimacy looms large over the constitution 22 years after its promulgation and does not seem to abate anytime soon. Nigeria must address the question of the legitimacy of the 1999 Constitution if it is to consolidate its democracy. There are two options. One, jettison the current constitution and draft a new constitution that meets the yearnings of the people and reflects the unique socio-cultural and political histories and experiences of Nigeria. Two, continue with constitutional amendments as provided in the constitution. For Suberu (2015), an incremental constitutional amendment offers a much more feasible pathway than a wholesome change done at once. For many others, the creation of a constitution that reflects the will of the people is inevitable, but this needs not be abrupt (Ihonvbere, 2000; Akinrinade, 2003; Arowosegbe, 2022). The current constitution should only be a guideline according to Ihonvbere (2000). Similarly, Arowosegbe (2022) argues that the 1999 Constitution should be considered an interim constitution necessary to aid the transition to civilian rule. Any amendment should be towards establishing an independent Sovereign National Conference that would draft the people's constitution, which would only become legal after a referendum 'based on universal adult suffrage' (Arowosegbe, 2022, p.44).

The constitution, written or unwritten, is very vital to the proper functioning and survival of a democratic society. It is 'the only way the led can make their leaders accountable' (Adejumobi, 2000, p.8). As Sklar (1983) poignantly argues, the strength of democracy is 'the accountability of rulers to their subjects' (Sklar, 1983, p.11). A constitution reflects the social contract between an individual and the state, and/or between groups and the state; stipulates the rights and responsibilities of the individuals, groups and the state; regulates the interactions between them and mediate their differences (Adejumobi, 2000). However, the plethora of conflicts that plague the Nigerian state in the Fourth Republic shows that the 1999 Constitution is not fit for addressing these problems.

### **Local Geopolitics and the Institutionalisation of Violence**

The return to democratic rule in 1999 after 16 years (1983–1999) of successive military administrations created an opportunity for citizens'

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participation in the country's political affairs as well as enthused protests and riots including inter-ethnic conflicts that have been otherwise repressed during the long years of military rule. Unfortunately, the capacity of the country's law enforcement, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), to provide internal security had been greatly undermined during those long years of military rule. Nigeria operates a federal government that is modelled on the US federal system, but while state police exist in the US, the NPF is centralised. This further compounds the state of insecurity. In the absence of an efficient and responsive law enforcement authority, Nigerian communities resorted to self-help by establishing armed vigilante networks. Each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones had (and, in some regions, continue to have) an armed non-state group policing its region. These include the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Mambilla militia group, Bakassi Boys and many others (Oyeniya, 2010). These groups are like neighbourhood watch, but they take on the symbols of ethnicity and religion, reflecting the dynamic nature of Nigeria's plural society. Intriguingly, many of these groups were sponsored and supported by the state governments, putting the host states on direct collision course with the federal government.

The return to democratic rule also increased existing tensions and conflicts between different ethnic groups such as Ife/Modakeke in the southwest of Nigeria, Ijaw/Itsekeri in the south-south and across the Middle Belt of Nigeria including Plateau and Benue States. In the Niger Delta, the agitation for resource control increased in pace, while self-determination drives and movements emerged in the Yoruba southwest and in the Igbo-dominated southeast. In the southeast, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was established in 1999. In the southwest, several interest groups emerged demanding restructuring of the polity for the attainment of true federalism. Many of these groups evolved into violent agitations, for example, OPC in southwest Nigeria and the Niger Delta struggle-turned-insurgency. The Nigerian Government, under President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), a former military Head of State (1976–1979), responded to these conflicts using mostly military force, a conflict response strategy that continues to be popular, sadly. Nigerian soldiers were deployed to these conflict hotspots leading to some of the worst records of human rights violation by the Nigerian military. The Zaki-Biam, Zango Kataf and Odi massacres are some of the famous military invasions. For instance, in Odi, a small town in the Niger Delta state of Bayelsa, the Nigerian military allegedly killed up to 2,000 people including women and children and destroyed virtually all the properties in a reprisal attack for the killing of 12 security personnel.

President Obasanjo's emergence as the president speaks to the social engineering strategy and political calculation of the military and Northern Nigerian oligarchs. Although Obasanjo was elected through the ballot box, it is safe to argue that Obasanjo was selected by the military establishment and power brokers (largely elites from Northern Nigeria). Obasanjo's

selection was aimed at pacifying the southwest Yoruba for their lost mandate. IBB had annulled the presidential electoral victory of Moshood Kashimawo Abiola (MKO), a Yoruba businessman and philanthropist, who overwhelmingly won the election of 12 June 1993, which would have ushered in the botched Third Republic. 12 June has since then remained a symbol of Yoruba struggle against military rule, authoritarianism and the defence of democracy. The opposition party made up of two political parties, Alliance for Democracy and the All People's Party, also fielded a Yoruba man, Chief Samuel Olujemisi Falae (known simply as Olu Falae) as their presidential candidate, who although lost to President Obasanjo, notably, won an overwhelming share of the southwest Yoruba votes. It was evident that the Yoruba people had been compensated for their lost mandate and crucial role in the fight for the restoration of democracy in 1999. A clear example of this is noted in the primary elections of the People's Democratic Party, where Obasanjo was up against Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo man and former Vice President in the Second Republic. Although Ekwueme was a clear choice, Obasanjo finally emerged as the party flag bearer. As a former military Head of State from the Yoruba ethnic group and a staunch defender of the 'One Nigeria' project, Obasanjo was considered a safe choice. Once again, the military establishment and the northern oligarchs derailed the natural trajectory of democracy in Nigeria by manipulating the process to install Obasanjo.

Although, President Obasanjo emerged under a flawed democratic process, this was overlooked as Nigerians celebrated the end of oppressive military rule and the dawn of a new era of freedom that democracy offers. President Obasanjo's administration was however confronted with mounting insecurities and challenges including an astronomical external debt, excruciating poverty and unemployment, which are effects of the long years of military rule. Nigeria had been suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations and isolated from the international community of nations due to General Abacha's reign of terror. President Obasanjo carried out several reforms including his signature economic policy, National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was replicated at the state government level as SEEDS (State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy). Although these macro-economic policies were designed to address the socio-economic challenges including poverty and inequality, they betray an effort to secure foreign debt relief and external aid (Paden, 2005; Omeje, 2007). President Obasanjo also initiated other reforms including the introduction of the Petroleum Industry Bill, anti-corruption reforms (denoted by the establishment of the Economic Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC) and military reforms. These reforms produced consequences that remain enduring to this day.

For instance, the military reform by the Obasanjo administration involved the compulsory retirement of military officers, especially officers that have been involved in partisan politics one way or another. On the surface, it

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appeared that President Obasanjo was driven by the need to professionalise the military and discourage its interference in politics, but Obasanjo's actions fit into a recurrent pattern exhibited by past military regimes in consolidating their grip on power. A similar method is applied by regional countries such as Chad and Niger that are in a military pact with Nigeria, Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against the Boko Haram terrorist group. According to de Montclos, the President of Niger sends his 'best generals on operations abroad to avoid coup', while in Chad, 'the government sends the most undisciplined and rebellious to the front, in order to keep them away from the capital' (de Montclos, 2020, pp.71–72). Although such strategy helps the government of the day maintain its grip on power, it adversely affects the counterterrorism effort as it deprives it of trained and competent force (de Montclos, 2020). Therefore, as a former military Head of State, Obasanjo understood the threat that partisan military officers constitute to Nigeria's young democracy and his own political survival.

Unfortunately, many of the affected officers were from the north. The northern political elites therefore perceived this as a threat to their geopolitical interest, and, starting from the Zamfara state, the governors of 11 northern states responded by adopting the full provisions of Shariah or Islamic law in their penal codes, a direct affront to Nigeria's secular political system. Article 10 of the 1999 Constitution prohibits the adoption of any religion as the state religion. Ali Mazrui describes this ploy as 'Shariacracy' and President Obasanjo rightly dismissed it as 'Political Islam' (Nwankpa, 2015). Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and former Emir of Kano, provides a more balanced assessment of the political discourse on Shariah that recognises the political opportunism of the northern political class as well as other rationales that include the renaissance of an Islamic sensibility free from the dominance of Western materialism and an expression of 'discontent with poverty, illiteracy and general financial and economic difficulties' (Sanusi, 2001, p.1). However, the adoption of Shariah did not only pit the majority Muslims in the north against the Christian majority in the south and the Christian minority in the north, it exposed an intra-Muslim contest between the northern political class and the northern traditional religious establishment and on the periphery of that, the progressive Muslims in the north (Sanusi, 2001; Nwankpa, 2015; Kassim & Nwankpa, 2018). At the end of the day, 'the implementation of shariah makes them (the Ulama-northern religious elites) indispensable as custodians of knowledge of what the shariah is' (Sanusi, 2001, p.4). Therefore, the Shariah implementation reveals more than just a political calculation by the northern political class to secure access and maintain control of the central government. It reveals 'contest between the different Muslim groups over the monopoly of shariah' (Nwankpa, 2015, p.20) and 'control over the means of production, persuasion and coercion' (Sanusi, 2001, p.4). It is within this context that we understand the emergence of Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist group that has been terrorising Nigeria for 12 years,

starting from 2009. Sadly, the actions of the northern political class have institutionalised violence in the region.

## **Elections and Political Violence**

Multi-party elections are increasingly occurring in Africa, even though most of the elections are rarely free and fair (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2012). Some scholars such as Lindberg (2004) have defended their importance as they provide incremental steps towards the institutionalisation of democracy (see Laakso, 2007; Crawford & Lynch, 2012). This argument however underestimates the adverse impact on democracy as the flawed elections, which usually generate violence, represent, on the one hand, one step forward and, on the other hand, two steps backward. Multi-party elections, in this regard, represent autocracy by other means and have been described as ‘electoral authoritarianism; ‘democratic despotism’, ‘elective dictatorship’ or ‘facade democracy’ (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2012, p.39). Electoral democracy in Africa therefore presents limited substantial value and in general is ‘a limited form of democracy, even by the standard of liberal democracy, being promoted internationally’ (Obi, 2012, p.95; Obi, 2004). The election outcomes are usually disputed, and the weak electoral governance system and other poor institutions fail to prevent pre-election and post-election violence. Ironically, electoral democracy presents itself as a source of violence and militarisation.

The negative impact of elections in Africa as a veritable source of violence and militarisation has largely been ignored by external actors and Western governments who appear to be more interested in stability than the entrenchment of genuine democracy (Hauser, 1999). External observers and supporters of electoral democracy in Africa are therefore complicit in this sense (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2012; Crawford & Lynch, 2012; Obi, 2004, 2012). We are reminded once again of the Cold War era when the Western superpowers covertly and in some cases overtly supported their African proxies, which were largely military regimes and authoritarian governments. The period of democratisation is akin to the Cold War era as the new African democrats focus more on the ‘letter’ (form) rather than the ‘spirit’ (substance) of democracy as they exploit Western government’s prioritisation of stability over democracy (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2012). Elite manipulation of the electoral process is therefore a major source of violence (Obi, 2012).

Since the return to democratic government in 1999, Nigeria has experienced five consecutive elections: 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. The five elections have led to three successive changes of governments—President Obasanjo (1999–2003, 2003–2007), President Musa Yar’Adua (2007–2010), President Goodluck Jonathan (Interim President 2010–2011), President Jonathan (President, 2011–2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2019, 2019–present). Successive elections after the

## 10 *General Introduction*

1999 elections only worsened, with the 2007 elections widely denounced as incredible, and in Omotola's view, a threat to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria (Omotola, 2007; Adebaniwi & Obadare, 2012). The 2007 elections witnessed an extraordinary influence from political godfathers, who are influential patrons with power, money and influence over an extensive network of clients, leading to the monetisation, privatisation and criminalisation of politics (Omotola, 2007). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the general body vested with the constitutional authority to conduct and regulate elections in Nigeria, has often failed to conduct free and fair elections because of a lack of true financial and political autonomy and therefore is prone to partiality. This seems to be the case in the 2007 elections (Ijim-Agbor, 2007; Adejumbi & Kehinde, 2007). The general election of 2011 was marked by violence and remained one of the most (if not the most) violent in Nigeria's election history. The post-election violence that resulted in the death of 800 people and displaced 65,000 people was less about the conduct of the election, but the disappointment with the outcome. The challenger, Muhammadu Buhari, lost to the interim president, President Goodluck Jonathan, whom he deposed four years later. The northern Hausa-Fulani had expected to regain control of the federal government, which they lost due to the death of President Yar'Adua in office. It is therefore not surprising that the violence was concentrated in Northern Nigeria.

But for the first time in Nigerian history, an incumbent, President Goodluck, was deposed in the 2015 election. The 2015 election was also markedly different from previous elections that were marred by election malpractices and post-election violence. Despite the relative success of the election and the conspicuous absence of any significant post-election violence, the pre-election period was charged with tension. There was genuine concern for the future of Nigeria, which already was facing an uphill battle against Boko Haram, an Islamic fundamentalist organisation that threatens to impose Islamic law and system on the secular Nigerian state. The northern elites felt betrayed by President Goodluck Jonathan's decision to seek re-election, an action that flouted the agreement negotiated by former President Obasanjo that President Goodluck would only serve one term. President Jonathan's failures to win his re-election bid and his acceptance of his defeat saved Nigeria from a big catastrophe that could have happened. Although militant groups in the Niger Delta had threatened violence should Jonathan lose the election, they failed to carry out their threats; the year 2015 therefore broke the cycle of violence that had characterised previous elections.

However, there was a slide in democratic elections as the subsequent election that saw President Buhari re-elected in 2019 failed to live up to expectations. There was widespread voter intimidation and election irregularity. There were pockets of violence, especially in opposition (People's Democratic Party, PDP)-controlled states such as Rivers State

and in opposition-controlled areas in the states under the incumbent's (All Progressives Congress, APC) command such as Lagos state (Oyewole & Omotola, 2021). The propensity towards violence is due to a fundamental crisis in Nigeria's democracy, which was designed by the military and reflected its militarised political culture (Obi, 2012; Adejumo & Kehinde, 2007). Hence, elections in the Fourth Republic are seen as 'war by other means' and electoral victory as a 'do or die affair' (Obi, 2012, p.98). The British colonial legacy, which involved the colonial British government's manipulation of the electoral process to favour the predominantly Hausa-Fulani, is also implicated (Nwolise, 2007; Adebani & Obadare, 2012). According to Nwolise, 'even before Nigeria's independence, electoral violence had taken root in the country' (Nwolise, 2007, p.163). Although Laakso (2007) argues that the quality of elections has improved in Africa, the violence-prone elections and winner-take-all mentality that still characterise most elections in the continent show that there is still a long way to go (Nordic Africa Institute, NAI, 2018). But election-related violence is dynamic in nature, occurring at different stages of the electoral cycle, not limited to general and national elections and includes intra-party politics and violence (an electoral violence type that is given limited attention in the literature) (NAI, 2018). Oyewole and Omotola's (2021) assessment of the 2019 election in Nigeria is therefore unique in its examination of violence that occurs during inter-election periods and the spatial national and sub-national distribution of the violence.

There have been efforts to reduce election-related violence. One of such efforts is the ban on single identity (such as ethnicity, religion, region, gender)-based parties. Currently, more than 20 African countries, including Nigeria, ban particularistic parties (Bogaards, 2007). Political parties in Nigeria are required to reflect the principle of the federal character where 'the membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion or ethnic grouping' (Nigerian Constitution, 1999, Section 222b). Section 223 (b) mandates that the members of the executive or governing bodies of a political party must 'belong to different states not being less in number than two-thirds of all the states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja' (Nigerian Constitution, 1999, Section 223b). Obviously, progress has been made as denoted by the increasing competitive party politics and regular elections, but this has not altered the behaviour of voters and the pattern of voting that is usually modelled along ethnic and, to some extent, religious lines. In this sense, contemporary political parties in Nigeria are not dissimilar to First Republic parties.

The First Republic political parties were formed along ethnic lines and represented the geopolitical interests of the three major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) and the corresponding regional governments (Western, Eastern and Northern). The Action Group (AG) represented the Yoruba and Western region, the National Council of Nigeria and the