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Violence between and within political parties in Nigeria: statistics, structures and patterns (2006-2014)

Corentin Cohen

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Corentin COHEN

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Violence between and
within political parties in
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Corentin COHEN*

Violence between and within political parties in Nigeria: statistics, structures and patterns (2006–2014)

Executive Summary

Acts of violence between or within political parties in Nigeria are usually associated with general elections and their spectacular death toll. This research uses statistical tools to analyse this violence during the 2006–2014 period. Patterns of political violence between the 2007 and 2011 general elections differ strongly. During the 2007 election, killings occurred mainly within parties or were linked to the campaign. During the 2011 elections, however, most casualties were reported after the announcement of the results. Nevertheless, it appears that killings related to general elections accounted for less than 50% of the total number of such fatalities as they were reported between 2006 and 2014. A large share of party violence is ignored, as it is mostly internal or with a low lethality rate. Arguably, violence is a means used by the political elite, rather than the people's choice to protest against fraud. Levels of violence vary between parties and between states. As the ruling party, the PDP is a central actor, involved in 97% of the casualties of party clashes. Over the period under study, some events are particularly distinctive because of their large number of casualties and their links to ethnic, religious, or economic tensions.

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INTRODUCTION

“To understand this kind of mafia-style activity in Nigerian politics, it is important to note that many political parties are operated by political ‘godfathers’, who use money and violence to control the political process.”¹

It was in these blunt words that the United States Institute for Peace depicted political practices on the eve of the 2007 general elections in Nigeria. As had already been the case with earlier elections, these elections led to hundreds of deaths. As we write these lines on the eve of the 2015 general elections, think tanks and international organizations have issued barometers and reports on violence in the shared hope of monitoring and deterring politically associated acts of violence in Nigeria. With an accuracy that we do not seek to evaluate in this article, they have made different predictions regarding the most violent regions and the causes of these recorded acts of violence. A complete review of these reports is yet to be undertaken and overreaches the objective of this research. Rather than seeking to analyse acts of violence associated with the next general election, this article will attempt to understand whether general elections *per se* are indeed periods of exceptional violence in Nigeria or merely reflect other tensions and processes occurring during non-electoral periods.

The question is central. Most press articles on Nigeria,² a flourishing number of reports,³ and also

¹ United State Institutes of Peace, *Nigeria’s 2007 elections, the Fitful Path to Democratic Citizenship*, Special Report 182 January 2007 p. 4.

²<http://businessdayonline.com/2014/11/2015-political-risk-outlook/#.VLjWZ8Yc50v> and <http://allafrica.com/stories/201411070362.html>

³ See for instance pre-electoral reports by the Transition Monitoring Group, DFID, Cleen Foundation, International Crisis Group, United State Institute of Peace, UN...

academic research primarily focus on elections.^{4 5 6} The only statistical analysis of party violence, proposed by Timothy Sisk, focuses on the 2007 and 2011 elections. Paradoxically, it argues that elections are not the most lethal periods in Nigeria.⁷ Drawing from IFRA's Nigeria Watch database, which records fatalities as they are reported in the Nigerian media, this study rather starts with a debate on the definition of party violence, before detailing the forms and actors it involves.

To do so it answers a set of central questions: What are the most violent periods of political party-related killings? What parties are most associated with fatal violence, and which events are more lethal? To what extent can internal disputes and rivalries be seen as decisive factors in explaining deaths linked with political contests? What are the different scales of political violence, and how do they relate to each other? What are the states that are most affected by fatal contests between parties? How have these trends evolved between 2006 and 2014?

The following study shows that general elections contribute less than 50% of the fatalities linked to political contests reported during the period under review. Such violence is usually explained by the fraudulent practices that keep citizens excluded from power.⁸ In

⁴ BASEDEAU, Matthias, ERDMANN, Gero, MEHLER, Andreas, Ed. *Votes, Money and Violence: Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007

⁵ FADAKINTE, Mojibayo Mobolaji, Nigeria and Election Crises: Debating the Causes, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 6; April 2014

⁶ IGWE, Dickson, (2012) The Perception of Electoral Violence and Democratization in Ibadan, Oyo State Southwest Nigeria, *Democracy and Security*, 8:1, 51-71

⁷ Ed. BEKOE, Dorina, *Voting in fear: Electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa*, SISK, Timothy, "Evaluating Election-Related Violence: Nigeria and Sudan in Comparative Perspective," Washington, DC, USIP Press, 2012, 300 pp. p.39.

⁸ QUANTIN, Patrick, "Pour une analyse comparative des élections africaines », *Politique Africaine*, 69, 1998, 13–26.

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Nigeria, however, resorting to force is not so much a people's response to election rigging but a tool for, among others, politicians. Thus a large share of political violence occurs within parties. Moreover, certain parties, such as the PDP, are systematically involved in violence, while others are not. Depending on the states where they operate, some party members seem to be more likely to commit violent crimes than others. Furthermore, they often seem to do so in order to trigger ethno-religious clashes which are more deadly. Since independence, all elections have been marked by rigging, when parties used violence to reinforce their power. The 2015 election seems to be no exception.⁹

I. A HISTORY OF PARTY-RELATED VIOLENCE: 'GODFATHERISM', 'KADUNA MAFIA' AND 'DEMOCRAZY'

Political violence in Nigeria is not a particular feature of civilian regimes. The first major political assassinations after independence came with the 1966 coup and the execution of Prime Minister Balewa, along with Premiers Ahmadu Bello and Samuel Akintola and Finance Minister Festus Okotie Eboh. The military era then brought to power a group of politicians, officers, and businessmen that were nicknamed the 'Kaduna Mafia'. Since the return to a civilian regime in 1999, the term 'godfatherism' refers to the criminalization of politics and the ability of some kingmakers to select and impose their supporters.¹⁰

Historically, political violence had not affected Nigeria's decolonization. However, rising tensions

⁹ <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/174708-jos-violence-call-supporters-order-presidency-tells-buhari.html>

¹⁰ PEROUSE DE MONTCLOS, Marc-Antoine, *Vers un nouveau régime politique en Afrique Subsaharienne? Des transitions démocratiques dans l'impasse*. Les études de l'Ifri, 2010, p. 20-23.

between Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group and the NNDP led to the end of the First Republic in 1966. The 1964 general elections were marked by major irregularities.¹¹ They initiated a system of rigging which characterized the following elections, with the "illegal printing of voters' cards", the "harassment of candidates", "infant voting", "box-switching", and the "inflation of figures".¹² These malpractices provoked widespread violence in the 1964 general elections and the 1965 regional elections in West. At the end of the 1980s, officials thus acknowledged that "rigging of elections has become part of [Nigeria's] political culture."¹³

During the First Republic, the four major parties represented regional constituencies. Led by Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was strong in the North, together with Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), while the mostly Yoruba Action Group had its roots in the West, and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens represented the Igbo in the East. Lying behind these regional identities were also religious determinants and the idea that there was an equilibrium to be found between a Christian South and a Muslim North. This representation of a divided federation is still very present today.

During the Second Republic, the 1979 and 1983 elections were also marred by massive fraud and violence, which eventually led General Mohammadu Buhari to take

¹¹ HILL, Jonathan, N., *Nigeria Since Independence, Forever Fragile?* Pallgrave MacMillan, New York, 2012, p. 51.

¹² Jawan, Jayun A and Osinakachukwu, Nwokeke, The Electoral Process and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 4, No. 2; September 2011, p. 131.

¹³ 1986 judicial commission of inquiry into the operations of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) reported by a report of the NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION of Nigeria in 2011 in a Premium Time article <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/wp-content/files/2014/02/Initial-Report-Final-Version.pdf>

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power and ban existing parties.^{14 15} The short-lived transitional Third Republic did not perform any better, and parties were again dismantled by military rulers. With the return to a civilian regime in 1999, the first elections of the Fourth Republic were then marred by massive fraud.^{16 17 18} Drawing from their research in the Niger Delta, Ben Naanen and Kiale Nyiayaana argue that the PDP increased the tendency to use violence as competition intensified:

In many states PDP victory in the 1999 polls was marginal. To maintain its hold on such states the party made every effort to eliminate the opposition. Events connected to the subsequent 2003 elections were to provide an indication that the party was hardly in the mood to concede power in a free electoral contest. Within the ruling party itself the struggle became even more deadly as a result of the individual ambitions of political leaders and their supporters.¹⁹

This tendency was also bolstered by a change in the sociology of political violence:

¹⁴ Voir TOYIN, Falola, IHONVBERE, Julius, *The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-1983*. London: Zed Books, 1985

¹⁵ Jawan, Jayun A and Osinakachukwu, Nwokeke, The Electoral Process and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, *Journal of Politics and Law* Vol. 4, No. 2; September 2011., p132.

¹⁶ COLLIER, Paul, VICENTE, Pedro C., "Violence, bribery, and fraud: the political economy of elections in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Public Choice* (2012) 153:117–147

¹⁷ UKANA, B. Ikpe, "Patrimonialism and Military Regimes in Nigeria", *African Journal of Political Science / Revue Africaine de Science Politique*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (June 2000), pp. 146-162.

¹⁸ The Carter Center, National Democratic Institute, *Observing the 1998-99 Nigeria Elections, Final Report*, Washington, 1999, p.25-30.

¹⁹ NAANEN, Ben, NYIAYAANA, Kiale, *State Failure and Niger Delta Conflict*, in ED OKOME, Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké, *State Fragility, State Formation, and Human Security in Nigeria*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 124

[U]nemployed and angry youths, who led the communal and ethnic-based conflicts while remaining the scourge of oil companies, now became willing recruits for ambitious politicians. The new private armies, locally referred to as political thugs or secret cult groups, were now generously funded, armed with expensive sophisticated weapons [...]. Inter- and intraparty clashes laid waste whole communities. Political violence intensified with the approach of the 2003 general elections.

Human Rights Watch reported that these elections led to more than 100 deaths. The struggle was reinforced by the necessity for candidates to be endorsed by a registered party, which incensed the stakes of primaries and congresses.²⁰ The 2007 elections were “not credible” either, according to the European Union observation mission. They led to more than 300 deaths, most of them before the voting took place.²¹ Finally, the 2011 elections

²⁰ OSHODI, Ademola, “Return to Civilian Rule in Nigeria: Problems of Electoral Culture and Transparency over the past three Nigerian Elections (1999 – 2007)”, *The Round Table*, Vol. 96, No. 392, 617 – 630, October 2007, p.619

²¹ “The 2007 State and Federal elections fell far short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. They were marred by very poor organisation, lack of essential transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, substantial evidence of fraud, widespread voter disenfranchisement at different stages of the process, lack of equal conditions for political parties and candidates and numerous incidents of violence. As a result, the process cannot be considered to have been credible. Given the lack of transparency and evidence of fraud, particularly in the result collation process, there can be no confidence in the results of these elections. This is all the more regrettable since they were held in an improved atmosphere in which freedoms of expression and assembly were broadly respected during campaigning, the judiciary played a generally positive and independent role and the people showed remarkable commitment to democracy, eagerly engaging in the electoral process and waiting patiently to vote in often very difficult circumstances.” (EU Election Observation Mission, *Nigeria 2007, Final Report: Presidential, National Assembly, Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections*, Executive Summary, p. 2. http://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20NIGERIA%202007_en.pdf).

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provoked an upheaval after the announcement of the results, causing more than 1,000 casualties, according to some press reports.²²

II. METHODOLOGY

This study relies on the Nigeria Watch Project, which records fatalities reported in ten Nigerian national newspapers since 2006.²³ We extracted from the database all the events that opposed political groups with political groups. The period under review starts with the launching of the database on 1 June 2006 and ends on 30 November 2014. The data related to 303 incidents had to be refined, excluding stories that did not mention political parties but community and ethnic organizations, or Boko Haram. The analysis is thus based on 275 relevant incidents that involved political parties. For each incident, the number of fatalities recorded in the database is an average of the numbers reported by different sources.

To study the elections' impact on political violence, we first had to determine the dates of general elections. The 2007 elections were held on 14 and 21 April. The 2011 elections took place on 9 April for the parliament, while the president was elected on the 16 April. As the primaries of most parties had started in December 2006 and 2010, we decided that the electoral period under review would start four months before the voting date, that is, on 1 December. To be more accurate, we also included some events that happened in November and that were related to primaries or to the general

²² United States Institute of Peace, *Breaking the Cycle of Electoral Violence in Nigeria*, Special Report 263, December 2010 p. 2.

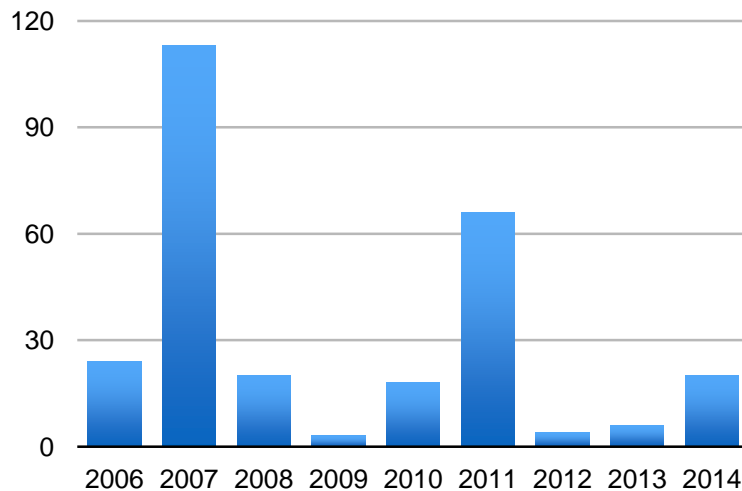
²³ The newspapers are: *The Daily Champion*, *The Guardian*, *PM News* (moribund and replaced by *Leadership* since 1 June 2013), *Punch*, *This Day*, *Vanguard*, *The Independent*, *New Nigerian* (extinct and replaced by *Nigerian Tribune* since 1 June 2013), *Daily Trust*, *The Nation*.

elections. The end dates were chosen empirically when election-related violence stopped. This is the most appropriate method, as we will show that the patterns of violence differ strongly from one election to another.

The parties were identified with the help of the press clippings that are archived for each incident. When the perpetrator or the victim could not be recognized, they were tagged as being “unidentified”. When it was not possible to determine whether violence was internal or targeting another party, the event was also classified as “unidentified”.

III. LESS THAN 50% OF DEATHS OCCUR DURING GENERAL ELECTIONS

Figure 1: Number of party-related fatal incidents per year (2006–2014)

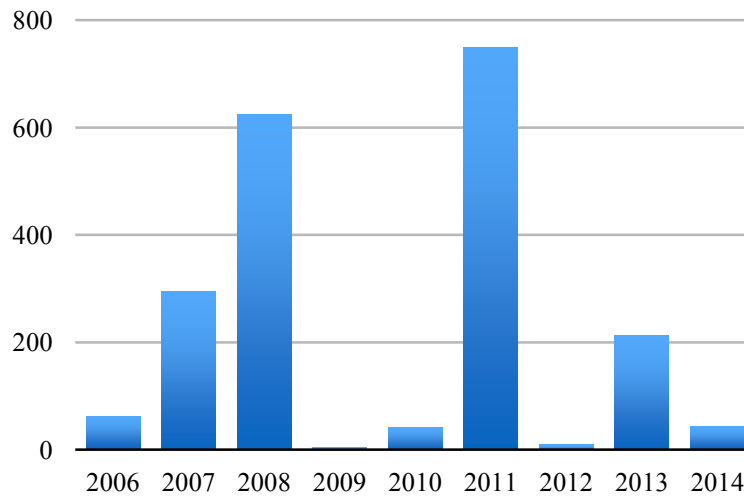


Statistically, years during which general elections have been held can indeed be considered as having been the most violent. The 2007 and 2011 years concentrate most of the fatal incidents during the period under review (fig. 1). This finding confirms that general elections are decisive moments of violence, with 24 incidents and 62 fatalities in 2006; 113 and 295 in 2007; 20 and 625 in

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2008; 3 and 5 in 2009; 18 and 42 in 2010; 66 and 749 in
2011; 4 and 9 in 2012; 6 and 212 in 2013; and 20 and 30
as at 1 November 2014 (fig. 2).

*Figure 2: Number of party-related fatalities per year
(2006–2014)*

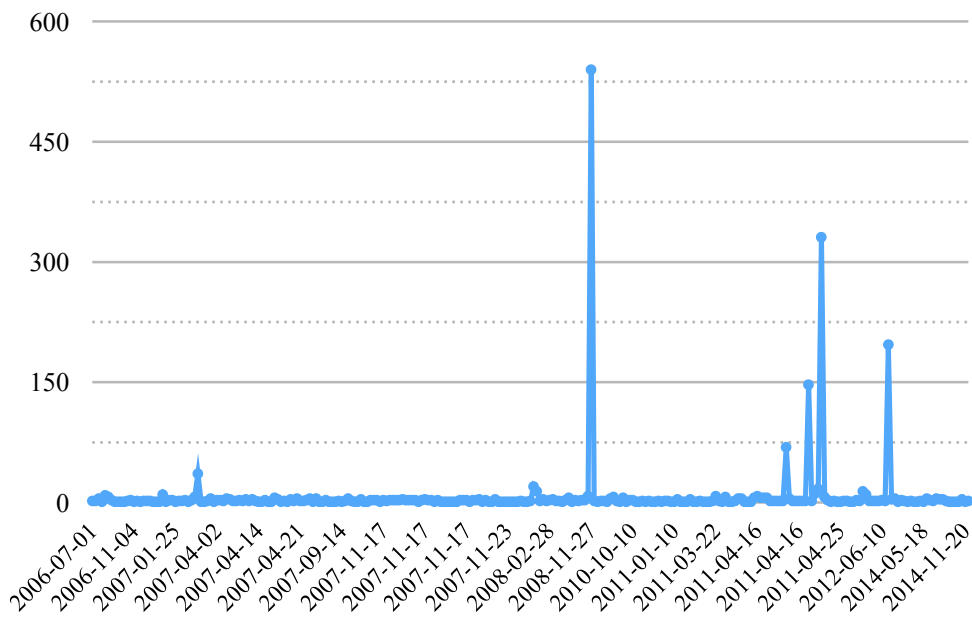


Undoubtedly, the election factor accounts for political parties' violence. But the figures can be misleading because the number of incidents does not exactly match the number of fatalities. Although high in 2007 and 2011, the level of violence is also considerable in 2008 and 2013. Despite a lower number of incidents reported, for instance, the year 2008 witnessed more victims than in 2007, with 540 people killed because of clashes between the winning PDP and the ANPP during the Plateau State gubernatorial elections. As for the 2013 casualties, the majority can be accounted for by factional clashes between CPC rival groups, which ignited ethnic tensions between Gwandara and Eggon communities in Nasarawa, resulting in 197 deaths during the three weeks of turmoil.

The monthly breakdown of fatalities also points to four sets of party violence: the political campaign before

the general elections, between November 2006 and February 2007; a peak in December 2007 because of Local Government elections that led to the death of 104 people in Kano; deadly state elections in Plateau in May 2008; the general elections of April 2011 (fig. 3).

Figure 3: Number of party-related fatalities per month (2006–2014)



Thus, the scale and patterns of violence related to general elections are different, with 164 fatalities in 2007 and 746 in 2011. To assess more precisely the election factor, it would be necessary to analyse the difference between the incidents that happened during the key periods of December 2006 to April 2007, December 2010 to April 2011, and, presumably, October 2014 to April 2015.

Figure 4: Party-related electoral violence: number of fatalities, Dec. – Aug. 2007

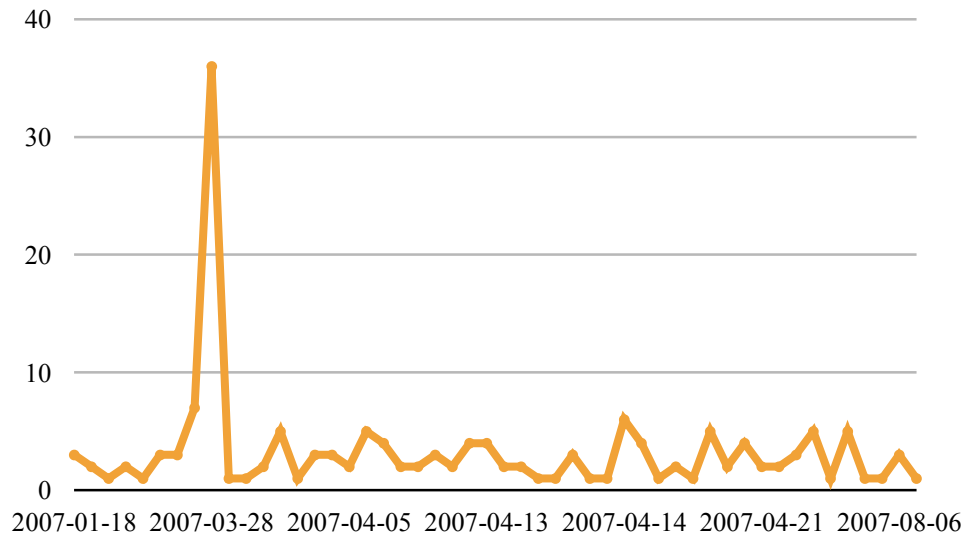
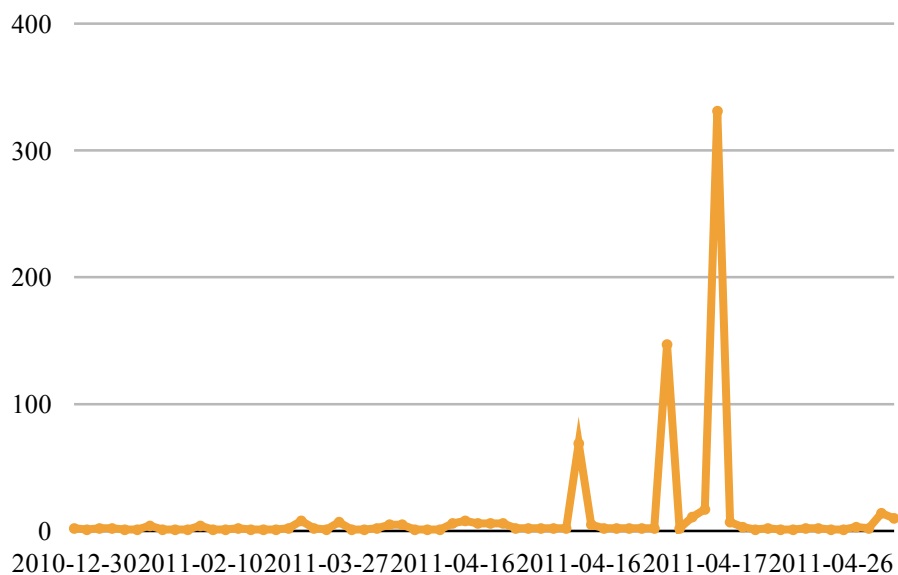
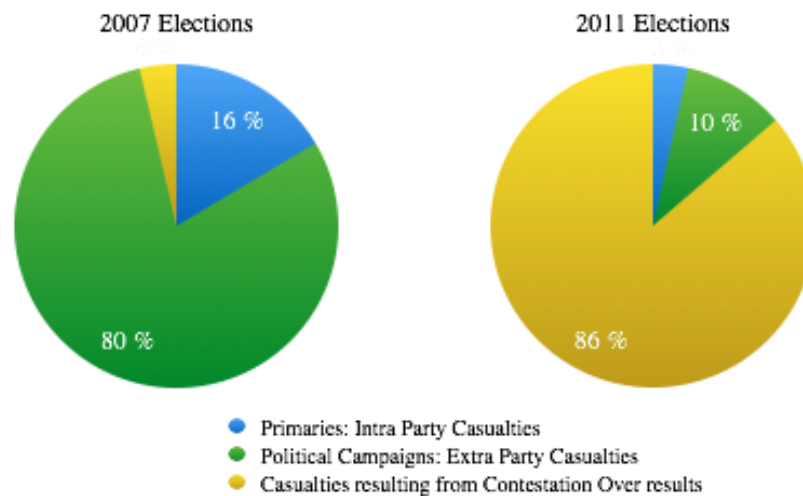


Figure 5: Party-related electoral violence: number of fatalities, Dec. 2010 – Aug. 2011



The differences between the two elections lie not only in the scale of violence; in 2007, most political incidents were reported before the vote and involved factional and personal clashes during party congresses and primaries, in addition to conflicts opposing at least two parties (fig. 4). During that period, internal fighting within parties and violence perpetrated by supporters accounted respectively for 27 and 131 fatalities. States with the most deadly intra-party conflicts were Benue (5), Lagos (4), and Oyo (3), while the states where rivalries between parties were the most deadly were Nasarawa (36), Oyo (19), Lagos (18), Osun (11), and Benue (7). There were very few fatal incidents and casualties after the proclamation of the results, although President Musa Yar'adua acknowledged massive fraud and corruption.

Figure 6: Intra- and extra-party violence: number of fatalities, 2007 and 2011 general elections



On the contrary, most of the victims of the 2011 elections were killed after the proclamation of results, which were then contested in the streets (fig. 5 and 6). Intra-party violence caused 26 deaths; clashes between parties, 76. States affected by intra-party violence were Edo (9), Delta (3), and Benue(3). The ones affected by clashes between parties were Bayelsa (21), Gombe (11),

Akwa Ibom (10), and Oyo (7). After the voting day on 9 April 2011, 36 fatal incidents caused 659 deaths, most of them in Bauchi and Kaduna states, and to a lesser extent in Akwa Ibom.

To sum up, the findings confirm that general elections are moments of exceptional violence. Yet they explain only 45% of the total number of fatalities reported: 8% in the 2007 and 37% in the 2011 general elections.

IV. INTRA-PARTY VIOLENCE ACCOUNTS FOR 27% OF THE INCIDENTS AND 18% OF PARTY-RELATED FATALITIES

Figure 7: Number of fatalities associated with each party (2006–2014)

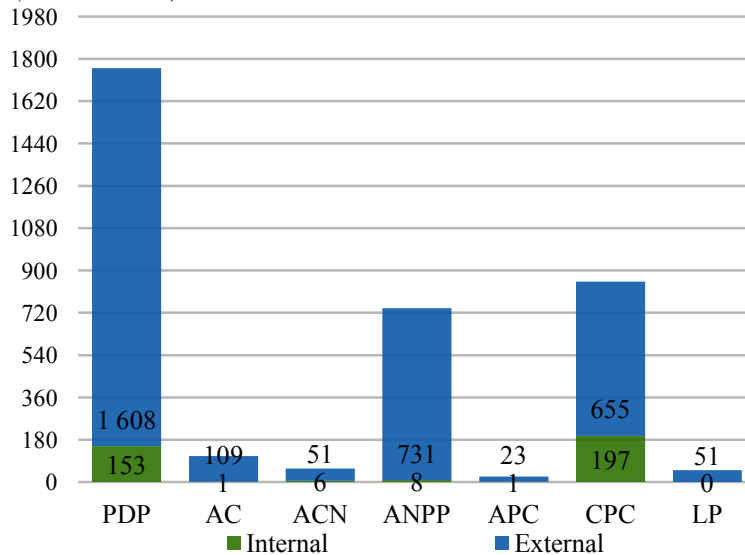
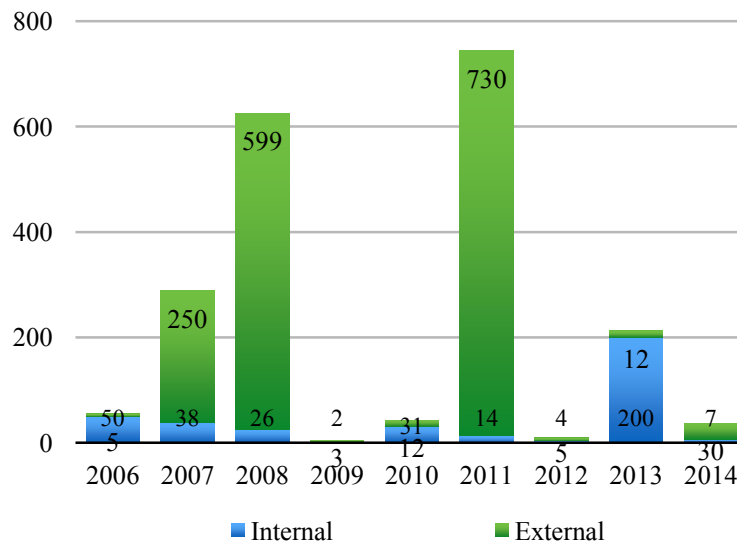


Figure 8: Party violence fatalities per year (2006–2014)

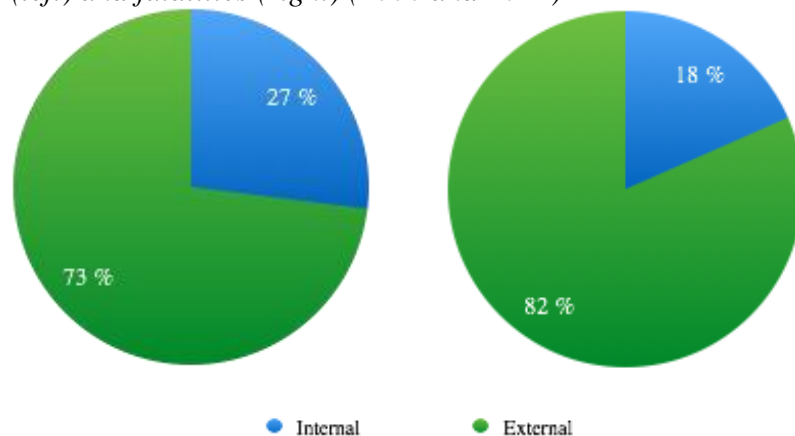


Most of the ‘political’ fatalities reported in 2006 are linked with the 2007 general elections and are internal, as in 2010 when 31 persons were killed in factional clashes within a party, as against 12 in external violence. In 2013, the highest number of fatalities resulting from intra-party clashes was found within the CPC in Nassarawa. Overall, 27% of fatal incidents involving political parties between 2006 and 2014 were internal, but they accounted only for 18% of the total number of deaths (fig. 9). This is perhaps because they occur during shorter periods, mostly during primaries and party congresses. Such violence takes two forms, which are frequently linked: 1) political assassinations of aspirants who fight for the official endorsement of their party; 2) skirmishes and riots that oppose rival factions within a party.

Groups identified as gangs or cult societies are involved in more than 62% of 48 cases of intra-party violence, resulting in 274 deaths. These incidents occurred in 15 states, especially in Rivers, Oyo, Ondo, Edo, Borno, and Nasarawa (which recorded 197 deaths). With 16% of 194 cases that resulted in 101 fatalities, cult

societies and gangs seem to be much less involved in clashes between parties.

Figure 9: Political parties' violence: number of incidents (left) and fatalities (right) (2006 and 2014)

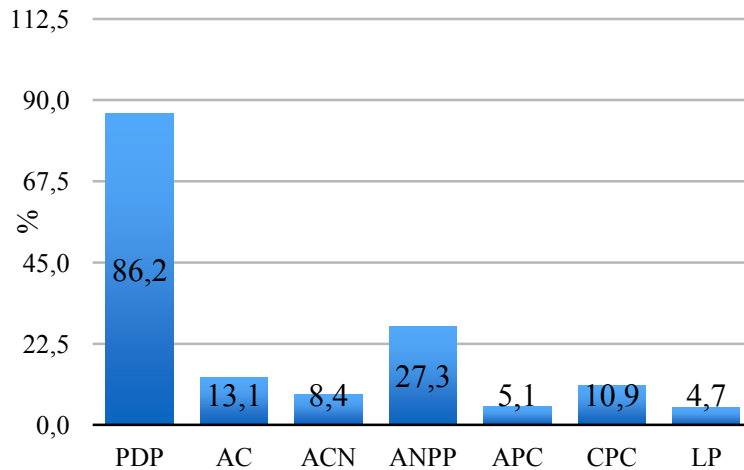


V. CENTRALITY OF THE PDP IN CLASHES BETWEEN PARTIES

Which are the political parties most associated with violence? From 2006 to 2014, fatal incidents involved mainly the PDP (86%), followed by the ANPP (27%), the AC (13%) / ACN (8%), the CPC (10%), the APC (5%), and the LP (less than 5%). All major parties were affected, but smaller parties do not appear in the data (see fig. 10).²⁴ The PDP was also involved in 87% of the total number of fatalities, followed by the CPC (24%), the ANPP (21%), the AC / ACN (5%), and the APC and LP (1% each).

²⁴ For a complete list of officially registered political parties, see the INEC website: <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/2012-10-29-11-05-46/political-parties>

Figure 10: Percentage of fatal incidents per party (2006–2014)

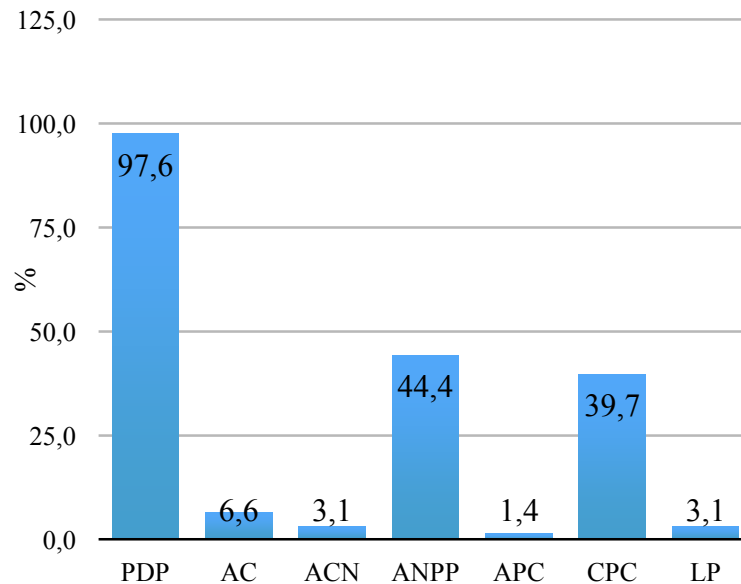


Note: The total exceeds 100% because each incident may involve more than one party.

CPC has the highest rate of internal violence, and 39% of its fatalities resulted from a single incident in Nasarawa. As for the PDP, 25% of its internal clashes accounted for 9% of its fatalities, mainly in Rivers (28 deaths), Akwa Ibom (23), and Benue (21). Other political parties record a much lower level of internal violence, which caused 4% of the fatalities associated with the APC and 1% each for the AC, the ACN, and the ANPP.

By contrast, external violence between political parties focuses on the PDP, which was involved in 97% of the fatalities resulting from such clashes (fig. 11). This is probably because the party in power is present nationwide and controls the resources of the Federal Government.

Figure 11: Percentage per party of fatalities resulting from clashes between parties (2006–2014)



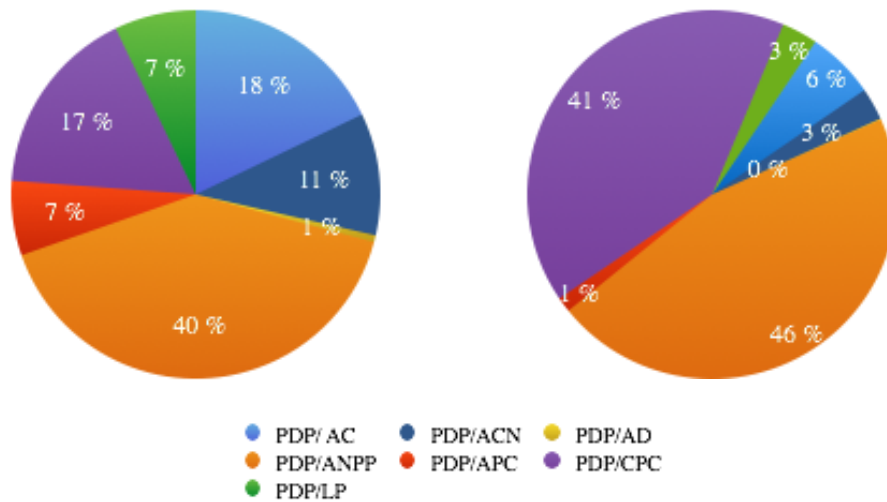
Although the PDP is associated with over 97% of the fatalities resulting from fighting between political parties, this does not mean that it is the only perpetrator or victim. The CPC and the ANPP appear as its most violent opponents. As shown in Figure 12, most of the fatalities resulting from such clashes occurred between the PDP and ANPP (46%), followed by the CPC (41%). During the period under review, ANPP was the main rival of the PDP, especially in Bauchi, Oyo, and Kano, which were affected by violent contestation of the results after local government elections. With a total of 540 fatalities during regional elections in November 2008, Plateau was the most violent state.

Struggles between the PDP and the CPC occurred only during the 2011 general elections. They occurred in the North, especially in Bauchi and Kaduna (95% of a total of 655 fatalities), and, to a lesser extent, in Gombe, Nassarawa, Kano, Kebi, Niger, and Yobe. In Kaduna State alone, more than 478 people were killed in the two

LGAs of Kachia and Zangon-Kataf. The CPC was not involved in fatal incidents against another party, but it carried on fighting the PDP once merged into the APC. Such clashes killed 21 persons between January and October 2014, and they did not involve any other party.

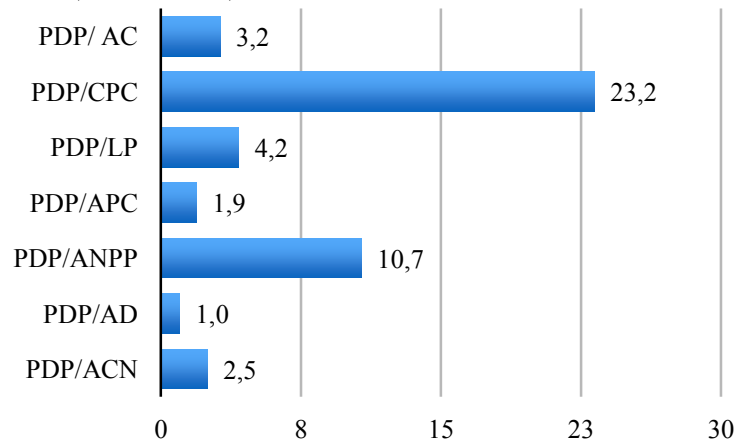
Clashes between AC/ACN and PDP occurred mostly in Akwa Ibom (6 deaths), Ekiti (8), Kogi (5), and Lagos (9), with few fatal incidents (6 of 30) involving gangs. During the period under review, AC/ACN also clashed with the LP and the ADC (3 and 1 incidents, respectively).

Figure 12: PDP clashes with other parties, percentage of incidents (left) and of fatalities (right) (2006–2014)



VI. HOW AND WHERE DO SKIRMISHES TRANSFORM INTO MASS VIOLENCE?

Figure 13: Average number of fatalities per political clash (2006–2014)

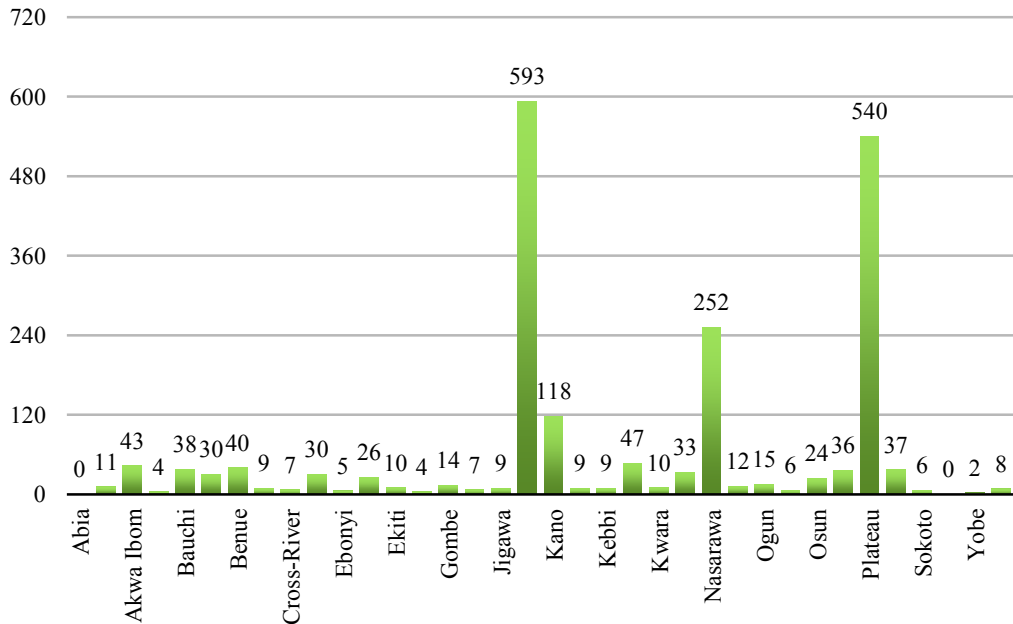


Some clashes between parties are more deadly than others, especially when they involve the CPC, the ANPP, and the PDP (fig. 13). Such cases usually occur to ignite social, religious, and ethnic tensions. Also, only 14 incidents account for 70% of the fatalities reported during the period under review. With, respectively, 540 and 330 fatalities in Plateau in 2008 and Kano in 2011, for instance, clashes between the PDP and the ANPP resulted in the burning of churches and mosques. In Nasarawa in 2007, the ethnic divide opposed the Alago (supporting the ANPP) and the Eggon (supporting the PDP). Nationwide, cases of electoral violence mixing political, ethnic, and religious issues usually occur after the announcement of results, as in 2011 between the PDP and the CPC in Plateau, Gombe, and Kaduna.

In this regard, some states are more likely to experience electoral violence, with over 100 fatalities in Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, and Plateau, an average of 40 in Adamawa, Bauchi Bayelsa, Benue, Kogi, Lagos, Oyo,

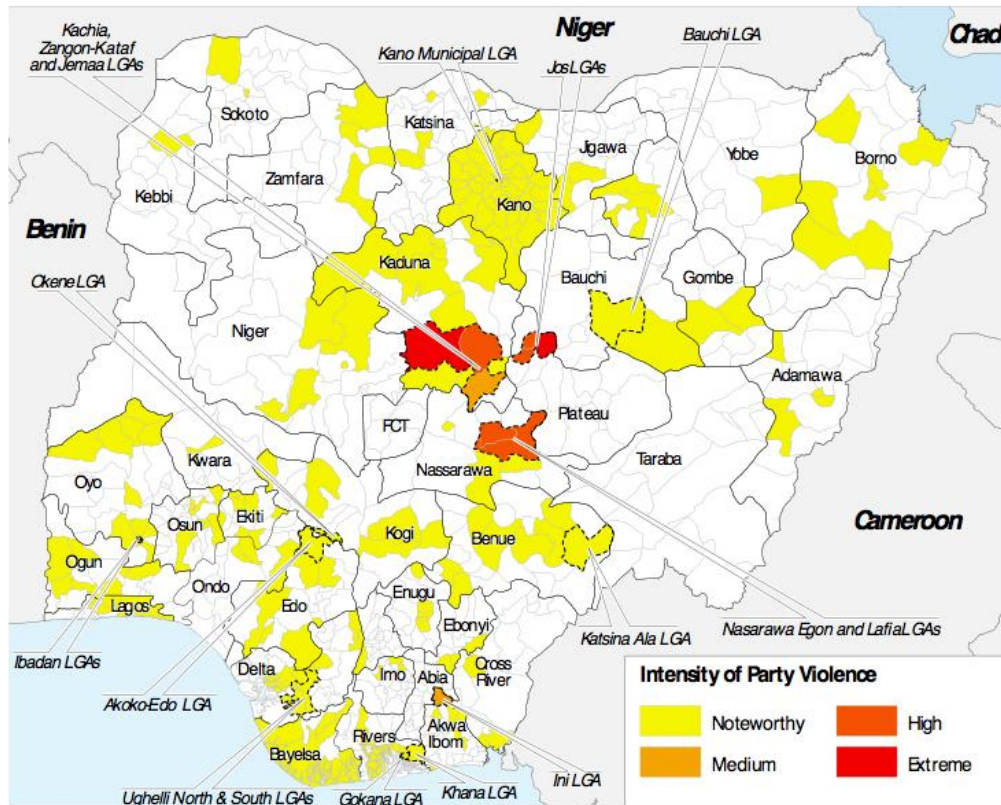
and Rivers, and none in Abia and Taraba, perhaps because such incidents were not reported (fig. 14).

Figure 14: political parties related fatalities per state (2006–2014)



Finally, some LGAs deserve particular attention because they are frequently affected by clashes (see the map below). This is the case, for instance, of Ini in Akwa Ibom (25 fatalities reported in 3 incidents in 2008 and 2012); Katsina Ala in Benue (5 in 3 incidents in 2007 and 2010); Ughelli North and South in Delta (9 in 5 incidents in 2006, 2008, and 2011); Kano Municipal in Kano State (17 in 4 incidents in 2007, 2008, 2011, and 2014); Okene in Kogi (33 in 4 incidents in 2007, 2008, and 2009); Gokana and Khana in Rivers (with, respectively, 9 in 3 incidents in 2006 and 7 in 4 in 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2014); Bauchi LGA in Bauchi State (13 in 4 incidents in 2007 and 2011); Akoko-Edo in Edo (5 in 4 incidents in 2007 and 2011); Lafia in Nasarawa (244 in 6 incidents in 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013, and 2014); and all Ibadan LGAs (11 in 7 incidents in 2006, 2007, 2010, and 2011).

Map 1: Intensity of party violence in Nigeria (2006–2014)



CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that despite the focus of the foreign media, general elections account for only half of the number of fatalities related to party violence in Nigeria. Moreover, clashes between parties are not always reported and should rather be studied through local disputes. Although rigging frequently leads to protest, there is no evidence that political violence is linked mainly to electoral fraud. If the contestation of the results of the 2011 general elections provoked hundreds of deaths, local government elections are also important because they can exacerbate ethnic, religious, and social tensions.

The PDP is the main actor in violence. It records the largest number of fatalities related to internal disputes, and it is involved in 97% of all reported party clashes during the period under review, especially with the ANPP and the CPC in Kaduna, Kano, Nasarawa, and Plateau states.

These findings pave the way for a sociological and political analysis based on empirical studies. Several questions could be investigated. Regarding intra-party violence, for instance, are congresses and primaries more violent at the local, gubernatorial, or national level? Also, which gangs or cult societies are most involved in political violence in each state? Regarding clashes between parties, do they occur when election results are tight, and to what extent does rigging lead to fatal incidents? Do parties resort to violence when they are in a situation of monopoly or when they are contested in an open competition? Why are some party clashes deadlier and how do they transform into mass violence in certain LGAs? Answering all these questions would certainly help understanding the dynamics of political violence in Nigeria.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND PARTIES MENTIONED
IN THIS ARTICLE

| | |
|---------|--|
| AC: | Action Congress |
| ACN: | Action Congress of Nigeria, formerly Action Congress, AC |
| ADC: | African Democratic Congress (Anambra) |
| AG: | Action Group |
| ANPP: | All Nigeria Peoples Party |
| APC: | All Progressives Congress |
| APGA: | All Progressive Grand Alliance |
| CPC: | Congress for Progressive Change |
| DPP: | Democratic People's Party |
| INEC: | Independent National Electoral Commission |
| LP: | Labor Party |
| MASSOB: | Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra |
| MEND: | Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta |
| NEPU: | Northern Elements Progressive Union |
| NNDP: | Nigerian National Democratic Party |
| NPC: | Northern People's Congress |
| NURTW: | National Union of Road Transport Workers |
| OPC: | Oodua Peoples' Congress |
| PDP: | People's Democratic Party |
| SRM: | Save River Movement ²⁵ |
| UPGA: | United Progressive Grand Alliance |

²⁵ SRM is not a political party *per se* or officially registered, but it is involved in violence as it supports and campaigns for the APC in the 2015 elections in Rivers State. See for instance: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201401201193.html>