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Contentious elections, political exclusion, and challenges of national integration in Nigeria

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Abstract: The roles of hate speech, ethnicity and region were very central to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Essentially, the elections created “mobilisational gaps”, built around religion and ethnicity. These factors shaped the pre- and post-election periods and divisions between ethnic groups associated with the incumbent regime (in-group) and other ethnic groups (out-group). This triggered widespread inter-group mistrust and insecurity which have conducted into post-election appointments along primordial lines like religion, region and ethnicity. Consequently, political inclusion and national integration have become elusive. Despite the emphasis of Goal #10.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on political inclusion of everyone irrespective of race and ethnicity, post-election appointments have been divisive. Using qualitative research approach, this paper investigates the link between the outcome of the 2015 presidential election, political exclusion and national integration in Nigeria. It posits that democratisation of politics is the panacea for political tension in Nigeria.

Subjects: African Studies; Politics & Development; Sustainable Development

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Elections in most African multicultural societies like DR Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe are often characterised by hate campaigns, mudslinging and electoral violence which often threaten their post-election peacebuilding and national integration. The contentious character of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria was made possible by the emergence of a viable opposition party, postponement of the election, legality of the biometric smart card reader, eligibility of the APC presidential candidate, and the use of hate speech in the run up to the election. This article investigates the link between the outcome of the 2015 presidential election, political exclusion and national integration in Nigeria. It found that the deliberate exclusion of some factions of the ruling class is a reflection of the overall pattern of hate speech-induced ethnic coalitions and mobilisations during the electioneering. Hence, without minimisation of post-election exclusionary tendencies through conscious democratisation of politics, national integration in the country will remain a wishful thought.

Keywords: contentious elections; hate speech; political exclusion; sustainable development agenda; 2015 general elections; national integration

1. Introduction

Elections serve twin purposes in a democracy. First, it gives voters the freedom to choose candidates of their choice in order to manage their affairs and secondly, it affords the candidates the opportunity to canvass for the votes of the eligible voters in a free and fair contest (Obianyo & Emesibe, 2015). However, elections in Africa are far from achieving these purposes; they are increasingly contentious and often divide the countries along ethnic and religious lines. The aftermath of most elections in Kenya, particularly the 27 December 2007 general elections, divided the country and left more than 1,300 people dead and nearly 600,000 in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps (Barkan, 2013; Opondo, 2014). The hotly contested election was mostly between Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU) and Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Subsequently, Kenya witnessed a level of division and violence never seen before in its electoral history. Similarly, the August 2017 presidential election contest mainly between Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga further reinforced in-group ethno-regional and clannish cleavages in the country. In 2010, Cote d'Ivoire suffered the same fate. While the Ivorian Constitutional Council declared Laurent Gbagbo the winner of the presidential run-off election,¹ the IEC and the international community were convinced that Ouattara had won the election with a 54.1% share of votes, against 45.9% for Gbagbo (Cook, 2011; Ipinoyomi, 2012). What followed was political violence which left at least 3,000 people dead and more than 150 women raped (Human Rights Watch, 2011). This is not dissimilar to the experiences of several other post-war and post-military democracies in Africa.

Nigeria has witnessed a rising tide of contentious elections ending in heated debates, court challenges, protests and legitimacy crises. In some instances, these election disputes were settled peacefully through legal means and electoral reforms. In others, they triggered bloodshed, destruction, and undermined the capacity for stable governance, political inclusion, and national integration. The 2015 general elections in Nigeria were not only the 5th quadrennial since 1999 but the most competitive and divisive in the annals of electoral democracy in the country (Nwangwu, Onah, & Otu, 2018). This is mainly because of the zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics which is commonly propelled by the predatory character of its ruling class. The unprecedented campaign was full of dramatic twists and turns, including hate speeches and acrimony till the elections in 2015. It led to bitter tumultuous elections laid bare by divisions within the country. The elections were characterised by fear, hate campaigns, and pre-election violence that made the build-up one of the most explosive and contentious in Nigeria since its independence in 1960. For instance, the former Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Elder Godsdoy Orubebe disrupted proceeding at the National Collation Centre of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for about 30-min while accusing the Commission's Chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega, of being biased. With his candidate, Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) trailing Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) by a wide margin with a few states to go, Orubebe made a last-ditch effort to prevent the announcement of results; alleging that Jega had colluded with APC to falsify the results of the presidential election. While accusing Jega of being "partial" and "tribalistic", Orubebe vowed to disrupt further announcement of the results, asking Jega to respond to the issues raised by the PDP in a letter to the Commission alleging election irregularities in the Northern states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Katsina (Adeniyi, 2017; Afolabi & Avasiloae, 2015; Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, 2015a).

As a consequence of the acrimonious and hate-laden election, post-election appointments were designed to widen the chasm of ethnic, regional, partisan and religious lines in Nigeria. This is because the ruling class places a high premium on the control of state power which is the biggest and most easily accessible source of wealth accumulation. They use all means to attain this objective including fostering ethnic sectarianism and political repression. Being the exclusive tool

of those in power (who are agents of ethnic groups), defending their prebends becomes a very fundamental and charged issue; politics and elections become an overriding and war-like exercise waged among ethnic groups (Ibeanu, 1993).

The preparations for the 2015 general elections followed a pattern that made elections acquire more dangerous dimensions in which social and political fault-lines, like ethnic animosity, religious dichotomy and social discontent, become convenient expression before and after the elections. This is traceable to the zoning arrangement of the PDP which was jettisoned in the run up to the 2011 general elections. Zoning was widely used by the PDP as a mechanism for uniting and welding diverse ethno-regional and religious interests into a cohesive nation-state in Nigeria. According to Section 7 (2) (c) of the PDP Constitution, in pursuance of the principle of equity, justice and fairness, PDP shall adhere to the policy of rotation and zoning of party and public elective offices, and it shall be enforced by the appropriate executive committee at all levels (Peoples Democratic Party, 2006).

The emergence of a viable opposition party coincided with a period of great tension between North and South. Essentially, the tension is traceable to the decision of President Goodluck Jonathan to contest the 2011 elections; a decision that made many Northern politicians to feel cheated of their turn in producing the president and also induced electoral violence. General Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim with cult-like Muslim followers in the North and the main opposition candidate from the APC, won the presidential election and this marked the first time an incumbent president would lose re-election and concede defeat to an opposition candidate in Nigeria. The election witnessed an intense manipulation of the Christian-Muslim divide and the North-South dichotomy which added to the already existing tension in the country. Deliberate spread of falsehood that demeans other people on the basis of religion, ethnicity, gender or state of origin was extensively used during the electioneering. The consequence of the foregoing is that the elections remained the most divisive ever held in the country. The language used during political campaigns and rallies was provocative and divisive. Many leading politicians from Northern Nigeria had insisted that state power must return to the region while President Goodluck Jonathan from South-South wanted a second term in office. This set the tottering stage for the presidential election.

The 2015 general elections acquired high rate of litigations, especially over postponement of the elections, the constitutionality of *electronic smart card reader* and the qualification of the APC presidential candidate. In addition, the elections acquired the characteristics of conflicts and desperate preparations as if it were a full-blown war. This development made national integration a difficult task today more than any time in history. Like all elections before 2015, it witnessed the assemblage of thousands of people composed of poll officials, party agents, security personnel and election observers. It also required the acquisition of over 120,000 ballot boxes and materials for the elections. For another thing, the heat and passion often associated with elections in Nigeria often make it appear like war. This is because Nigeria's electoral democracy is predominantly zero-sum whereby the losers lose everything and the winners win everything; reminiscent to the payment of reparations of an enemy defeated in a war (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2012; Mbah, Nwangwu, & Edeh, 2017). Over the years, INEC has been confronted with serious security problems in the build-up to, during and in the aftermath of elections. Although the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria was the first since 1960, whose outcome led to the emergence of a new government under a different political party (from PDP to APC), the outcome of the hate speech-infested election and (mis)management of victory by the APC have further widened ethno-regional and religious cleavages, thereby threatening national integration. Thus, this paper investigates the link between the outcome of the 2015 presidential election, political exclusion and national integration in Nigeria.

2. Class character of the state and contentious elections in Nigeria

The question of class in contemporary politics is acquiring a particular importance both in theory and practice of politics, especially in Africa. There is no doubt the operational and conceptual

ambiguities associated with class in advanced economies led many African nationalists and political commentators to assume *a priori* that class only has a limited application in Africa.² This is largely because the social structures and competing affiliations like ethnic, caste or religious loyalties were upheld as more manifest determinants of an individual's social role (Cohen, 1972). In the African context it has been possible to argue on the one hand that class formation and crystallisation have not, and may never occur; or, on the other hand, that if class structures are emerging, that these are of peripheral importance in the determination of social conflict. In other words, the argument presupposes that Africa lies outside the mainstream of world historical development.

Members of the African ruling class are not homogeneous and so is its Nigerian variant (Berman, 1998). The situation faced by the members, is in large part, made up of relationships with others in the same class. Hence, an analysis of the character of these relationships is required to make the reasons for their actions intelligible and to understand their consequences. Admittedly, the idea of a ruling class is a structural concept and it embodies claims about the way relations extending through the whole society are ordered. The ruling class owns the state and there is a circulation of ownership of the state within the same class. This circulation and its proceeds are *via* the state power and those who control it. Election as one of the legitimate means of acquiring state power, despite its relevance is, in most cases, riddled with conflicts and contentions in Nigeria. To carry forward this conflict, elections provide the members of the ruling class the main vehicle of class conflict. This is because to be excluded from the class means ultimate ruin and to be included means an everlasting prosperity. The struggle for state power mirrors the struggle for economic resources which follow so rigidly and crudely the geometry of power. Hence, distribution instead of wealth creation is badly skewed against other ethnic nationalities outside the gate of state power (Mbah et al., 2017). This heightens ethnic divisions and chauvinism; thereby making in-group/out-group disharmony irresistible and inevitable for the control of state power.

Admittedly, this can be conducive to exclusion and marginalisation of groups and individuals in the pursuit of ethnic or sectional interests. For the Nigerian ruling class, development is synonymous with personal enrichment and the use of state power for this process has been theoretically and practically accepted by them. Once state power is achieved, it is often used for personal or sectional economic enrichment of those who have achieved it and for their supporters, friends, members of their families, concubines, cronies, courtiers of government, and praise singers. The emergence of corruption and political manipulation is due to the absence of an independent and creative ruling class of the type that brought the industrial revolution to the western world and Japan or even the self-disciplined and sacrificing type that engineered self-sustained growth in Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore (Nnoli, 1993).

Resultantly, the state in Nigeria principally deals with its members as social agents of ethnic groups (not as free, individual and equal citizens), and the power of that state exists as *prebends* parcelled out to ethnic groups instead of a unified, objective, and independent entity standing above society and expressing the corporate existence of the people-nation (Ibeanu, 1993). Being the exclusive tool of those in power, defending their prebends becomes a very fundamental and charged issue; politics and elections become an overriding and war-like exercise waged among ethnic groups (Ibeanu, 1993). In the ensuing war-like struggles, especially through elections, different groups and individuals try to outdo one another in bending fragile rules, and short-circuiting laid down processes. Instructively though, wars, guns, and votes are about power (Collier, 2010). Winners and losers alike do not trust the rules of election as well as themselves because these rules are flouted by both losers and winners, thus further weakening the rules and procedures for credible elections, and making it impossible for a stable and legitimate regime of power transfer and winner to emerge. This lawlessness also explains why personalisation of power is very rampant in Africa (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2014).

As a result, "politics is everything and everything is politics including life and death. In Nigeria, whoever wins in politics wins everything, and whoever loses, loses everything including lives and

livelihoods” (Ibeanu & Mbah, 2014, p. 47). The state remains one of the sectional interests rather than a representative of the collective interests of the people. It exists as prebends parcelled out to various sectional interests, and in Nigerian case, ethnic interests in particular. Thus, politics becomes fiercely prebendal as ethnic and other sectional interests engage themselves in a fatal contest in elections for increasing, allocating and defending their share of the “powers” of the state (Joseph, 1987). In effect, politics has become for many, a springboard for instant wealth. It makes, by state approval, instant millionaires of people that successfully participate in the political game. For that, many are prepared to lie, cheat, defraud, fraternise, intimidate, embarrass, harass, kill their opponents, and endanger the process of elections and its procedures.

There are an excessive premium on election and power which makes politics and elections more of warfare rather than a process of bargaining, discussion, and orderly transfer of power. Thus, there is a dominance of exclusive rather than inclusive strategies for elections and power. These general characteristics made the 2015 elections in Nigeria extremely contentious and war-like episode. The unwholesome practices also culminated in division of the country along religious, regional and ethnic lines immediately after the elections; a division that has been exacerbated by the exclusionary leadership style of the current regime of President Muhammadu Buhari. For instance, after the tension-soaked elections, the President declared that the constituents that gave him 97% of the votes cannot, in all honesty, be treated equally, on some issues, with those that gave him 5%.³ It shows how sectional and personal interests have permeated national politics.

However, political development goes beyond the prebendalisation of office to even distribution of national resources in order to expand the living standard and material well-being of the people (Uricoechea, 1980). Contrary to the provisions of Goal #10.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), post-election appointments and development policies in Nigeria since 2015 are not all-inclusive, just, equitable, and populist.

The division within the ruling class has widened the chances of national integration since considerations for appointments are made on the basis of religion and ethnicity. This division is reflected in the political rivalries between the members of the two major parties, with the APC circling their wagons around Buhari and the opposition party, PDP allying with Jonathan. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, the PDP alleged that APC is filled with Muslim fundamentalists that want to Islamise Nigeria. At the same time, the then Vice-President, Namadi Sambo, while campaigning in Dutse, Jigawa State, warned the North that the vice presidential candidate of the APC, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, has over 5,000 churches and by implication, should be seen as a religious threat to the Muslim North (Okonkwo, 2015). This tends to fracture the country by introducing distrust and disrespect among Nigerians. This is complex since the ethnic and religious entanglements and divisions are within communities, local governments as much as they are between ethnic nationalities (Okonkwo, 2015). The post-election violence in 2011 may be called a crisis of expectation in the context of zero-sum political competition.

3. Contentious issues in the 2015 general elections

The zero-sum nature of Nigerian politics and predatory character of its ruling class came to the fore during the 2015 presidential election in the country. As noted earlier, the election was the most contentious and divisive in the annals of the country’s electoral democracy. The contention was mainly orchestrated by the emergence of the viable opposition party, postponement of the election, constitutionality of the biometric smart card reader, eligibility of the APC presidential candidate, and the use of hate speech in the run up to the election. What follows is a discourse of how some of these factors coalesced to make the 2015 presidential election contentious.

4. Postponement of the 2015 general elections

Issues of postponement of elections and sometimes refusal to announce election dates are increasingly becoming a new twist in African politics. It is needless to say that such tendencies are more pronounced in social formations with a high dose of political *sit-tightism*. In the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for instance, the presidential election was fixed on 23 December 2018, two days to Christmas, after several delays and postponements. The president of the *Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante* (CENI) (also known as the Independent National Electoral Commission), Corneille Nangaa, used the insurrectionist violence in the central Kasai region as a pretext for the delay (Welle, 2017). Notwithstanding, electoral preparations thus far have excluded important elements of the *Saint Sylvester Agreement* of 31 December 2016, which set out steps for a democratic transition of power (International Crisis Group, 2018). A similar tendency also characterised the Gabonese legislative elections, which were postponed to 9 July 2017, and later to April 2018.

The postponement of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria from February to March/April 2015 was one of the most contentious issues in the elections. The postponement was based on the adverse security situation across the nation, especially the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East. The elections occurred after a controversial six-week postponement following insistence by security agencies that the elections be pushed forward for them to accelerate the battle against the insurgency in the North-East. INEC obliged and subsequently postponed the elections. The delay became highly contentious and was seen by many opposition politicians as a foul play to favour the ruling party. INEC's argument was that the issue of security which is outside the control of the Commission is equally crucial for the successful conduct of the 2015 general elections. It, therefore, became pertinent for INEC to seriously consider the security advisory presented to it by the security and intelligence services in order to provide a safe environment for personnel, voters, election observers and election materials during the elections. Where the security services strongly advise against the conduct of the election, it would be foolhardy and unconscionable of the Commission to deploy personnel and call voters out in such a situation knowing full well the implications. Due to the foregoing, the Council of State and the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) wrote a letter to the Commission, drawing its attention to the then developments in the North-East. The letter stated that security could not be guaranteed during the 14 and 28 February 2015 elections. This advice was reinforced by the armed services and intelligence chiefs which unanimously reiterated that the safety and security of INEC operations cannot be guaranteed, and that the security services needed at least six weeks within which to conclude a major military operation against Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East (Ogala, 2015). Thus, the elections were postponed. Apart from the above, Sections 25 (1) and 26 (1) of the 2010 *Electoral Act* (as amended) gives INEC the power to postpone elections if it so desires.

That was not the first time that INEC had postponed a presidential election. It did so in 2011 but this time the rescheduling came in the context of a far tighter political race between Goodluck Jonathan of PDP and Muhammadu Buhari of APC. It met with widespread condemnation. The then opposition party, the APC, described it as "highly provocative" and "a major setback for Nigerian democracy", while the United States said it was "disappointed" (De Villiers, 2015). In Nigeria, many people saw it as a desperate attempt to retain political power by the PDP-led government. However, no law was actually breached as a result of the postponement. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria requires that election be held a minimum of 30 days before the deadline for the termination of an existing government, in this case, 29 May 2015. Reactions indicate general displeasure with the shift. On the other hand, many see it as a better option than organising a shoddy and ill-prepared poll. At yet another level, reactions were split along party lines, and the postponement was widely seen as a ploy to give the ruling PDP an opportunity to gain ground in the campaign (De Villiers, 2015).

The shift of election dates from 14 and 28 February to 4 March and 11 April gave many legal minded persons in the country a cause for concern. Although the new dates did not violate the provisions of the *Electoral Act, 2010* (as amended), the concern was about the law which says all cases relating to elections should be determined and concluded within 180 days. Besides Boko Haram insurgency, the second and perhaps more important reason

for the postponement of the elections was the fear that INEC's level of preparedness was questionable given that the percentage of those who collected their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) was not much. Prior to the postponement, data released by INEC showed that collection/distribution of the PVCs across the geo-political zones were as follows: South-West 63.68%, South-South 63.9%, South-East 49%, North-East 78%, North-West 77% and North-Central 52% (Okenyodo, 2015). The South-East geo-political zone with 49% is the lowest in the nation. That was a worrisome situation because it meant that about 51% of eligible voters would not cast their ballots in 2015 general elections. However, the high level of PVC collection in the North-East, despite the prevalence of Boko Haram insurgency in the zone, was vehemently contested. For the purpose of the 2015 general elections, INEC had announced that only persons with PVCs would be eligible to vote. In effect, anyone who did not possess the card stood disqualified.

Arising from the above, the 2015 general elections which were scheduled to be held on 14 and 28 February 2015 were postponed by INEC to 28 March and 11 April 2015. The *Electoral Act 2010* also gives INEC the power to postpone elections by a period of not more than 150 days before the expiration of an incumbent government and not later than 30 days before the end of the same. The power of INEC to postpone elections within the general parameters set by the 1999 *Constitution*, although wide, is not unlimited. This provision in the 1999 *Constitution* gives INEC the leeway to act arbitrarily or to be manipulated by politicians. In this context, Alebiosu (2015, p. 5) observes:

No doubt, INEC was arm-twisted by the security apparatus of the Nigerian state in rescheduling the 2015 general elections; and this singular act embarrassed Nigeria and Nigerians. Indeed, the postponement of the general election appears to almost erode public credibility and confidence in the elections. It must also be stated that billions of naira of public funds had been expended towards preparations for the elections.

It is important to state that Section 26 of the *Electoral Act* empowers INEC to postpone elections where there is a reason to believe that a serious breach of the peace would occur if the elections are held on a said date (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010). Therefore, the postponement of the elections is within the purview of INEC's powers following security concerns raised by the National Security Adviser (NSA) that it required six weeks to put the security situation in the North-East in place before elections would be held. Yet, the postponement posed serious constitutional challenges and became very contentious especially, from the perspective of the main opposition party and Northern political oligarchs.

The shifts which started with insinuations by the NSA, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, became real following deep concerns raised by service chiefs to INEC, expressing deep security concerns over the conduct of the elections. In very clear terms, logistics, lives and property across the board and most importantly the lives of INEC officials could not be guaranteed (Nkwocha, 2015). The security situation in states like Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno and Yobe had led to many internal population displacements, as many as one million, coupled with the fear that they and even others not displaced would be discouraged from coming out to vote, and hence disenfranchised.

5. Constitutionality of the smart card reader

The Smart Card Reader (SCR) is a portable electronic device designed and configured to authenticate and verify INEC-issued PVCs on election day. The device uses a cryptographic technology that has ultra-low power consumption with a single core frequency of 1.2 GHz and an Android 4.2.2 Operating System (INEC, 2014). It was used to remove duplication of voters from the voters' register. Voters were issued with biometric voter cards containing name, age, identity number and fingerprints. These were used to check electoral fraud at polling stations. The SCR was introduced as part of the registration and authentication of duly registered voters. The device had been promoted by INEC as an anti-electoral fraud machine and was introduced to enhance

the integrity of the electoral process in Nigeria (Amenaghawon, 2015; Nwangwu et al., 2018). It was also programmed to work for specific polling units on election day only. Among other things, the device made the 2015 elections markedly different and contentious from previous ones. However, technical hitches were recorded and some legal and constitutional issues arose from the use of the device.

On 7 March 2015, INEC test-ran the reliability of the biometric technology in 225 out of the total 120,000 polling units and 358 out of the 155,000 voting centres that were used for the elections (Idowu, 2015). The test-run of the device took place in 12 states, namely: Rivers and Delta (South-South), Kano and Kebbi (North-West), Anambra and Ebonyi (South-East), Ekiti and Lagos (South-West), Bauchi and Taraba (North-East) as well as Niger and Nasarawa (North-Central). While acknowledging the challenges of the device in confirming fingerprints, the Commission expressed satisfaction that the basic duty of the card reader— to authenticate the genuineness of PVCs— was in almost all cases achieved. However, the 41% failure rate of the device during the test-run accounted for the alternative of physical authentication of voters (through the completion of an Incident Form) provided they are legitimate holders of genuine PVCs. It is important to note that the 41% failure rate of the SCR had nothing to do with the literacy level of voters.

These hitches pertaining to the validity of the use of SCR in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria became a highly contested and contentious issue well after the elections. On the one hand, proponents of the use of SCR have viewed the innovation as a deliberate effort in ensuring the conduct of a free and fair election while, on the other hand, there have been arguments that INEC neither has the legitimate authority nor capacity to use the card reader (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015). The use of card readers despite its supposed benefits generated a heated debate between the PDP and APC. The PDP expressed their reservations about the insistence of INEC to use the electronic device while the APC favoured its usage at the polls. The APC had alleged that the PDP's public opposition to the device in the rescheduled elections has shown the accuracy of the APC's accusations that the ruling party is doing all in its powers to either prevent the election from being held or to rig it. The party argued that the PDP/Jonathan Administration was doing everything possible to sabotage the machine and prevent its use. On the contrary, PDP accused the leadership of APC of having hidden agenda because of its vociferous clamour for the electronic device (Adeyemi, Abubakar, & Jimoh, 2015). It became so contentious in the build up to the elections that many legal experts argued that it was illegal and unconstitutional to use it during the elections. Section 52 (1) (b) of the *Electoral Act 2010* which states that "the use of electronic voting machine, for the time being, is prohibited" is often cited to support this claim. However, the card reader is not a voting machine but a verification device for intending voters. The device is designed to read the information contained in the embedded chip of the PVCs issued by INEC, to verify the authenticity of PVC and also carry out a verification of the intending voter by matching the biometrics obtained from the voters on the spot with the ones stored on the PVC (INEC, 2014).

The ability of the card reader to perform the above task and equally keep a tally of the total number of voters accredited at the polling unit and forwarding the information to central database server over a Global System for Mobile network makes the device a welcome development in the annals of elections and democratisation in Nigeria. The fundamental basis for the introduction of the device in the 2015 general elections was to prevent electoral fraud, ensure that votes counted, reduce litigations arising from elections, authenticate and verify voters, protect the integrity and credibility of Nigerian elections, audit results from polling units across the country, and ensure transparency and accountability by INEC in election administration. Under paragraph 15 (1) (a)–(e) of the Third Schedule to the *1999 Constitution*, (as amended), "INEC is mandated to organise, undertake and supervise all elections in Nigeria, conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the registration of voters for the purpose of any election" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011, p. 277).

The use of the electronic card reader machine for accreditation of voters was provided for in the Approved Guidelines and Regulations for the Conduct of the 2015 General Elections, but not in

either the *Constitution* or the *Electoral Act*. However, the device was never intended to supplant, displace or supersede the voters' register. The National Assembly, in its wisdom, did not deem it necessary to bowdlerise the said analogue procedure in Section 49 of the *Electoral Act* so that the card reader procedure would be the sole determinant of a valid accreditation process. From the Corrigendum No. 2, made on 28 March 2015, amending paragraph 13 (b) of the Approved Guidelines, it stands to reason that the SCR was meant to supplement the voters' register and was never designed to supplant it. Thus, the questions relating to the legality of the device were misplaced. As argued in Nwangwu et al. (2018), Section 52 (1) (b) of the Act proscribes electronic voting (e-voting) but the SCR is a mere form of identification and accreditation, not a means of casting a ballot.

The concept of election denotes a process consisting of accreditation, voting, collation and declaration of results. Accreditation in an election process is a prerequisite for the validation of the credibility of votes. In fact, any vote returned without accreditation for a particular voting unit cannot be said to have been obtained through due electoral process (Yesufu, 2016). The importance of accreditation is underscored by the fact that elections can be nullified for lack of accreditation. Section 49 of the *Electoral Act* describes the process of accreditation in a most explicit way as follows:

- (1) Any person intending to vote with his voter's card, shall present himself to a presiding officer at the polling unit in the constituency in which his name is registered with his voter's card.
- (2) The presiding officer shall, on being satisfied that the name of the person is on the register of voters, issue him a ballot paper and indicate on the register that the person has voted.

According to Nweze (as cited in Yesufu, 2016), despite the authorisation of the use of SCR by the *Guidelines and Manual*, the *Electoral Act 2010* (as amended), in Section 49 (1) and (2), had ordained an analogue procedure for the accreditation process. As a corollary to the procedure outlined above, Section 53 (2) of the Act provides the consequences for the breach, negation or violation of the sanctity of the actual poll sequel to the consummation of the accreditation procedure in Section 49. Section 53 (2) states:

where the votes cast at an election in any polling unit exceed the number of registered voters in that polling unit, the result of the election for that polling unit shall be declared null and void by the Commission and another election may be conducted at a date to be fixed by the Commission where the result at that polling unit may affect the overall result in the Constituency.

Despite INEC's power under the 1999 *Constitution* and the *Electoral Act 2010* to regulate the conduct of elections in Nigeria, the divergent views on the legality of the SCR appear to be as a result of Section 52 of the Act which prohibits electronic voting. However, proponents of the card reader often distinguish the voting procedure outlawed by Section 52 from the authentication process, which they claim that the machine seeks to achieve. This is because Section 52 merely regulates electronic voting not electronic devices such as the card reader, which authenticates the identity of a voter by verifying that his or her fingerprints match the biometrics stored in the embedded chip of his or her PVC (Nwangwu et al., 2018; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015).

A study of electronic voting, especially in advanced democracies, reveals that the physical presence of a voter at a polling centre is not necessarily required as he/she is able to vote from a different location electronically. This is not the case with the SCR during the elections. Therefore, a closer reading of Section 52 (1) (a) and (b), does confirm that a card reader is not an electronic voting machine but an anti-rigging device. It also reduces the possibility of results from a polling unit being liable to nullification and avoidance (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2015). Problems raised by the SCR led to objections before the tribunals and Court of Appeal in which it was alleged that there were irregularities in respect to the application of the technology during the 2015

elections as many polling units did not have card readers or did not use them even when available. The decision of the Court of Appeal in *APC vs. Agbaje & others* establishes the long-standing principle that no ground of an election petition can be formulated outside the ones prescribed under Section 138 (1) of the *Electoral Act 2010* (as amended).

6. The use of hate speech in the run up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria

The democratisation of politics in Nigeria and indeed, other jurisdictions like Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe has been adversely affected by the preponderance of hate campaign, especially during the prelude to general elections. By hate campaign, we mean any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which can incite people to violence or prejudicial action. It is noteworthy that every abusive language does not necessarily translate into hate speech. In other words, it is important to situate every speech within its wider political, economic and social context in order to determine whether it is hateful or not (Van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2000). As identified by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room (2015b), for a language to be adjudged a hate speech, it has to be gauged in relation to its severity, intent, content and extent. Hate speech can be identified by the severity of what is said, the intensity of the harm advocated, the content of the communication and the public nature of the speech. A cursory look at Table 1 clearly indicates that the above criteria are fully met in all the speeches made by the political elite during the run up to the 2015 general elections. By the same token, freedom of speech cannot be sacrificed on the altar of hate speech. Put differently, hate campaign is not within the purview of freedom of expression. Just as free speech cannot be justifiably used within the framework of relevant laws in any society to inflict noise pollution on the environment, it cannot be a basis for incitement of the youthful but naïve followers to political violence or mass murder. The use of hate speech as an ointment that lubricates the machinery of political violence has remained antithetical to the democratisation of politics. Hate speech is usually enmeshed in mudslinging, bigotry and insults.

The prevalence of hate speech during the build up to the 2015 general elections is a testimony to the dearth of issue-based campaigns. Campaign around various questions of public policy is meant to be guided by the *grundnorm*—the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). In terms of quality of governance, Chapter Two of the *Constitution* offers a rich mine of ideas to ideology-inclined parties and politicians. Such campaigns are usually built around *how* controversial, but topical issues and conversations of national concern would be tackled by a given candidate or political party. In Nigeria today, such vexatious issues might include political restructuring, the Niger Delta, Biafra separatist movement, economic recession, internal population displacement, energy security and food security (Ikeanyibe, Ezeibe, Mbah, & Nwangwu, 2018). Apart from the ineffectiveness of extant regulatory frameworks of the state such as the *Electoral Act 2010* (as amended), hate speech has continued unabated in Nigeria's body-politic because the ideology of development counts for nothing in the country. Thus, Nwangwu and Ononogbu (2014) posit that the prevailing ideological vacuum of most political parties is now filled with primordial identities like ethnicity, regionalism, religion as well as money-bag-politics as virile instruments of political mobilisation. Instead of mobilising people around issues of development on horizontal basis, the elite are busy manipulating the people vertically using regional, ethnic and religious prejudices.

The saturation of the political atmosphere with hate speech during the prelude to the 2015 general elections can hardly be understood outside the abandonment of the zoning policy of the PDP. Following the insistence of former President Goodluck Jonathan to contest the 2011 Presidential Election against the zoning arrangement of the party, some politicians of Hausa/Fulani extraction with megalomaniac inclinations decided to use every available means to ensure the return of political power to the Northern region. The Northern Political Leadership Forum (NPLF) which housed most of these politicians used different strategies, including hate campaign, to undermine the candidature of President Jonathan. For instance, it was under this platform that politicians like Alhaji Lawal Kaita, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, General Ibrahim

Table 1. Checklist of major hate speeches in the run-up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria

S/N	Date	Hate Speaker(s)	Hate Speech	Context of the Speech	Source
1	28 March 2012	Alhaji Lawal Kaita, PDP chieftain and former governor of old Kaduna State	A Northerner must become president in 2015 or Nigeria will divide. We hear rumours all over that Jonathan is planning to contest in 2015. Well, the north is going to be prepared if the country remains one. That is, if the country remains one, we are going to fight for it. If not, everybody can go his way.	At a press conference in Katsina, the former governor stated this while commenting on the stand of the PDP on consensus at its convention.	Premium Times, 8 December 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/151053-nerve-lawal-kaita-shame-junaid-mohammed-femi-fani-kayode.html
2	14 May 2012	General Muhammadu Buhari	If what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon will be soaked in blood.	Mr. Buhari stated this in Kaduna while addressing members of the Congress for Progressive Change from Niger State who paid him a courtesy visit.	Binniyat, L. (2012). <i>Vanguard</i> , 15 May. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/2015-ll-be-bloody-if-buhari/
3	2 June 2013	General Muhammadu Buhari	The military offensives against the Boko Haram insurgents are anti-north.	He stated this while featuring as "Guest of the Week", a Hausa programme of the Kaduna-based Liberty Radio.	<i>This Day</i> , 3 June 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/buhari-military-offensive-against-boko-haram-anti-north/
4	22 August 2013	Junaid Mohammed	Let me say this, if without the consent of the law, they rig the election the way they rigged 2011 election, there will be mayhem in Nigeria.	A telephone chat with the <i>Vanguard Newspaper</i>	<i>Vanguard</i> , 23 August 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/08/there-ll-be-mayhem-if-jonathan-rigs-2015-polls-junaid-mohammed/
5	29 November 2013	Junaid Mohammed	There would be bloodshed if Jonathan stood for the 2015 elections.	In an exclusive interview with <i>Sunday Sun</i> from his base in Kano, Kano State	<i>Sunday Sun</i> , 1 December 2013. Retrieved from: http://sunnewsonline.com/new/2015-therell-bloodshed-jonathan-runs-warns-junaid-mohammed/

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

S/N	Date	Hate Speaker(s)	Hate Speech	Context of the Speech	Source
6	23 January 2014	Malam Nasir El-Rufai, APC chieftain	The next elections would be bloody and many people are likely to die. The only alternative left to get power is to take it by force.	The APC chieftain spoke at the Transformed to Transform (the T2T) Nigeria Conference and Career Fair, held at the Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja.	Punch, 28 January 2014. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com/news/sss-detains-el-rufai/
7	16 April 2014	Vice Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd.), former governor of Adamawa State	The Jonathan's administration counter-terror operation against Boko Haram insurgents is tantamount to a "full-fledged genocide" against the North.	The former governor stated this in a memo he addressed to the Northern Nigeria Governors Forum.	Odunsi, W. (2014). "Full text of Nyako's letter", <i>Daily Post Newsletter</i> [Online] 19 Apr. Retrieved from: http://daily-post.ng/2014/04/19/pdp-running-government-impunity-led-evil-minded-persons-full-text-nyakos-letter/
8	26 November 2014	General Muhammadu Buhari, APC presidential aspirant	The country may be overrun by the dreaded Boko Haram sect in the next four years should the PDP be allowed to continue in power.	The then APC presidential aspirant stated this in Asaba during a meeting with APC delegates from the South-South in preparation for the 10 December Congress of the party.	Definitelykingsley.com. Friday, 28 November 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.definitelykingsley.com/2014/11/boko-haram-will-run-over-nigeria-except.html
9	27 November 2014	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	A vote for PDP in 2015 General Elections is a vote for continuation of insurgency.	In Enugu during an address to Enugu State delegates of the APC national convention.	http://www.osunde defender.org/?p=187850
10	19 November 2014	Ibrahim Shehu Shema, Governor of Katsina State	You should not be bordered with cockroaches of politics. Cockroaches are only found in the toilet even at homes. If you see cockroach in your house, crush them (apparently referring to his political opponents).	At PDP political rally in Katsina, Katsina State.	Premium Times, 19 November 2014. Retrieved from: www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/171411-katsina-governor-shema-caught-video-urging-supporters-crush-kill-political-opponents.html#amp
11	2014	Ima Sadiq, an Islamic cleric	Muslims vote for Buhari. It is a sin to support a non-Muslim	Through his Twitter handle, the cleric canvassed support for Buhari's candidature.	Twitter handle, Saturday, 27 December 2014

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

S/N	Date	Hate Speaker(s)	Hate Speech	Context of the Speech	Source
12	2014	Professor Ango Abdullahi, Secretary of the Northern Elders Forum	Those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 will be considered an enemy of the North	During an interview in his office in Bauchi.	Vanguard, 15 October 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/10/2015-well-regard-anyone-vote-pdp-enemy-north-nef/
13	5 May 2013	Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, the leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteers Force (NDPVF)	There will be no peace, not only in the Niger Delta, but everywhere if Goodluck Jonathan is not president by 2015, except God takes his life, which we do not pray for.	At a press conference in Abuja after a meeting with the Special Assistant to the President on Niger Delta Affairs.	Vanguard, 5 May 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/there-will-be-no-peace-if-jonathan-is-not-returned-in-2015-dokubo-asari/
14	23 April, 2014	Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, APC national leader	It is going to be rig and roast. We are prepared not to go to court but drive them out	He spoke at his investiture as the Chancellor of Ladoko Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho and award of Honourary Doctor of Science in Management Science.	Vanguard, 24 April 2014. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/04/ekiti-osun-guber-pollsl-rig-roast-tinubu/
15	2014	Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, the leader of NDPVF	2015 is more than do-or-die. You are a man and I am a man, we are going to meet at the battlefield	The militant leader spoke at a strategy meeting with former Niger Delta militants organised by the Niger Delta Development Commission.	News Express, 3 May 2014
16	2015	Patience Jonathan, former First Lady	<i>Wetin him dey find again? Him dey drag with him pikin mate, old man wey no get brain, him brain don die pata pata (What is Buhari looking for? Old man that does not know his age. Your brain is dead).</i>	During the PDP women presidential campaign rally in Kogi State	Reported by The Express New, 4 March 2014

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

S/N	Date	Hate Speaker(s)	Hate Speech	Context of the Speech	Source
17	2015	Patience Jonathan, former First Lady	Our people no dey born shildren wey dem no dey fit count. Our men no dey born shildren throwy for street. We no dey like the people for that side (Our people do not give birth to uncountable children. Our men don't give birth to children that they dump in streets. We are not like people from that part of the country). Apparently, the former first lady was referring to the <i>almajiri</i> system in northern Nigeria.	At a campaign rally in Calabar, the capital of Cross River State	<i>The Nation</i> , 10 March 2015
18	2015	Patience Jonathan, former First Lady	Anybody that come and tell you change (that is, the APC slogan), stone that person... What you did not do in 1985, is it now that old age has caught up with you that you want to come and change...you cannot change rather you will turn back to a baby	Calabar, the capital of Cross River State	<i>The Nation</i> (2015). "The Complete Works of Patience Jonathan", on Sunday, 15 March.
19	2015	Peter Ayodele Fayose, the Governor of Ekiti State	Buhari would likely die in office if elected, recall that Murtala Muhammed, Sani Abacha and Umaru Yar'Adua, all former heads of state from the North West like Buhari, had died in office.	In January 2015, the Governor stated these repeatedly in front page newspaper advertorials.	19 January 2015, <i>ThisDay</i> and other national dailies

Source: Compiled by the authors

Babangida, Dr. Burkola Saraki, Junaid Mohammed, General Aliyu Gusau, among others, made incendiary speeches against the aspiration and candidature of President Jonathan (Ikeanyibe et al., 2018; Mbah et al., 2017). Similarly, other Northern politicians outside the NPLF like Shehu Sani (former civil rights activist) and General Muhammadu Buhari (frontline opposition politician and first runners-up during the 2003, 2007 and 2011 presidential elections) also contributed to the enmeshment of the political atmosphere with hate speech. For instance, Alhaji Lawal Kaita stated that the North was determined to make the country ungovernable for President Jonathan or any other Southerner who found his way to the seat of power on the platform of the PDP against the principle of the party's zoning policy (*Nigerian Tribune*, 13 October 2010). Similarly, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (apparently quoting from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*) stated that those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable (Okocha, 2010). Although it is difficult to establish a direct relationship between hate campaign and electoral violence, experience from Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria, Zanzibar, Zimbabwe and even Germany has shown that hate speech is usually deployed to prepare the ground for political violence. For instance, German Nazi Leader, Joseph Goebbels, deployed it against the Jews to prepare the ground for the Holocaust in which more than six million were murdered.

Despite the subtle prohibition of certain conducts at political campaigns by Sections 95 (1) and 102 of the *Electoral Act 2010* (as amended), Paragraph 10 (c) of the INEC-issued *Guidelines for Political Rallies* and other related provisions found in international conventions like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which the Nigerian government acceded to in July 1993), it was not sufficient to deter megalomaniac Nigerian politicians during the prelude to the 2015 general elections. Section 95 (1) of the *Electoral Act* states that "no political campaign or slogan shall be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings". Sub-section 2 further proscribes the use of abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language and insinuations designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions during political campaigns (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010). In spite of the destructive capacity of hate campaign, Alhaji Lawal Kaita (PDP chieftain and former governor of old Kaduna State), General Muhammadu Buhari (frontline opposition leader and the incumbent president of Nigeria), Junaid Mohammed, Malam Nasir El-Rufai (APC chieftain and the incumbent governor of Kaduna State), Vice-Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd.) (former governor of Adamawa State), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (former Vice-President), Shema Ibrahim (former Governor of Katsina State), Ima Sadiq (an Islamic cleric), Professor Ango Abdullahi (former Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the incumbent Secretary of the Northern Elders Forum), Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari (leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteers Force), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu (acclaimed APC national leader) and Patience Jonathan (former First Lady) among others, employed such speeches during political campaign. For instance, El-Rufai categorically stated that the 2015 elections would be bloody and that the only alternative left to get power is to take it by force (*Punch*, 28 January 2014). Similarly, Mrs. Patience Jonathan during a campaign rally in Calabar enjoined PDP supporters to stone anybody that shouts *change* (the APC slogan) (*The Nation*, 15 March 2015). Apparently, this made it impossible for APC to campaign in Okrika, (the hometown of the former First Lady) Rivers State, a state adjudged as a political stronghold of President Jonathan. Table 1 chronicles some hate speeches that characterised the run up to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

These hate campaigns were used to ridicule, slander or insult the sensibilities of political opponents. They really heightened the already charged political environment negatively, leaving the people more divided during and after the elections. These speeches have negative consequences for democratisation of politics, post-election peace building and national integration in the country. They could provoke people to violence and incite them against others' religion, nationality or race. It thus presents a profound challenge to the Nigerian democratic experience and national integration. This is because such speeches are not usually based on issues of campaigns and elections but on trivial ethnic and religious matters that could precipitate political violence.

While the 2015 general elections were preceded by inflammatory speeches (see Table 1), they largely failed to culminate in post-election violence. This is attributable to the broad-mindedness of some frontline candidates who lost elections and congratulated the winners (Nwangwu et al., 2018). This happened first at the national level when Dr Jonathan called to congratulate General Muhammadu Buhari on 31 March 2015. This exemplary conduct was emulated by defeated PDP governorship candidates in Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Lagos, Niger, and Oyo States. These gestures helped to douse the tension that was generated during the cantankerous election campaigns.

It is worthy of note that the absence of clearly articulated laws against hate campaign has further undermined Nigeria's unity. An equally worrisome development is the weakness of the extant institutional and administrative mechanisms (like the National Assembly, Judiciary, INEC, National Human Rights Commission, among others) for the enforcement of existing laws. This is so because politicians (lawmakers) whose conducts are meant to be regulated by these laws are the ones who design the electoral regimes (Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2016). Lack of institutional, administrative, and financial autonomy of the INEC, therefore, has reduced the Commission into a tool for the advancement of the political interests of politicians and political entrepreneurs. Hence, even if the laws were couched unambiguously under the prevailing circumstance, they would hardly enjoy effective implementation. Apparently acknowledging the administrative and other weaknesses of these government agencies, Mr. Bem Angwe of the National Human Rights Commission, opted for the option of "naming and shaming" of perpetrators of hate campaign as a panacea for hate speech in Nigeria (Malik, 2015). This attests to the dearth of prosecutorial powers against hate campaign by these agencies.

7. Post-2015 presidential election appointments and national integration

In multi-ethnic and plural societies such as Nigeria, appointments into major political positions are critical elements of politics. There is excessive premium on power and positions which converts them into wealth. In this sense, position means wealth and money and to get them, one has to occupy a good political position in government. There is equally a predominance of exclusive rather than inclusive strategies for power and positions. These general characteristics make appointments so contentious and led to the emergence of a good number of discontent and agitations after the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The pattern of ethnic coalition and deployment of hate speech as a veritable instrument of political mobilisation largely favoured the APC candidate, General Buhari. As a consequence, his post-election appointments have continued to reflect the infamous 97% versus 5% ratio with its attendant threats to national integration.

The South-East geo-political zone has not had it smooth in terms of representation in top public offices. Virtually all the appointees of the present government are mainly Muslims from the Northern region. As shown in Table 2, none of the principal government officials hails from the South-East. The appointments were mainly based on ethnic and religious affinities, thereby deepening the relationship between ethnicity, politics, and religion in the country. This made it impossible to run a merit-driven system in Nigeria. This is because the appointments were made in contravention of global best practices, especially Goal 10.2 of the SDGs which promotes the social, economic and political inclusion of everyone irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status. By the same token, the appointments flagrantly violate Section 14 (3) of the 1999 *Constitution* which explicitly states:

the composition of the government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall... reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011, p. 35).

However, President Buhari breached this section in his appointments in which one ethnic nationality dominates critical areas of governance. In the above appointments into public offices, four

Table 2. Some major appointments of president Muhammadu Buhari since 29 May 2015

S/N	Positions	Occupants	States/Zones
1	Aide de Camp to the President	Lt. Col. Abubakar Lawal	Kano State, North-West
2	Special Adviser, Media and Publicity	Mr. Femi Adesina	Osun State, South-West
3	Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity	Mallam Garba Shehu	Kano State, North-West
4	State Chief of Protocol/ Special Assistant	Lawal Kazaure	Jigawa State, North-West
5	Accountant General of the Federation	Ahmed Idris	Kano State, North-West
6	National Security Adviser	Maj. General Babagana Monguno (rtd)	Borno State, North-East
7	Chief of Defence Staff	Maj. General Abayomi Olonisakin	Ekiti State, South-West
8	Chief of Army Staff	Major General Tukur Buratai	Borno State, North-East
9	Chief of Naval Staff	Rear Admiral Ibok-Ete EkweIbas	Cross Rivers, South-South
10	Chief of Air Staff	AVM Sadique Abubakar	Bauchi State, North-East
11	Chief of Defence Intelligence	AVM Monday Riku Morgan	Benue State, North Central
12	Director General, Department State Services (DSS)	Lawal Daura	Katsina State, North-West
13	Chairman of INEC	Prof. Mahmood Yakubu	Bauchi State, North-East
14	Managing Director, Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA)	Habibu Abdullahi	Kano State, North-West
15	Special Adviser, Niger Delta Amnesty Office	Brig. General Paul Boroh (rtd)	Bayelsa State, South-South
16	Acting Director General, NIMASA	Baba Haruna Jauro	Yobe State, North-East
17	Executive Vice Chairman/ Chief Executive Officer, NCC	Umaru Dambatta	Kano State, North-West
18	Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service	Babatunde Fowler	Lagos State, South-West
19	Director General, Budget Office of the Federation	Aliyu Gusau	Zamfara State, North-West
20	Group Managing Director, NNPC	Dr. Maikanti Baru	Bauchi State, North-East
21	Secretary to the Government of the Federation	Babachir David Lawal (later removed over grass-cutting contract scandal and replaced with his kinsman, Boss Mustapha)	Adamawa State, North-East
22	Chief of Staff to the President	Abba Kyari	Borno State, North-East
23	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Customs Service	Col. Hameed Ibrahim Ali (rtd)	Kaduna State, North-West
24	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service	Kure Martin Abeshi	Nasarawa State, North-Central
25	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (Senate)	Senator Ita Enang	Akwa Ibom State, South-South
26	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Reps)	Hon. Suleiman Kawu	Kano State, North-West

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

S/N	Positions	Occupants	States/Zones
27	Managing Director, Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)	Modeccai Baba Ladan	Kano State, North-West
28	Managing Director, Asset Management Company of Nigeria (AMCON)	Ahmed Lawan Kuru	Kano State, North-West
29	Commissioner for Insurance	Mohammed Kari	North-West
30	Senior Special Assistant on Media to the Vice President	Laolu Akande	South-West

Source: Authors' finding

were appointed from the South-West and the South-South, respectively, the rest were from the North and overwhelmingly Muslims. None is from the South-East.

Again, President Buhari replaced Solomon Arase, the immediate past Inspector General of Police with Ibrahim Kpotun Idris, an Assistant Inspector-General of Police from the Northern region. Needless to say, his ascension to the position led to the retirement, in one fell swoop and in a more absurd manner, of 21 Deputy Inspectors-General of Police and Assistant Inspectors-General of Police who were senior to Idris. Similarly, the removal of the former Director General of the National Intelligence Agency, Ambassador Ayo Oke (a Yoruba man from Oyo State), led to the appointment of Ahmed Rufai Abubakar (who is of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic origin) as his replacement. With Abubakar's appointment, 99% of the heads of security agencies in Nigeria are not only northerners but are mainly of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic stock. Although Ambassador Oke was removed from office the same day Babachir David Lawal was ousted as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, the latter's substitute came from his immediate family, community and home state of Adamawa while Oke's came from the Northern state of Katsina. These actions of the president have consummated his northernisation of Nigeria's national security. As shown in Table 2, no person was appointed from any of the states in the South-East into any key office of the present government. More gravely, apart from the Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Defence Staff, there is no other Southerner in the head of Buhari's national security architecture. Thus, the offices of the Minister of Defence, Minister of Interior, NSA, Chief of Army Staff, Inspector General of Police, Chief of Air Staff, Director General of the National Intelligence Agency, Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency, Director General of the Department of State Service, Comptroller General of Prison, Comptroller General of Customs, Comptroller General of Immigration, and so on, are Muslim Northerners.

Arguably, the failure led to the founding or revival of various militias and separatist groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), among others. In the case of IPOB and MASSOB, there were frequent demonstrations by their members and supporters who often clashed with security agencies. These usually disrupt economic activities in locations where the protests frequently occur (Ibeanu, Orji, & Iwuamadi, 2016). To be sure, pro-Biafra protests have discouraged investment and equally have specific regional and national security implications, including the mobilisation of potential protesters to escalate armed violence and worsen the existing levels of insecurity (Ibeanu et al., 2016). The capacity of the security agencies to handle the movement in a peaceful and professional manner has declined, resulting in serious human right violations. The recurring agitation for Biafra has serious implications for political stability and national integration. There is widely accepted perception among people, especially from the South-East, that there is leadership failure. This failure has translated to deteriorating socio-economic conditions represented by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, insecurity, and the deplorable state of infrastructure in the zone. These situations are commonly attributed to the failure of political leadership, particularly at the national level. By the

same token, the outcome of the 2015 general elections which many people from the zone see as unfavourable has also led to their brazen exclusion and marginalisation from national politics and positions. Post-election appointments at the federal level (see Table 2) has further exacerbated the fears of the people from the zone. More than ever before in the history of Nigeria, the exclusionary leadership style of President Buhari has made the country become divided along religious, regional and ethnic lines while national integration continues to receive mere lip service.

Separatist agitations and violence that is incidental to them have increased in the aftermath of the elections. With separatist agitations simmering in other parts of Nigeria, the persistence of the agitations for Biafra has become a rallying point for groups to question the Nigerian project. This is because Biafra separatism could produce a snowball effect by motivating many other groups to demand for greater autonomy or separation (Ibeanu et al., 2016). The use of force and unrestrained arrest of members of various separatist groups and individuals common in Nigeria, especially since 2015, has become frightening as the country is fast evolving into a totalitarian state.

8. Conclusion

This paper investigated the link between the outcome of the 2015 general elections, political exclusion and national integration in Nigeria. It found that despite the relatively successful conduct of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, national identity, unity and integration have declined. This paradox is tied to the existence of strong political actors who selectively dispense privileges to all fractions of the power blocs usually defined as primordial, ethno-communal and religious groups. If democratic political development in Nigeria is to be sustainable, then greater efforts must be made to build vibrant political institutions that hold the confidence of Nigerian society in high trust. Both democracy and national integration cannot be consolidated or effectively maintained in the country without the emergence of robust institutions and strong leadership devoid of ethnicity and religion. This is because the combination of the two is causing trust in the democratic institutions to decline. Nigeria is inclined to building strong individuals divorced from strong institutions. It must be noted that, it is strong institutions and collectives and not necessarily strong individuals that propel a nation to greatness. No nation can grow, function well, and be properly grounded when its vision, actions and inactions are wrapped around individuals and primordial concerns. Thus, greater efforts should be channelled towards inclusive and participatory governance in line with Goal 10.2 of the SDGs. This will help in bridging the divides that were created during and after the 2015 general elections.

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Notes

1. Fewer than 24-h after the decision of the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), the president of the Constitutional Council and a close ally of Gbagbo, Paul Yao N'Dre, overturned the Commission's results and proclaimed Gbagbo the winner with 51.45% of the votes.

The Council annulled hundreds of thousands of ballots from the northern region, Alassane Ouattara's electoral stronghold, based on alleged voting irregularities.

2. The first position usually starts with the assertion that traditional African societies were strongly egalitarian in character and had an absence, or a low level, of stratification. Thus, Nkrumah (1970) argues that many commentators have talked and written as though Africa is a separate entity to which the social, economic and political patterns of the world do not apply. The concepts of "African humanism", "African socialism", "traditional collectivism", "pragmatic socialism", Sekou Toure's "communaucratique" and Julius Nyerere's "ujamaa" all proclaim the absence of social classes in African social formations. However, nothing is further from the truth.
3. During a state visit to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on 22 July 2015, President Buhari stated that the constituents, for example, that gave him 97% of the vote cannot, in all honesty, be treated the same way on some issues with constituencies that gave him 5%. Although the percentage does not add up, it was President Buhari's direct response to how he would tackle militant agitations in the Niger Delta.

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