

Join Us or Be Junked? Party Politics, Military Coups and Political Assassination in Post-Independence Nigeria 1966-2016

John Sunday Ojo^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Nigeria attained independence on October 1st 1960 as a nation-state comprised of divergent ethnic clusters. By the time of independence, the country was set on the footpath of democratization by the colonial state. The effort at democratization was short-lived by the military coup that claimed the lives of many civilians. The political threshold is therefore attributed to the nauseating root of political assassination that scaled through many political transitions in the post-independence Nigeria. This paper interrogates the interplay between party politics, stratocracy and political related carnages since termination of colonial occupation in Nigeria. The study traces the major political assassination cases from 1966 to 2016. Drawing upon massive political killings, the article explains the root cause of immoral ecology of politically related murders and its horrible implications. It found that the deplorable military cosmopolitan governance, skyrocket political factionalism, cataclysmic ethno-religious politics, avalanche criminalization of the political party system, hegemonic political incumbency and faltering judicial system elicit contagious politically motivated killings in Nigeria. The paper concludes by providing recommendation that application of intra-party and inter-party dialogues become a mechanism for averting political homicide in political engagements and electioneering. To this end, there is a need for Nigerian political elites to eschew from inflammatory catch phrase such as “do-or-die” “rig and roast” and other grumbling words that encourages political bloodbath. Hence, sanitization of politics that extricate narcissistic interest is a pungent bludgeon to sustain political civility in Nigerian emerging democracy.

Key words: Political assassination; Political parties; Democracy; Politics; Military coups; Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Violence has never been an instrument used by us, as founding fathers of the Nigerian Republic, to solve political problems. ... I consider it most unfortunate that our “Young Turks” decided to introduce the element of violent revolution into Nigerian politics. No matter how they and our general public might have been provoked by obstinate and perhaps grasping politicians, it is an unwise policy.... As far as I am concerned, I regard the killings of our political and military leaders as a national calamity....¹

My job is to obliterate military targets through the use of destructive force. I must debilitate the enemy through killing enemy soldiers and reduce the enemy’s arsenals. In the process, some civilians may be harmed or killed. But that country’s leaders have acted unconsciously and pose a threat to peace. So the enemy’s must be attacked. I harbor no malice toward the human beings who will be destroyed through my actions. I am following the commands of my superior officers. My country is depending upon me. It is my duty to fight when summons to fight. (Calhoun, 2002, pp.2-3)

The foregoing postulations demonstrate the importation of violence, state sponsored assassination/military coups and paid killings, fixated in democratic political lexicon, such conjecture lends credence to Nigeria’s political arena

¹ See Nnamdi Azikwe quoted in Omoigui (undated) Operation “Aure”: The Northern Military Counter-Rebellion of July 1966. Retrieved 2015, December 12 from <http://www.Africamasterweb.com/countercoup>

as animated haven and organic vibes for power mongers, political barons, godfathers, criminal syndicates, rogue, mafia-like politicians and dictatorial power huntsmen that considered political leadership a money-spinning profession. Central to the Nigerian political discourse is the conviction observed by Richard Joseph, he posited that “ambivalent nature of state power, inherited from the colonial era expanded considerably since independence in ways which have deepened this ambivalence” (Joseph, 1983). Moreover, the configuration of Nigeria’s society embedded in multi-ethnic clusters constructs a beneficial political atmosphere for political brokers who exploit the opportunity to foster personal accumulation through the political pitfall created by the colonial institution. Similarly, Claude Ake put forward a facsimile replication of Nigerian socio-political impasse, he posited that,

the crux of the problem is the over-politicization of social life ...we are intoxicated with politics: The premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures in order to win and maintain political power; our energy tends to be channeled into the struggle for power to the detriment of economically productive efforts.²

The extreme measures taken by most politicians in winning election demand Nigeria’s depreciative stance in Africa, as rightly noted by Margery Parham that, Nigeria’s titular edifice as “giant of Africa” began to crumple as a result of political assassination that thwarts the political events of January 1966 in which authoritarian regime pronounced its involvement in politics (Perham, 1970). The participation of authoritarian regime in Nigerian politics journeyed through 29 years (1966-1979 and 1983-1999), with abrogation of civil rights and rule of law, fashioning prospect for Nigerian political ecology to be militarized, violent and chaotic, even after the departure of uncivil rule (Igwe, 2012). The resultant effect therefore advanced the abrasion of political assassination and violence as machination to settle political warfare which impedes the sustainability of Nigerian electoral democracy (Omotoso, 2013).

Although, politically related murders are ubiquitous in every political ambiance across the world, while the degree of its occurrences designates its distinction. America and other nations of the world have their portions in political assassination. This includes the murder of Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King. In Egypt, the killing of Awwal Sadat, Acquino of Phillipine, Patrice Lumumba of Congo as well as Indra of India are typical examples of political assassination (Olaopa et al., 2009). In a similar direction, Jones & Olken suggested that the assassination of political leaders has been a primordial one, from Julius Caesar to Yitzhak Rabin. He further explicated that, had Adolf Hitler spent more time in the Munich beer outlet in 1939, he would

have been killed by a timed bomb. This thus represents the profound rhetoric of political murders in the Western democracies and the global South (Jones & Olken, 2008).

Following parallel trend in Nigeria, political assassination is rooted in political milieu. It is an instrument used both by the miscreants and the government to eliminate political opponents,³ that influence the practice and conduct of democracy to the extent that the dichotomy between crime and politics becomes woolly (Oladele, 2006), abetted with high magnitude of corruption, unemployment, poverty, malfunctioning security agencies and lack of political will in the part of government to protect law and order,⁴ making socio-political environment more frightening for individuals in the country.⁵ Between 1960 to-date, Nigeria has experienced high profile political murders without devising adequate investigative measure by the national security agencies especially the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to bring the perpetrators to book (Igbafe & Offiong, 2007). Even when the police apprehend the suspects, low level ruffians becomes point of target while neglecting the politicians who sponsor them. Innocent citizens are arrested, just to hoodwink the general public that they have performed their civil obligations (Human Rights Watch, 2003); some of the political assassination cases are even attributed to armed robbery without justifiable reports. The reason is not far-fetched from illicit interference of political godfathers, inadequate resources, constitutional lacuna, involvement of political office holders, judicial ineptitude and institutional decay. The major concern of this paper is to interrogate how party politics and military coups impel political assassination in the post-independence Nigeria. Efforts are made to account for numerous cases of unresolved political killings from 1960 to 2016. The article further stressed out the connections between party politics, military coups and political related murders in post-colonial Nigeria.

1. PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE NIGERIA

Democracy requires an institution through which citizens freehandedly permitted to choose political candidates. This required the creation of political parties with basic principles, tenets and ideologies. Thus, a political party constitutes a set of people agreed to form ideological canons, aimed to capture and control the government of a particular country. The primary objective of every political party is to canvass the citizens in the pre-election

² Claude Ake quoted in Diamond, L. (1984, p.905). Nigeria in Search of Democracy. *Foreign Affairs*, 2(4), 905-927.

³ Sahara reporter, October 21, 2009.

⁴ See *The Tide Newspaper*, 15th 2013.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.10.

environment as well as acquiring political leadership at the local, state and national levels. A more inclusive role and responsibility of political parties are to present candidates for electoral screening and mobilize citizens for political support in the electoral contest. According to Jinadu, he argued that in the western political philosophy, political parties are more functional than structural, characterized with two indispensable features, including facilitation of electoral choice(s) and management of governmental business under the institutional platform of a party. The institutional dais of political parties enlighten the political society regarding the selection of candidates, representation, canvassing and voting before the election (Jinadu, 2011). Thus, political parties are crucial for democratic survival in every political community.

Liberal democracy becomes a conventional form of political system across the world. Central to the notion of democratization is the subject of elections. As Diamond argues that elections are the “litmus test” of democratic system. Replace it with elections are fundamental mechanisms for choosing political representatives in democratic society. Voting remains a primary method for democratic reality. The necessity of elections can thus be considered as an instrument through which political leaders are held accountable to the public (Luqman, 2009). For an election to be free and fair, there are four conditions as suggested by Mackenzie, these include effective functioning of political parties, unbiased electoral umpire, independent judiciary obliges to interpret electoral laws and the public acceptance of the electoral rules.⁶ Having said that, the general conduct of an election requires what can be refers as electoral administration. Electoral administration implies the general management of the election, involving planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, coordinating and reporting. It requires tripartite stages, that is, pre-election, election and post-election activities. The pre-election activities include registration of political parties, screening of candidates, delimitation of constituencies and registration of electorates. The election activities entail the conduct of election. While post-election environment accommodates pronouncement of election results and electoral litigation by the aggrieved political contestants who might not satisfy with election results. The complaints usually directed to a constitutionally electoral tribunal set up by the government (Ajayi, 2007).

Comparing the level of compliance with the fundamental ethos of democracy in the global North and South, a school of thought, Klusmeyer rightly noted that there is high level of adherence to the basic

rules and principles guiding political parties in western democracies. However, in the developing world, Nigeria inclusive, the democratic institutions are weak, with apparent subjugation of national interests over personal interests (Klusmeyer, 1995). In the so called ungovernable political spaces, personal interests are misconstrued as national interests. The political parties are uncoordinated to the extent that the wishes of the party leaders override the wills of the general member of the party. Since Nigeria’s independence to the present, political parties have become an agent of disintegration rather than integration, therefore, raises a fundamental question as whether the institutional creation of the parties or the membership is the obstructive pillars that hamstrings democratic development in the country. Human Rights Watch observed that, indiscipline within the Nigerian political parties infiltrates and triggers tension between the political supporters and the opponents (Ibid., p.15).

Reference to the numerous electoral dystopias in Nigeria includes that of 1959, 1965, 1993 and post 2011 election crises. According to Anifowose electoral crisis emanates as a result of the struggle for power and hegemonic tendency of the incumbent political party. He further argued that the 1959 elections conducted were marred with intimidation and violence as well as stuffing of ballot boxes, destruction of lives and properties (Anifowose, 1982). Similarly, Post observed that the application and adoption of ethnicity and regional forces as common tactic to win political race by the NCNC, NPC and AG results to electoral violence that circumscribes 1959 election. The prominent among electoral crises witnessed in the country is that of 1964, between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and S. L. Akintola who served as the Premier of Western region. The crisis led to the detention of major leaders of the party—Action Group (AG), Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Anthony Enahoro were imprisoned and charged with treason felony by the court of law; this occurrence eventually fascinated military take-over in Nigeria’s democratic space (Post, 1963). Osaghae (1998) argued that, the pre and post electoral violence led to the collapse of the first republic. Hence, “winning elections became a life and death struggle which justifies all means—fair or foul”⁷.

In a bid to win election at all cost, Ige posited that, political coalitions were employed as an instrument for electoral triumph. The political parties that engaged in this logic include NNDP and NPC that formed the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), the AG and NCNC formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The amalgamation and formation of the two political parties were necessary as a strategy to defeat opposition (Ige, 1995). In the same vein, Falola et al. (1991) defensively justified the amalgamative contrivance of the political

⁶ See Mackenzie quoted in Igbuzor. (2010). *Managing the electoral Process: Civil Society perspectives*. A paper presented at the Nigerian Bar Association Annual General Conference, Spidel Working Session on Public Interest and Development Law, Held in Kaduna on 24th of August, 2010.

⁷ Ake, 1983 quoted in Joseph (2008, p.21).

parties; they argued that the political consolidation was needed to defeat the opposition in the electoral face-off. The desire to triumph in the election results in major crises that eclipsed Nigeria's first republic. The collapse of democratic regimes in the first republics which provide political platform for military governance therefore empowers the authoritarian sect to engage in the political affairs of the nation.

The military ruled for uninterrupted thirteen years before a new civilian government was constituted in 1979 for the second republic. The authoritarian regime of Murtala/Obasanjo constituted the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), saddled with the responsibility of conducting elections of July/August 1979. The government also established electoral tribunal to resolve electoral dispute related cases in the country. The declaration of election results generates controversies among the political parties, for instance, both the FEDECO and judiciary were alleged in conspiracy with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which was declared as having majority in the National Assembly and the winner of presidential election. The implacable crisis generated by the controversial election subsumed the illegitimacy of political administration of former President Shehu Shagari (Ibid., p.20).

In 1983, a transitional effort championed by Shehu Shagari Administration was disregarded by the opposition, seen as skewed political platform for the electoral contest. Discontentment by the opposition parties regarding the election results of 1979 were also repeated in 1983. The electoral institution (FEDECO) put in place by the former regime NPN was reconstituted, and thus, making opposition parties to be suspicious of election rigging. Despite a series of allegations against the incumbent regime, the elections were conducted; however, the general conducts of the elections was considered fraudulent and full of malpractices and improprieties. The political climate therefore led to the denunciation of the election results, especially in some states like Ondo, Oyo and Anambra. Consequently, FEDECO offices were burnt in the above mentioned states, igniting electoral violence which propelled the killings of some political colossus in NPN, considered to have orchestrated the electoral rigging. The electoral violence triggered military take-over in the country, thus back to the doomsday of authoritarian political epoch. The new military government constituted by Muhammadu Buhari/Tunde Idiagbo bunged all democratic institutions and apprehended some political office holders alleged of corruption (Ibid.).

"Between 1991 and 1993, Nigeria had a kind of political novelty called 'Diarchy' that combined civil rule and military dictatorship in one administration headed by the military-General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida" (Ibid., p.6). An effort was made by the military government headed by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1993 to conduct another election, the preparation for another

democratic journey raised peoples' hope and aspiration for majoritarian rule that provides opportunity for rule of law and fundamental human rights of the citizens. The major contestants in the election were Moshood Abiola, a South Westerner who contested under the political auspices of SDP and Alhaji Tofa, a Northerner, who contested under the political dais of NRC. Moshood Abiola was declared a winner of the election by the electoral commission. Nevertheless, the military government headed by Ibrahim Babangida declared that, he was not satisfied with the election results. This generates a great protest in the country especially in the South Western Nigeria. Therefore, the protest led to imprisonment of Moshood Abiola who later died in prison yard. Prior to the demise of Moshood Abiola, the military president declared Interim Government headed by Ernest Shonekan, the regime was later toppled by the military which later produced Major-General Sanni Abacha, Abacha died on the mantle of leadership. As a result of Abacha's death, General Abdulsalam Abubakar took over the mantle of leadership, and he served as the last military president in Nigeria.

Shortly, after the military reassurance to hand-over power to civilian regime in 1999 under the authoritarian political leadership of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, elections were conducted which restored former military dictator, Olusegun Obasanjo as newly democratically elected President in Nigeria, therefore, symbolizes another political expedition to Nigerian fourth republic, inaugurated on 29 May 1999. The journey through the fourth republic was marked by another historic epoch in sustaining democratic politics in Nigeria. According to the International Crisis Group report

democratic government has been uninterrupted for more than a decade, but the quality of elections since the return to civilian rule in 1999, of which these are the fourth, has declined continually. 1999 polls that swept General Olusegun Obasanjo and the PDP party to power were flawed but generally accepted by Nigerians glad to see the back of a repressive military dictatorship. Over subsequent years, Obasanjo and the ruling party—an alliance of oligarchs with close links to the military—consolidated their grip on power. In 2003 his mandate was renewed in a vote that was decried by observers as heavily rigged.⁸

Olusegun Obasanjo ruled for 8 years, however, the former President managed to elongate his tenure, the legislative institution that would have been instrumental to his third term agenda discarded the proposition. As a result of expiration of Obasanjo's political tenure, elections were conducted in 2003. The International election monitoring groups emphasized that 2003 elections were marred with violence, rigging and sorts of electoral criminalities. However, the idealism of democratic practice worthwhile depends on the general even handedness, freeness and

⁸ International Crisis Group report (2012).

fairness of an election. To achieve these, observing and monitoring the election become indispensable cognate of democratic development in every political orb.

This calls for election observation which has been a mechanism designed by advanced democracies through the establishment of international election monitoring organizations to legitimize democracy all over the world. It is important to cue here that the major elections conducted shortly after Nigerian independence were marred by rigging, violence, impropriety and all sorts of electoral manipulations. Consequently, the interventions of international election monitoring bodies necessitate the safeguarding of democracy from electoral immodesty in sustaining ethical standard for democratic advancement in Nigeria. Observing election transcends the conduct of an election; it involves pre- election assessment, the election itself and the post-election activities. The international election observers play a dominant role as watchmanship in homogenizing, standardizing, and appraising electoral integrity across the globe.

With similar outlook, prior the rejection of Olusegun Obasanjo's third term bid, another election was conducted in 2007 which led to the emergence People's Democratic candidate, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The conduct and general administration of the election was championed by Professor Maurice Iwu, who served as the chairman of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria. The international and local election observers considered the election as the worst in the political history of the country. Nevertheless, Umaru Musa Yaradua was declared a winner in the election. However, the former President publicly declared that the election that brought him to power was rigged and ensnared in electoral disorders. The observation of the former President Umaru Musa Yaradua on electoral misconducts triggered his political will for setting up electoral reform committee led by Justice Muhammed Uwais (Rtd). The terms of reference of the committee were to provide corrective measures to numerous anomalies in Nigeria's electoral acts. The committee came out with recommendations which include independent candidature, Political Parties registration and regulatory commission (PPRRC), Constituency Delimitation Commission (CDC), establishment of Electoral Offenses Commission (EOC) just to mention but few. These recommendations were forwarded to the National Assembly for final ratification. However, the proposal witnessed a lot of setback. The suggested solutions were not holistically implemented in the legislative chamber. Immediately after the public declaration of the demise of President Umaru Musa Yaradua, the then Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan enthroned to fill the vacant post as the acting Nigerian President. This was done in accordance with the constitutional guidelines of the country. The emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as the acting President provides opportunity for him to contest in the 2011 presidential

election under the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The election was considered free and fair by the various international and local election observers. The general administration of the election was coordinated by Professor Attahiru Jega, the former chairman of INEC. This becomes historic in Nigeria's political history (Alabi & Sakariyau, 2013). Despite the high level of transparency in the election, the election witnessed post-election violence especially in the Northern Nigeria, this is because of political victory of Goodluck Jonathan who hailed from South-South (Ploch, 2013). It is important to note here the recurrence of ethno-religious politics that has problematized the country. Prior the expiration of four years tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan, another election was set in motion, the electoral contestation was between President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. Muhammadu Buhari was declared a winner in 2015 by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). One of the factors to be noted here is that, the political era experienced a peaceful transition from the incumbent regime to opposition party which becomes a landmark in Nigeria's political journey. The above political scenario pinpoints tumultuous political expedition of Nigerian since independence. As rightly notes by Igwe that

until the present political dispensation, since independence in 1960, Nigeria's efforts at democratization never succeeded beyond six years. Since the (First Republic) 1960-1964 general elections, electoral violence, which was eventually indirectly terminated, has become a common feature of elections in Nigeria. It is pertinent to know that each set of elections in Nigeria up to this date seemingly deepened the culture of violence. This is reflected in the inter- and intraparty clashes centered on overblown personality politics riddled with bitter struggles for domination and control of party and power for selfish or sectional interests. This has reduced local and national politics to a contest of personality, centered on money and self, instead of ideology centered on superior issues. This contradiction has rubbed Nigeria's polity of content and substance and reduced electoral processes to mere routine. (Ibid., p.6)

Therefore, it can be argued that the country has experienced turbulent political history with its manifestation in electoral misconducts and disruption of political regimes by the military invasion in Nigeria's body politics. Violence, assassination, ethnic and religious bigotries exemplified Nigeria's political experiments. In this regard, the next section looks into various military coups that result in political assassination of political office holders and the military officers.

2. TOWARDS DIARCHY: THE TREND OF POLITICAL ASSASSINATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE NIGERIA

The etymological use of the concept "assassination" was first employed in the medieval era to illustrate the

killings of prominent Christians by the “Hashshashing”, a clandestine Islamic group (Ibid., p.8). The existence of such secret group is traced to eighth and fourteenth centuries, empowered to kill the Abbasid elites who opposed its principles. The historical assumption of the origin is conventionally employed to represent murder committed by individuals or groups, especially if the victim is a political juggernaut within a political community. Most cases of assassination are understood within the continuum of politics. The reason behind the execution of such evil-project is usually considered if the victim in question is a purported opposition of the incumbent regime. Within Nigeria’s context, assassination can be categorized into two, these include killing executed by groups of people and individuals. Both require careful planning, weapon procurement and getting accurate information about the movement of the targeted victim through the instrumentality of the hired assassins (Albert, 2010). Historically, tracing the manifestation of political related killings in Nigeria, the political event of January 15, 1966, in which military state coordinated a brutal episode that led to the collapse of first republic, can be considered as the origin of political assassination after the departure of British colonialist in Nigeria. The event led by late Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and the likes predominantly from Eastern Nigeria, entrapped some political office holders like late Festus late Okotiebo, the former Minister of Finance, late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the former Prime Minister of Nigeria, late Sir S. I. Akintola, the former Premier of Western Region. They were all killed by the military juntas; the coup was a partial success because the objectives behind the plot could not be fully realized after the coup, while the aftermath of the coup witnessed the emergence of Major General Johnson Thomas Umunakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi as the first military head of state in Nigeria, he ruled from January to July 1966.

The second military coup in Nigeria took place on 29th July, 1966. It resulted in the death of Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi and some top military officers including the Governor of Western region, Adekunle Fajuyi. After the coup General Yakubu Gowon became the head of state and a commander-in-Chief of armed forces. The second military coup led to protracted political unrest in the country, the height of which was a thirty months of civil war. By 1967, the existing four regions were subdivided into twelve states as a response to secession bid of Eastern Nigeria orchestrated by Col Ojukwu. According to McNeil, Major-General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, leader of the new Nigerian military government, was convinced that federalism was the problem, and on 24 May 1966 he issued Decree No.34, which transformed Nigeria into a unitary state. In a radio broadcast announcing the decree, Ironsi said his plan was “intended to remove the last vestiges of the intense regionalism of the recent past, and to produce the cohesion in the governmental structure which is so

necessary in achieving...national unity” (McNeil, 2014). Therefore, an attempt to make Nigeria a constitutionally unitary state by Yakubu Gowon administration led to another military coup. The third martial wave occurred on 29th July 1975 piloted by Brigadier Muritala Mohammed which deposed the government of General Yakubu Gowon. Late Muritala Mohammed became the head of state after the coup and ruled for only six months. General Muritala was assassinated in a bloody coup. As a result of the death of Muritala Muhammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo emerged as fourth military president of the federal republic of Nigeria from February 1976 to September 1979. The regime was succeeded by General Muhammadu Buhari following the coup announced by Brigadier Sanni Abacha on December 31 1983. Subsequent to this occurrence, General Ibrahim Babangida came to power due to a coup announced by Lt. General Joshua Niyel Dongoyaro on August 27th 1985. In another related development, General Sanni Abacha became Head of State after the dethronement of existing Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan on November 17th 1993. Abacha’s regime was characterized with numerous state sponsored political murders and attempted assassination, this include killing of Kudirat Abiola and the likes. Immediately after the pronouncement of the death of Saani Abacha, the emergence of General Abubakar was pronounced on July 8th, 1993. The regime served as the last dictatorial regime witnessed by the country. General Abubakar handed over power to civilian government in 1999. In a series of military regimes as discussed above, some citizens that championed the termination of military regimes were killed, imprisoned, charged with treason felony’ (National Association of Seadog, 2006) while others such as Professor Wole Soyinka fled off to exile to escape political assassination organized by the military state. In this context, it can be argued that the Nigerian military state played a major role in political assassination.

Prior the Nigeria’s returned to democratic rule in 1999, the country continued to witness astronomical increase in political assassination, religious crises due to tenacious involvement of godfatherism, electoral malpractices, rigging, corruption acquisition of private army and myriad of socio-political problems (Oshodi, 2007). Consequently, provides opportunity for destruction of lives and properties (Agba, 2011). According to Human Right Watch, more than 300 innocent Nigerians were killed as a result of pre and post-election violence that encapsulates 2007 general elections in Nigeria (Ibid., p.41). Otite and Umukoro posit that, Nigerian democracy is characterized with detestable tradition such as offering money for political accomplishment through the instrumentality of political godfathers (Otite & Umukoro, 2010). This has been infused in Nigerian political culture, leaning on the political juggernauts to triumph in electoral contestation

through unsophisticated means. Having the support of godfathers, the procurement of weapons, electoral finance and recruitment of private army gives assurance for electoral conquest. The mobilization of canal instruments to win election at all cost makes democracy a dangerous game in the country. A typical manifestation of politics of godfatherism that metamorphosed in political upheaval include political rift that occurred between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Ladoke Akintola which disrupted the political atmosphere of South Western Nigeria, and consequently transmuted in a military takeover in the country. Political godfatherism describes a situation in which very powerful and influential members of the elite class use their power, money and influence to determine who should rule or occupy a given political office and who impose these leaders on the people. The leaders are generally forced upon the masses through intimidation, harassment and an excessive use of money. Political godfathers act as the financial backbone for politicians who aspire to occupy political offices at all cost. Such political office holders usually become tied to the apron string of

their godfathers. It is against this background that Igbuzor rightly explained the character of instrumental carnality of godfatherism in Nigerian political airspace that

political godfatherism is a term now reserved for God forsaken criminals who will go to any length; I mean any length to achieve their set goals of wielding political power including arson, intimidation, warning, flogging and sometimes assassination'. With the money diverted from the coffers of the Nigerian or State governments, they equipped their 'army' with the latest weapons with which their foot soldiers or political thugs recruited from amongst numerous jobless graduates and undergraduates from Nigerian and state universities to terrorize, kill and main their kits and kin who oppose them. There may have been numerous killings by orders from these political godfathers. (Ibid., p.43)

Thus, politics of victimization and bloodshed are therefore becomes the prominent mannerism of Nigerian democracy. In foregoing, political killings serve as a potent weapon in the hand of repressive political elites and military juntas to achieve political leadership. The table below shows numerous cases of unresolved political assassination since independence.

Table 1
Cases of Political Assassination From 1966-2016

	Name	Year	Location of death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Killer
1	Tafawa Balewa	1966	Lagos	Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Prime minister and Head of Government	Gunshot	Military
2	Ahmadu Bello	January 15, 1966.	Sokoto	Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Premier of Northern Nigeria	Gunshot	Military
3	Aguiyi-Ironsi	July 29, 1966	Lagos	Nigeria Military	Military Head of State	Gunshot	Military
4	Adekunle Fajuyi	July 29 th 1966	Oyo	Nigeria Military	Military Governor of western Nigeria	Gunshot	Military
5	Ladoke Akintola	January 15 th 1966	Oyo	Action Group	Premier of western region	Gunshot	Military
6	Alfred Rewane	October 6, 1995	Lagos	National Democratic Coalition (NADECO)	Business man, Elder statesman and NADECO financier	Gunshot	Military
7	Shehu Musa Yaradua	December 8 th 1997	Abakaliki prison	Military	Military chief of staff and SDP Presidential candidate	Poisoned	Military
8	Muritala Mohammed	Feb 13, 1976	Lagos	Nigeria Military	Head of State	Gunshot	Military
9	Tunde Idiagbon	1999	Ilorin, kwara state	Nigeria Military	Military vice president	Poisoned	Yet to be identified
19	Moshood Abiola		Lagos	SDP	Presidential winner of 1993 election	Poisoned	Yet to be identified
20	Dele Giwa	October 19, 1986	Lagos	Newswatch Newspaper	Editor Newswatch	Parcel of Bomb	Military state
21	Kudirat Abiola	June 4 1994	Lagos	SDP	Business mogul	Gunshot	Military state
22	Bola Ige	Dec. 23, 2001	Oyo	Alliance for Democracy (AD).	Minister of Justice and Attorney General	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
23	Marshal Harry	March 2003	Abuja FCT	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	ANPP Vice Chairman for the South-South Zone	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
24	Aminosari Dikibo	Feb. 6, 2004	Delta State	PDP	PDP National chairman	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
25	Ogbonnaya Uche	February 8, 2003	Imo State	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	ANPP senatorial candidate for Orlu zone at Owerri	Gunshot	Yet to be identified

To be continued

Continued

Name	Year	Location of death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Killer
26 Andrew Agom	March 4, 2004	Nassarawa	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Former boss of Nigeria Airway and PDP board of trustee	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
27 Alabi Okoju	May 15, 2005	Osun	Oranmiyan group	Leading financier Oranmiyan group, a socio-political organization	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
28 Mr. Ikenna Ibor,	March 27, 2003	Anambra State	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	ANPP councillorship candidate in Anambra State	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
29 Odunayo Olagbaju	2001	Ile-Ife, Osun State	Alliance for Democracy (AD).	Osun State House of Assembly.	Macheted	Yet to be identified
30 Funsho Williams	July 2006	Lagos	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Lagos PDP governorship aspirant	stabbed and strangled	Yet to be identified
31 Ayo Daramola	2006	Ekiti State	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Former World Bank consultant and PDP governorship aspirant in Ekiti State,	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
32 Anthony Nwudo	March 21, 2003	Ebonyi	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	ANPP House of Assembly aspirant,	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
33 Godwin Agbroko	December 25 th 2006	Lagos	ThisDay Newspaper	chairman, This Day Editorial Board	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
34 Ade Awonusi	January 7, 2002	Abuja	Confidential Secretary to the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Uwais	Confidential Secretary to the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Uwais	Stabbed	Yet to be identified
35 Abayomi Ogundeji	August 17, 2008	Lagos	ThisDay Newspaper	ThisDay Newspaper Editor	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
36 Bayo Ohu	September 20 th 2009	Lagos	Guardian Newspapers	Assistant News Editor of The Guardian Newspapers	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
37 Bagauda Kalto	1996	Abuja-Kaduna Road	News magazine	News magazine	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
38 Charles Nsiegbie	November 21, 2009	Rivers State	People Democratic Party	Political associate of Rivers state governor, Rotimi Amechi	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
39 Dipo Dina	Monday, January 25, 2010	Ogun state	Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)	Ogun state ACN governorship candidate	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
40 Janet Oladape	August 13 th 2002	Ondo	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	Leader of People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Odigbo LG	Clubbed	Yet to be identified
41 Babatunde Elegbede	May 5, 1994	Lagos	Nigeria military	Former chief of Naval Staff and military Governor of Rivers state	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
42 Lekan Owolabi	March 1995	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
43 Captain Tunde Ashafa	June 11, 1995	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
44 David Izegwere	December 1995	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
45 Kayode Awosanya	January 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
46 Mrs Tajudeen Abiola	February 9, 1996		Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
47 Alhaji Sama Kano	April 8, 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
48 Admiral Olu Omotehinwa	May 22, 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
49 Mrs Irene Obodo	June 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified

To be continued

Continued

	Name	Year	Location of death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Killer
50	Chief Adejola Balogun	June 15, 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
51	Esther A. Tejuoso	September 19, 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
52	Ahmed Onipede	2010	Lagos	Alliance for Democracy (AD).	former special adviser on mineral resources to the governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
53	Alhaja Suliat Adedeji	November 14, 1996	Ibadan	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
54	Toyin Onagoruwa	December 1996	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
55	Engr. Adesoji A. Dina	September 1998	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
56	Kola Tokunbo	January 31, 1999	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
57	Patrick Okoye	January 31, 1999	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
58	Sunday Ugwu	September 9, 1999	Enugu	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
59	Igwe Francis Nwankwo	February 15, 2000	Anambra	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
60	Nicholas Okhuakhua	June 2000	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
61	Mohammed Shuaibu	September 2000	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
62	Obatou Mumbo	October 17, 2000	Onitsha	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
63	Idowu Braimoh	November 5, 2000	Ondo	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
64	Joseph Osayande	December 4, 2000	Edo	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
65	Chief Layi Balogun	December 10, 2000	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
66	Monday Ndor	August 19, 2001	Port Harcourt	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
67	Onyebuchi Ede	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
68	Chibueze Idah	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
69	Ogbonna Odimbaiwe	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
70	Ifeanyi Nnaji	August 23, 2001	Ebonyi	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
71	Sunday Atte	February 5, 2005	Kogi	legislative council Yagba East local government	Leader of legislative council Yagba East local government	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
72	Mr. S.A. Awoniyi	January 7, 2002	Abuja	Former confidential secretary to a former chief of justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais	Former confidential secretary to a former chief of justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais	Stabbed to death	Yet to be identified
73	Eyo Eyo	April 2002	Cross River	Former information officer attached to the state's commissioner for agriculture in Cross River	Former information officer attached to the state's commissioner for agriculture in Cross River	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
74	Ifeanyi Igbokwe	April 18, 2002	Lagos	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
75	Musa Dayo	May 9, 2002	Bauchi	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified

To be continued

Continued

	Name	Year	Location of death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Killer
76	Christopher Ogbonna	May 26, 2002	Enugu	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
77	Maria-Theresa Nsa	June 11, 2002	Cross River	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
78	Igbafe and Offiong			Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
79	Chief & Mrs. Barnabas Igwe	September 1, 2002	Anambra State	Nigeria Bar Association	Onitsha branch chairman of Nigeria Bar Association	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
80	Mr. Ogonnaya Uche	February 8, 2003	Imo	All Nigeria Peoples Party	Former commissioner of commerce	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
81	E. Emenike	February 13, 2003	Imo	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
82	Theodore Agwatu	February 22, 2003	Imo	Former Principal secretary to the Imo state governor	Former Principal secretary to the Imo state governor	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
83	Emily Omope	March 3, 2003	Oyo	Alliance for Democracy (AD).	Alliance for Democracy (AD) member	Acid attack	Yet to be identified
84	Bala Mai-Haice	March 17, 2003	Gombe	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	Chairman of People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Yamaitu Deba Local Government	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
85	Ajibola Olanipekun	June 20, 2003	Ibadan	Senior Advocate of Nigeria	A lawyer in Ibadan	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
86	Lateef Olaniyan	July 16, 2005	Oyo			Gunshot	Yet to be identified
87	Professor Chimere Ikoku	October 20, 2002	Enugu	University of Nigeria, Nnsukka	Vice chancellor University of Nigeria, Nnsukka	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
88	Ahmed Pategi	August 15, 2002	Kwara	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
89	Mr. Anthony Ozioko	July 27, 2005	Abuja	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Peoples Democratic Party's Assistant National Director, Research and Planning,	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
90	Mr. Patrick Origbe	June 3, 2005	Delta	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Principal administrative officer Uvwie LGA	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
91	Mr. Felix Eboigbe	August 2005	Edo	People Democratic Party (PDP)	Councilor in Oredo local government of Edo state	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
92	Chief Jesse Aniku	July 2006	Plateau State	ACD	Gubernatorial aspirant of ACD	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
93	Captain Jerry Agbeyegbe	Oct 12, 2004	Lagos State	Nigeria Aviation	Aviation Chief,	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
94	Mr. Esho Egbelu	August 2004	Cross Rivers State	Unknown	Unknown	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
95	Chief Philip Olorunnipa	April 2004	Kogi State	Former Kogi state electoral commissioner	Former Kogi state electoral commissioner	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
96	Hon. Tony Dimegwu	April 30, 2003	Imo State	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	An ANPP member of the House of Assembly	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
97	Yemi Oni	March 2003	Ekiti State	Alliance for Democracy (AD).		Gunshot	Yet to be identified
98	Mr. Issa Zaria	April 2003	Kwara State	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	Member All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
99	Mr. Luke Shingaba	March 2004	Kogi state	Unknown	LG Chairmanship candidate	Gunshot	Yet to be identified

To be continued

Continued

Name	Year	Location of death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Killer
100 Dr. Ayodeji Daramola	August 14, 2006	Ekiti State	People Democratic Party (PDP)	governorship aspirant of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ekiti State,	Stabbed in the chest and strangled.	Yet to be identified
101 Onyewuchi Iwuchukwu	April 19, 2003	Imo state	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	Politician	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
102 Alhaji Modi Fannani Gubio	January 28, 2011	Borno State	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)	All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
103 Comrade Olaitan Oyerinde	May 3, 2012,	Edo State	Chairman of Lagos Campaign for Democracy (CD) between 1992 to 1994,	Private Secretary to the Edo State governor	Gunshot	Yet to be identified
104 Hon Monday Eleanya	February 11 2016	Rivers state	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Former member of Rivers state House of Assembly	Gunshot	Yet to be identified

Note. The above names do not comprise the total number of politically related killings since independence, there are other eminent politicians that were killed but their profiles could not be ascertained.
 Source: Author's Compilation

3. THE NEXUS BETWEEN PARTY POLITICS, MILITARY COUPS AND POLITICAL ASSASSINATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE NIGERIA

The transition from colonial to post-colonial state in Africa witnessed numerous skyjackings of political power by the military. According to Godsmith,

post-colonial experiments with elected government temporarily ended in most African countries in the 1960s, and military dictatorships and one-party regimes came to dominate the continent. The justification for such governments was often to build national unity, and the elections that were held during those years tended to be plebiscitary and non-competitive. (Goldsmith, 2015)

Nigeria is not excluded from this abrasive political expedition. It can be recalled that, the first military coup that midwife the collapse of the first republic was not proficiently executed without bloodshed. Some political office holders were murdered basically to allow authoritarian regime obtains the mantle of leadership. It is pertinent to note that one of the distinctive components that result in the disruption of democratic order in Nigerian first republic is the intensification of ethnicity in party politics, designed as an archetypal platform for political consideration. Conventionally, the emergence of ethnic movements in Nigerian party politics aggravates the travail. Political contestants housed within the ethnic continuum rather than political parties and competence; it is these ethnic clusters that dictate the movement, selection, electoral performance and inter-party and intra-party conflict resolution in Nigeria (Osaghae, 2003). Competition among the dominant ethnic groups, that is, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba have circumscribed and endangered

the political sustainability, leading to bloody civil war that lasted between 1967 and 1970 in the country. Despite the democratic transition in 1999, some observers have claimed that amplification of ethno-religious politics characterized the political events in the fourth republic. However, the legal restriction placed on the creation of ethnic political parties has not resolved the current conundrum of ethnicity in party politics. For instance, the electoral acts of 2006 prohibits political party membership created on ethnic platform, nevertheless, the formation of Alliance for Democracy (AD) was characterized as Yoruba political party in the Western Nigeria which established the attendance of ethnic politics in Nigerian political domain, as it was expressively observed by Olaniyan & Omotola (2015), that

across various epochs in Nigeria's transition, ethnicity has played an essentially contrasting role in the governance of the country during both colonial and post-independence eras, as well as under successive military and civilian regimes, with both positive and negative consequences.

Therefore makes Kuenzia & Lambright conclude that Nigerian party politics is a "bereft of ideological commitments" (Kuenzia & Lambright, 2015).

Premised on the above condition, the consideration for ethnic affiliation beginning from autocratic transition to democratic regime in Africa, none of the African countries was liberated from political violence. Electoral violence emanates as a result of unresolved political, economic, religious and ethnic injustices in the pre-election and post-election environments (Ibid., p.6). Fraudulent election becomes a major attribute of Nigerian electoral democracy. The manifestation infused in election rigging, falsification of election results, intimidation of political agents and electorates as well as killing and maiming of innocent citizens of echoes in the major elections

conducted from independence exacerbates the current dilemma of illiberal democratic tradition (Ibid., p.48). This position was rightly amplified by Chux Ibekwe and Akanmu Adebayo (2012) that:

Violent conflicts occur at party nominations and primaries and at campaign rallies. Often the goal . . . is to intimidate the electorate, assassinate political opponents, and cause general instability under the cover of which electoral malpractices (such as stealing voting materials, preventing the safe and orderly arrival of polling staff, etc.) may be carried out. . . . On election day, therefore, anarchy reigns. Candidates and their supporters

are known to carry weapons into the polling station, fire guns into the air, snatch ballot boxes, stuff the boxes with pre-voted ballots, and force electoral officials to validate forged results. . . . Violent conflicts continue or re-emerge after elections. . . . Many candidates know that their mandate may be stolen at any stage by a more forceful opposition, especially if that were the incumbent—and this gives ready employment for political thugs and hooligans.

There are various reasons that propel electoral violence in Nigeria, Höglund (2009) provides explanatory structure of these factors in the following table:

Table 2
Causes of Electoral Violence

	Conditions enabling the use of electoral violence	Factors triggering electoral violence
Nature of Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Patrimonial politics ●Conflict cleavages ●Violence as a legitimate Political tool ●Culture of impunity ●Access to arms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Violent actors participating in elections ●Biased police
Nature of Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Competitiveness ●Political mobilisation ●Stakes ●Exposure to attacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Misuse of political rights ●Militant mobilisation ●“Close races”
Electoral Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Systems creating clear winner and losers ●Few regulations about electoral conduct ●Administration with few checks and little power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Political usage of electoral administration ●Election fraud ●Unwanted or unexpected outcome of the election

Source: Hoglung, 2009.

Moreover, the challenge of corrupt political leadership in both military and civilian administration facilitated by oil revenue prompts a deepening crisis of kleptocracy in post-independence Nigeria. Looting of the national treasury by the political class contributes to the current woes of endemic poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, while the socio-economic life of the ordinary citizens is driven by political connection. Corruption is therefore becomes a normal way of life in Nigeria. The notables among political elites live in affluence with larger percent of rural and urban populace living in penury. The prevalence of poverty in the socio-political fabric of the country fascinates the involvement of unemployed youths that have formed numerous deadly assemblages; these unemployed youths are being recruited as political hired-killers by the politicians. The major obligations of these idle youths include disruption of election campaigns, snatching of ballot boxes during election and killing of political opponents. Thus, the prevalence of chronic poverty as a result of unemployment in the country provides a fertile ground for electoral violence and political assassination in Nigeria. According to Osoba the problem coupled with the deadly nature of Nigerian politics which gives room for personal accumulation

(Osoba,1996), thereby making the political system more cacophonous and violent.

Concomitantly, the increasing proliferation of ethnic based policing group such as Odua People’s Congress (OPC) in the Southwestern Nigeria, Bakassi Boys in the Southeastern, Arewa People’s Congress in the North and Egbesu Boys in the Niger-Delta area provides a platform for insecurity in Nigerian political processes. The emergence and formation of these numerous ethnic security outlets are as a result of failure of formal security institution in combating crimes and ensuring the safety of the people. However, the informal multilayered policing taxonomies are being employed by politicians to promote political agenda. For instance, OPC has been adopted by politicians to terrorize and intimidate political opponents in the country. Similarly, Egbesu Boys and Bakasi Boys have been employed to stand against ethno-political struggle in the country. This therefore becomes a haven of refuge for each ethnic group to fight ethnic scores in Nigerian politics (Ibid., p.57). The institutional prospect of Nigerian party politics therefore susceptible to electoral violence and ethnic struggle for power that prompts political assassination, threats, and assaults during electoral processes which has enforced many political

contestants to dissuade from democratic participation in the country.

SUMMARY

This article addresses unresolved political murders inveigled by party politics and military governance in Nigeria. The belligerent mythology of Nigerian party politics that prompts the incursion of the military in democratic stratum becomes a mordant beginning of decadence political murders that routed through turbulent political confrontation between the political elites and the military leaders. Over the years, the disposition of party politics in Nigeria exceptionally represents a repudiation of the democratic order, associated with the assassination, violence, lawlessness and impunity. The dilemma of democratic burst is linked with the conduct of election and electioneering processes. Recognizing the myriad of electoral mismanagement, violence, ethnicity, corruption and poverty that survived through times and history, authorizes political assassination that journeyed through the collapse of the first republic, champed by the military state which moribund Nigeria's political development. Considering the numerous military coups witnessed in post-independence Nigeria, it can be surmised that political killing was adopted by the authoritarian regimes to get rid of perceived political enemies and ethnically disparate military officers who might serve as obstruction to commandeer political leadership. It is in line with this argument that ethnicity played a major role in various military coups orchestrated by ethnic cabals. The assassination of some head of states through organized coup d'état's masterminded by ethnic factions within the military leadership explicates the detrimental effect of ethnic politics in the country.

In Nigeria, political killing remains a cataleptic instrument adopted by authoritarian regime, political godfathers and miscreant politicians to accomplish political mission. It constitutes a mechanism through which politicians perfected electoral conquest in the pre-election, actual election and post-election processes. The criminal nature of Nigerian electoral politics marooned in excessive politicking and moneybags politics which provides institutional habitation for political murderers, thereby making a paradoxical perceptive of Nigeria's democratic governance. The mechanism espouses by political elites in electoral conquest dwell within the spectrum of criminal enclave of political supporters that fuel the ember of violence, making it a normative political nomenclature in Nigerian party politics. The do or die nature of Nigeria's politics influences the political culture of the people. Nonetheless, democracy has it is practice all over the world emphasizes liberal participation which encourages every citizen to engage in governance. Undoubtedly, Nigerian democratic system has been infected with political assassination, considering

as an aberration in a liberal democratic order. It is obvious that, without providing an institutional structure that capable of enlightening political elites regarding the danger pose by incongruent political behaviours will be tantamount to democratic peril. To get rid of this predicament, engaging political parties through intra-party and inter-party dialogues serve as a panacea for mitigating political assassination in Nigeria. Therefore, attitudinal change in the part of Nigerian political elites becomes indispensable. Noticeably, Nigerian police has been unable to fathom a single case of political assassination since 1966; therefore, there is a need for reform in Nigeria policing system, while independent of the judiciary becomes a curative measure for the sustenance of the Nigerian democratic experiment.

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