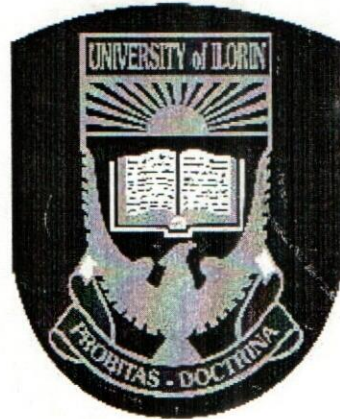


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HATE SPEECH AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: NIGERIA'S 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN RETROSPECT

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Abstract

This paper examines hate speech and Nigeria's 2015 general elections. The primary objective of the paper is to examine the negative effects of hate speech on national integration. However, through the adoption of the historical qualitative research design and content analysis of data gathered through secondary sources, it was discovered that the use of hate speech among political elites during the 2015 general election was rife. It was found out that the use of hate speech ignited pre-election violence which is dangerous to the process of national integration. It was however, submitted that, the rampant use of hate speech by political elites and contestants alike during election campaign period is due to the fact that hate speech offenders are not prosecuted accordingly. It is recommended among others that there must be proper implementation of the legal framework of hate speech which will bring offenders to book.

Keywords: *Democracy, Political Elites, Election, Hate Speech, National Integration*

Introduction

Periodic, free, fair and credible elections form the bedrock of modern and liberal democracy. While holding regular elections does not only form the basis of a democratic society, it is nevertheless crucial to its workings. Elections offer the electorate an opportunity to get certain knowledge and information that will actually guide their decision on the Election Day. Much as elections are crucial to democracy, the basic issues involved in the electoral process particularly electioneering campaigns determines to a large extent the success or otherwise of the entire electoral process. During election campaign periods, political parties try as much as possible to convince the electorate on why they should vote for their parties. Therefore, the contents of normal electioneering campaigns should be based on the policy intentions of political parties which are contained in the manifestoes and which the political parties wish to sell to the people in order to gain their votes on the Election Day. In essence political campaigns play a pivotal role in the political education and mobilization of the citizens both in developing and advanced democracies. These roles however, can only be played by electioneering campaigns which are constructive and are based on policy issues.

On the contrary, election campaigns which are aimed at defaming the character and personality of political opponents are dangerous and can impact negatively on the entire electoral process and the overall peaceful co-existence of the people within a democratic nation. Unlike developed democracies, political contests in developing democracies are characterised by all sorts of electoral anomalies, particularly, election related violence. One of the sources of the recurring decimal of electoral violence in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular is the incessant use of hate speeches during election campaign periods. Though, the use of hate speeches is not strange to the Nigerian political terrain, but hate speech assumed an unprecedented dimension during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. According to Akubor (2015) the use of hate speeches became rampant after candidates of major political parties emerged. He reiterated that "During this period, hardly could one hear politicians or group of politicians address issues without using abusive expressions, especially during political rallies which became avenues for raining hate speeches" (Akubor, 2015, P. 8).

The major objective of this paper however, is to examine the use of hate speeches during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria and its effects on national integration. To achieve this, the paper is divided into four parts. The first part gives a general introduction to the subject matter. The second segment consists of conceptual framework and a historical narrative of the use of hate speech in the Nigerian electoral process. The third part discusses the use of hate speech in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria and its attendant effects on national integration. The last part concludes and gives recommendations on how the use of hate speech can be controlled or curbed. Data for the paper were gathered through secondary sources. The content analysis method was employed in analyzing the data.

The Concepts of Hate Speech and National Integration

Hate Speech

There is an increase in the use and occurrence of hate speech in the world today. The rampancy in the use of hate speech has turned the concept into a universal phenomenon that is globally understood and widely prohibited. The significant damage hate speech causes has resulted in a global consensus that it should be declared illegal. When there are no laws banning the use of hate speeches, they encourage a situation in which particular groups are scorned (Hernández, 2011). Most countries of the world have established criminal codes and jurisdictions which have laws prohibiting the use of hate speech. As a concept, hate speech though, universally known and frequently used, it does not have a universally accepted definition. It has been observed by Weber (2009, P. 9) that "though most States have adopted legislation banning expressions amounting to "hate speech", definitions differ slightly when determining what is being banned". It is on this basis that the Freedom of Expression Institute (2013) asserted that for one to define hate speech it is essential that one takes into consideration international instruments and foreign law definitions of the concept of hate speech (Freedom of Expression Institute, 2013). Therefore, the Institute opines that "any definition of hate speech should have its foundation in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965 (ICERD) in which Article 4 perceives hate speech as:

an offence punishable by law all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin, and also the provision of any assistance to racist activities, including the financing thereof (Freedom of Expression Institute, 2013, P. 13).

In a similar vein, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation 97(20) defined the term hate speech as:

all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin." In this sense, "hate speech" covers comments which are necessarily directed against a person or a particular group of persons (Weber, 2009, P. 9).

Scholars have also offered individual perception of the term hate speech. For instance Daniele (2013) perceived hate speech as expressions which causes hatred of, or a bias against a person or group of people on a specified ground which may include race, nationality, ethnicity, country of origin, ethno-religious identity, religion, sexuality, gender identity or gender. Similarly, hate speech has also been defined as "any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it may incite violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group" (Hall, 2012, P 10). Rosenfeld (2012, P. 242) perceived hate speech as "speech designed to promote hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin". He further noted that the issue of hate speech is a challenge to contemporary constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression.

Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, Martinez (2015) while taking into consideration national and international legislation, viewed hate speech as "expressions that advocate incitement to harm particularly, discrimination, hostility or violence based upon the targets being identified with a certain social or demographic group" (P. 10). This may include, but is not limited to, speeches that advocate, threaten, or encourage violent acts. Gagliardone, et.al. (2015) further acknowledged the fact that hate speech may include words that tend to insult people in power, or derogate individuals. These according to them may occur during elections. During this period the concept of hate speech may be prone to manipulation. Accusations of initiating hate speech is particularly found among political opponents or used by people in power to curb dissent and criticism (Gagliardone, et.al., 2015). Summarily, the concept of hate speech according to Weber (2009), includes a variety of situations, these include: firstly, "incitement of racial hatred or in other words, hatred directed against persons or groups of persons on the grounds of belonging to a race; secondly, incitement to hatred on religious grounds, to which may be equated incitement to hatred on the basis of a distinction between believers and non-believers; and lastly, incitement to other forms of hatred based on intolerance "expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism" (P. 10). Cohen-Amalgor (2011) offered a comprehensive definition of hate speech when he asserted that:

Hate speech is a bias-motivated, hostile, malicious speech aimed at a person or a group of people because of some of their actual or perceived innate characteristics. It expresses discriminatory, intimidating, disapproving, antagonistic, and/or prejudicial attitudes towards those characteristics, which include gender, race, religion, ethnicity, colour, national origin, disability or sexual orientation. Hate speech is intended to injure, dehumanize, harass, intimidate, debase, degrade and victimize the targeted groups, and to foment insensitivity and brutality against them (P. 1).

Even though hate speech is not clearly stated in most international human rights documents and treaties, it is craftily stated by some of the principles relating to human dignity and freedom of expression (Gagliardone, et.al., 2015). It is contended that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was drafted as a response to the atrocities of the World War II, contains the right to equal protection under the law in Article 7, which proclaims that: "all are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (Gagliardone, et.al., 2015, P. 10). The UDHR further stated that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers". These two Articles of the UDHR point to the fact that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and the right to be protected against discrimination. Invariably therefore, "everyone has the right to be protected against hate speech insofar as such speech incorporates discriminatory objectives" (Morsink 1999 cited in (Gagliardone, et.al., 2015, P. 10).

From the forgoing, it can be observed that there is a common denominator to the definitions put forward by international legislations and instrument as well as individual scholars. Common to these definitions is that hate speech is aimed at discrediting or condemning an individual or group of people on certain grounds which include race, religion, physical or mental disabilities. It is also, important to note that the use of hate speech transcends election campaign periods. Hate speech can be used during inter-tribal conflict and during war. For the purpose of this paper however, hate speech is viewed as statements or acts made public by any form of media (social, electronic and print), during electioneering campaigns which are aimed at defaming or destroying the credibility and tarnishing the image of political opponents so as to make such opponents go out of favour with the electorates.

National Integration

Conceptualizing national integration presupposes a brief discussion of the term nation. Smith (1991) viewed nation as a large group of people with common attributes such as language, ethnicity, traditions and customs. He noted that a nation is more interpersonal, abstract and overtly political than an ethnic group. He posited that a nation is a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity and particular interest (Smith, 1991). Anderson (1983) described nation as an "imagined community". In this regard the material conditions of nations exist for imagining extended and shared conditions. Paul (1996 p. 34) viewed nation as an "abstract community". Nation according to him is objectively interpersonal even if individuals who form the nation see themselves as subjectively part embodied unity with orders. He further posited that members of a nation remain strangers to one another and will never likely meet (Paul, 2006). In whichever sense it is used a nation does not in all ramifications denote a country instead it denotes a group of people who have a feeling of oneness which is derived from some factors which include: common history, common value, norms and culture. These factors bind them together into a nation. People who make up a nation do

not necessarily live within a defined territory. they live in different regions and they practice different religions in different ways and may even speak different languages. But essentially, they have a feeling of oneness which is strengthened by the shared commonalities. The concept of national integration comprises two terms, that is, "national" and "integration". The term "national" refers to a sovereign country. integration on the other hand has been described by Ojo (2009) as being replete with different definitions. Integration has been conceptualized as

A process by which members of a social System (citizen for our purpose) develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub systems become less consequential in affecting behaviour. In this process, members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community (Morrison et.al cited in Ojo, 2009, p. 385)

To Weiner (1965 p. 55) integration is "a process that unites culturally and socially discrete groups into a territorial unit. In this way, the established national identity is helpful to overcome the problems between central authority and subordinate political groups. In addition to that it links the government with governed". Integration depicts the incorporation of diverse ethno-religious components of the population into a unified society, making way for equality of opportunity for all elements of such society. In this regard, individuals access to public or private good is adequately taken care of regardless of race, colour, ethnic or religious background. National integration on the other hand, covers a wide range of political and social activities. It combines the sentiments, bias, norms and values of different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups emotionally into a concise whole. It prevents narrow tendencies from hindering national unity and development. It has been used interchangeably with concepts like: nation building, national cohesion and national unity.

As a concept, national integration has been used to describe the creation of a congruity among various distinct groups with the aim of transforming them into a political community with the purpose of achieving economic and political upbringing of that community (Shakir, 1982). National integration has also been used to refer to a way of creating a feeling of territorial nationality which tends to eliminate subordinate and parochial loyalties. This definition assume that there is in existence an ethnically plural society in which each group is denoted by its own language or self conscious cultural identity features (Bamisaye, 2003 cited in Bello, 2012). Ojo (2009 p. 386) conceived national integration as "a plural society where component parts are reasonably contented in the polity vis-à-vis equity and justice in resource allocation cum

access to equal opportunities". For the purpose of this paper however, national integration refers to a process that produces an omnibus of initiatives put in place by a state, its representatives or institutions guided by respect for the unique traditions and cultural backgrounds of ethnicities sharing the same polity with the goal of harmonising all interests through a form of dialogue and representation and addressing differences that may be divisive and conflictual using the instruments of fairness, justice and equity in the sharing of resources, benefits, opportunities and responsibilities in order to guarantee stability, longevity and prosperity of the polity as long as the inhabitants decide to remain within the polity.

The Ritual Model of Hate Speech

The ritual model is an aspect of the communication paradigm that can be used to explain the use of hate speech in traditional democratic and heterogeneous societies. Popularised by Carey (1989), the model helps in the comprehension of how hate speech is put into use and how it can harm not only the group or persons at which such speeches are directed but the entire polity in general (Calvert, 1997). The ritual model assumes that: "hate speech is a long-term, cumulative harm that accrues with repeated use of racist epithets directed at targeted minorities" (Calvert, 1997 p.6). This according to him leads to the relegation of ethnic or racial minorities and groups who are characterised and touted by constant subservient attitudes. In this regard, the use of hate speech establishes a situation in which races and specific ethnic groups are treated in a completely different manner. Similarly, MacKinnon (1996) argued that hate speeches harm specific ethnic groups and affects them by relegating them in the public sphere and by making them subservient in the polity. Hate speech also provides a way by which an individual or group of individuals are seen as belonging to a particular stratum with negative descriptions (Delgado, 1995).

The ritual model also assumes that hate speech creates feelings of mediocrity and also brings about unbalanced treatment of groups or individuals based on certain group characteristics or personality traits of individual. The characteristics and traits are derivable from the reality that such group or individuals are from a specific ethnic group in a heterogeneous polity (Dalgado, 1995). While such groups or individuals can be inclined to retaliate in defending themselves with the use of counter-hate speech, MacKinnon (1996) noted that they are already deterred by the initial use of hate speech by other groups. In this circumstance, there is the need for such groups or individuals to defend their image in an environment that is already prejudiced by the influence of superior ethnic groups, culture or individuals. The resultant effect of this is mutual hatred, distrust and intolerance among the various ethnic groupings which make up the polity. Thus, the existing socio-cultural and political cleavages and diversities are aggravated and have very high potentialities of disintegrating the polity.

In Nigeria, the use of hate speech to relegate ethnic groups and individuals is common most especially during electioneering periods. During elections, political elites manipulate the existing socio-cultural divisions of the country to gain electoral

advantage. They do this by trying as much as possible to discredit political opponents even with the use of derogatory languages and speeches. It is quite unfortunate that while efforts are being geared towards dousing tension among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, political elite always devise a way of influencing such for their selfish and personal gains and aggrandisement. Ezeibe and Ikeanyibe (2017) noted that the elite who are supposed to champion anti-ethnic movements are those that frequently exploit ethnicity for individual and collective gains. By so doing, the elite behaviour is repugnant to the basic ideals of democracy. The quest to acquire political power has made the use of hate speech a prominent campaign method used to appeal to ethnic sentiments in election periods (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe (2017). This has grave implications for the unity and peaceful co-existence of the country.

Hate Speech: An Overview of the Nigerian Experience in Historical Context

The use of hate speech in the Nigerian political terrain dates back to the independence era. After attaining independence, Nigerian political elites, according to Ezeibe (2015), employed the divide and rule tactics with the use of hate speech. This he claimed stirred up feeling of provocation among the existing ethnic and religious groups, thereby leading to all forms of election related violence. It would be recalled that Nigeria's first attempt at democratization was thwarted by the breakdown of law and order which was a consequence of perceived election rigging and the incessant use of hate speech and anti-ethnic utterances. This situation couldn't have come as a surprise as the foundation stone of electoral politics in the First Republic was laid on ethnic considerations. This manifested in the creation and emergence of political parties. Though, with other ethnic groups in existence, the three dominant ethnic groups (the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) were at the fore-front of electoral politics in the First Republic.

These ethnic groups were seen as distinct and variously endowed with different economic and socio-cultural capabilities. This may have prompted Alhaji Maitama Sule, a Northern political elite to assert that: "Allah has bestowed on the Hausa-Fulani the gift of political leadership of the country man, the Yoruba, the genius of education, diplomacy and managerial excellence and the Igbo the bent and dynamism of economic enterprise" (The News, 1996 cited in Ovwasa, 2002 p. 56). The implication of such speech is that the speaker did not take into consideration other minority ethnic groups as part of the Nigerian state which may incite and provoke ethnic friction and conflict. The use of hate speech in the Nigerian First Republic was rife. As observed by Ezeibe (2015) political elites of the First Republic made use of hate speech aggressively which resulted in electoral violence, sectarian killings, military coups and civil war. In an attempt to discredit the Igbo ethnic group the Late Sadauna of Sokoto was reported to have uttered the following statement: "the Igbo are too dominating, if you employ an Igbo man as a labourer, he will like to take over as foreman within a short while"(Ezeibe, 2015 p. 14).

The first President of independent Nigeria, the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, also uttered the following statement: "the God of Africa has created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from bondage of ages" (Ezeibe, 2015 p. 14). Also, in criticizing the

policies of Nnamdi Azikiwe as the president of the country, Chief Obafemi Awolowo reiterated that: "Nnamdi Azikiwe's policy was to corrode the self respect of the Yoruba people as a group to build up the Igbos as a master race" (Seng, & Hunt, 1986 cited in Ezeibe, 2015 p. 14). These statements of hate and others characterised the First Republic politics of the country. The grudges of one ethnic group against the other which were nurtured in the First Republic manifested in the Second Republic. These coupled with other factors led to the eventual termination of the Second Republic. Politics of the Fourth Republic was characterised by incessant use of hate speech. As a matter of fact, the use of hate speech was rife in the build-up to the 2015 general election. Instead of focusing on issue based campaigns, politicians employed hate speech and campaign of calumny to woo voters to their sides. According to the National Human Rights Commission, the build-up to Nigeria's 2015 Presidential election saw a rise in hate speech, and was described as a worrisome source of election-related violence (Ibeh, 2015). The table below shows tabulated manifestation of hate speeches in the 2015 general elections.

Table 1: showing manifestation of the use of hate speech during the campaign period of the 2015 general election

S/n	Name of speaker	Contents of the Hate speech	Remarks
1.	Mrs. Patience Jonathan (Wife of former President)	"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".	The former first lady of the country describing the APC candidate, Muhammadu Buhari as mentally unfit to rule the country.
2.	Mrs. Patience Jonathan (Wife of former President)	"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 northern Nigeria)	The former first lady referring to APC candidate, Muhammadu Buhari as an almajiri (the practice of child abandonment at an early stage).
3.	Mrs. Patience Jonathan (Wife of former President)	"Anybody that come and tell you changes, 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"	Mrs. Patience Jonathan urged the members and supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to stone anyone who promises them change. The APC campaign slogan is based on the change mantra.
4.	Mrs. Patience Jonathan (Wife of former President)	"Don't vote for prison. A vote for Buhari is a vote to send people to prison. APC is a party of liars and propagandists. They have nothing to offer but to grab power by all means".	The former first lady urging voters not to vote for Muhammadu Buhari.

5.	Northern Elders Forum	"Those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 will be considered an enemy of the north"	The Northern Elders Forum urged everyone to vote for APC.
6.	Ayodele Fayose	"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".	The incumbent Governor of Ekiti state in January repeatedly took out front page newspaper advertorials warning voters not to vote for the APC presidential candidate Muhamadu Buhari. These advertisements, which were also known as "death wish advertorials" insinuated that the presidential candidate was likely to die in office if elected, like the late President, Yar'Adua.
7.	Dr. Junaidu Mohammed	"I don't believe Buhari or Nigeria owes any Igbo anything. I don't care what Ezeife says – if they (Igbo) had seceded, there would have been no Nigeria today. As people who acted outside the interest of Nigeria as a country, to expect compensation is a very odd logic. If the Igbo don't like it, they can attempt secession again. If they do, they must be prepared to live with the consequences – nobody owes them anything and nobody is out to compensate them for anything."	Dr. Junaidu Mohammed, a Second Republic lawmaker passed the comments in a reply to a statement by former Governor of Anambra State, Chukwuemeka Ezeife, on the claim that the Igbo had not been treated fairly in terms of political positions and appointments in the President Buhari administration.
8.	Dr. Junaidu Mohammed	"Unless efforts are made to ensure that the 2015 general election are free and fair, it may turn out to be the last election in the history of the nation"	The Second Republic lawmaker and the National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern Politicians, stated what might be the consequence of a rigged election.

9.	Alhaji Lawan Kaita	"The North would make the country ungovernable if President Goodluck Jonathan wins the 2011 polls... Anything short of a Northern President is tantamount to stealing our presidency".	The former Governor of the old Kaduna State passed the comments in reiterating the North's commitment to a Northern presidency.
10.	Chief Arthur Eze	"That short man called Ngige, we gave him power and he joined the Awolowo people; the people that killed Igbos".	The PDP Chieftain said this in showing the East dissatisfaction on Chris Ngige's alignment with the All Progressives Congress.
11.	Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo	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.	The leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Force (NDPSF) reiterated his nonnegotiable commitment to a South-South President.
12.	Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo	"If they contest (Northerners) they are wasting their time. He who pays the piper will dictate the tune. We own them. We are feeding them. They are parasites. A beggar has no choice. They are beggars and parasites".	The leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Force (NDPSF) considers the ambition of a northern presidential candidacy as a futility.
13.	Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo	"2015 is more than do -or-die. You are a man and I am a man, we are going to meet at the battlefield"	Describing the 2015 general elections particularly the presidential election as a fierce battle
14.	Ahmadu Ali	"The Yorubas are ungrateful kind of people, who do not appreciate what others have done for them"	The former PDP Chairman describing the Yoruba ethnic group as not appreciative.
15.	African Independent Television (AIT)	Documentary titled 'Lion of Bourdillon'.	"The hour-long documentary, aired at 11 p.m. on the First of March showcased various properties and companies across Lagos purportedly owned by Mr. Tinubu, a top leader of the APC describing him as "Nigeria's biggest landlord". It also alleged that the APC chieftain was "charged for narcotics" in 1993".

16.	Abu King Shuluwa	"Nigeria will disintegrate if Jonathan contests in 2015"	Threat against the candidacy of Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 presidential election.
17.	Shema Ibrahim	"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".	The former governor of Katsina state referring to his opponents as cockroaches.
18.	Alhaji Lai Mohammed	"If the 2015 elections are rigged, the party will not recognize the outcome and will go ahead and form a parallel government".	The National Publicity Secretary of the APC and presently the Minister of Information signalled the readiness of the APC to denounce a rigged election result.
19.	Ima Sadiq	"Muslims, vote for Buhari. It is a sin to support a non-Muslim"	The Northern Islamic cleric urging Muslims not to vote for Goodluck Jonathan.
20.	Rilwan Akiolu	"I'm not ready to beg you. Nobody knew how I picked Ambode. Jimi (Agbaje) is my blood relation and I told him that he cannot be governor in Lagos for now," he said. "The future belongs to God. I am not begging anybody, but what you people cannot do in Onitsha, Aba or anywhere, don't do it here. If you do what I want, Lagos will continue to be prosperous for you. If you go against my wish, you will perish in the water."	The Oba of Lagos threatening the Igbo community in Lagos if they go against his wish of Akinwunmi Abode winning the Lagos state Gubernatorial contest.
21.	Muhammadu Buhari	"PDP, Nigerians' Worst Nightmare"	Muhammadu Buhari expressing displeasure at the PDP rule since the inception of the Fourth Republic. He added that the worst mistake Nigerians could do is to vote the party back to power.
22.	Bola Tinubu	"It is going to be rig and roast. We are prepared not to go to court but drive them out".	Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, Former Lagos state governor saying what might be the consequence of a rigged election

Source: Compilation from: Tell, 7 July 2014, Leadership Newspaper, March 29, 2012, Daily Independent Friday, March 8th, 2013, Sun Newspaper, March 16, 2013, Sahara Reporters 22nd November, 2014, Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, (2015), The Nation Newspaper, March 10, 2015, Vanguard Newspaper, 15 October 2014, Premium Times, November 13, 2013, The Nation, 15th March.

One can deduce from the table above that issue based campaigns and achievements of the then PDP administration which should have characterised the build up to the general elections were substituted for hate speeches which were majorly used for character assassination. While the northern political elites and the leadership of the APC were interested in the presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari winning the presidential elections, the South-South political elites and the leadership of the PDP were interested in the then incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan retaining political power. These two opposing interest turned the 2015 presidential contest to a do-or-die affair according to the leader of the Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (News Express, 2014).

Hate Speech and National Integration: The Nexus

There exists a negative relationship between hate speech and national integration. According to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's Report (2015:15) "hate speech has harmful effects, regardless of whether it falls outside the criminal ban and is thus "legal" hate speech". Whether it is legal or criminal, hate speech has great impact on a polity, especially new states and states that are bedevilled with the challenge of ethno-religious sentiments. Hate speech has detrimental effects on states that are highly polarised along ethnic and religious lines. In this regard, hate speech "contributes to social exclusion and increased polarisation that breaks down social cohesion" (Davidio, Glick and Rudman, 2005: 10). In fragmented societies hate speech leads to further divisions in the existing ethnic cleavages. During the build up to the 2015 presidential elections, the country was divided along ethnic lines. Hate speeches were either directed at an individual or a particular ethnic group. As a matter of fact hate speeches were used to discredit a political opponent or supporters of a particular opponent. Such use of hate speeches in a highly heterogeneous and polarised country like Nigeria, has grievous effects, especially in a situation where peaceful co-existence among the people is a major challenge.

In the same vein, hate speeches are veritable source of violent actions. Members of a targeted group may instigate violent acts which may lead to large scale violent conflict between two groups. These usually result in election related violence which has negative effects on integrative processes and political participation in a democratic policy. Hate speeches in the form of inflammatory languages can heighten tension between opposing parties and among major stakeholders in a national integration process. Prior to the 2015 general elections the then incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan reinstated his commitment to the conduct free and fair election. He stated that: "our elections next year will be free and fair. It will be very peaceful in nature that will even surprise the world" (The Punch, 2014). It was however, observed by Ibrahim Zikirullahi, the Chairman of Transition Monitoring Group that the circumstances surrounding the build up to the general elections did not support such optimism expressed by the former President. The Chairman of TMG lamented that: "We are approaching the 2015 elections and already the ethnic and sectarian band is being beaten; various groups are talking about marginalization along ethnic, regional and

religious lines. If we are not careful we run the risk of fighting along these lines and further divide the country" (International Crises Group, 2014:33).

The use of inflammatory languages and making of appeal to ethnic sentiments during the pre-election period were a signal to the occurrence of large scale election violence which would worsen the existing security and leadership crisis of the country. Having observed that the pre-election period was already setting the tone for election related violence due to the incessant use of hate speech coupled with existing security challenges and some other factors, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs initiated a Peace Accord which was signed on the 14th of January, 2015 by the two leading presidential candidates Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. As if this was not enough, the National Peace Committee headed by the former military ruler, Abubakar Abdulsalam initiated another Peace Accord and was also signed accordingly by the two leading presidential candidates. The peace accord contained an undertaking by the parties to avoid actions that could promote violence during and after the polls (Premium Times, 2015). It would be recalled that post election violence followed the announcement of the 2011 presidential election result. The violence which broke out particularly in the North was reported to have claimed about 800 lives and properties worth billions of Naira (Human Rights Watch, 2011). What may have influenced the peace accord could have been a bid to prevent the ugly incidence of 2011 from reoccurring.

Conclusion: Controlling Hate Speech in Future Elections

Even though the use of hate speech and inflammatory languages is not new to the Nigerian political terrain, there was an unprecedented use of hate speech and inflammatory languages during the build up to the 2015 general elections. The disheartening aspect was that the use of hate speech was spearheaded by the politicians and even contestants who were major stakeholders in the Nigeria's electoral process. To demonstrate the rampant use of hate speech by notable politicians, the National Human Rights Commission noted that the "run-up to Nigeria's 2015 Presidential election has seen a rise in hate speech, and a worrisome footprint of an election-related violence" (NHRC, 2015). It has been demonstrated that the use of hate speech and inflammatory languages are inimical to national integration efforts and the overall electoral and democratization process. Despite the fact that the use of hate speech and inflammatory languages is prohibited by the Electoral Act, there is still the incessant use of such during election campaigns. Part V, Section 97, Sub-section (1) of the Electoral Act 2010 as amended states that: "No political campaigns or slogan shall be tainted with the abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings".

Sub-section (2) further states that: "Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or insinuations or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions shall not be employed or used in political campaigns" (Electoral Act, 2010: A51). With these provisions of the Electoral Act it is obvious that there is a complete

violation of the provisions of the electoral laws. It is as well important to note that no violator of these provisions has been brought to book. It is however, imperative to note that the use of hate speech is on the increase because perpetrators and users of hate speech usually go unpunished. Therefore, to prevent hate speech in future elections there should be proper implementation of the provisions of the law which hold political actors responsible for the use of hate speech and inflammatory languages as well as its consequences. In order to achieve this, there is a need for the police and other prosecuting authorities to go on adequate training programmes so as to acquire the basic and complex skills of dealing with perpetrators and users of hate speech during elections. In addition, security operatives and prosecuting agencies should demonstrate to the public that they do not condone or take with levity the use of hate speeches. Lastly, civil society organization should be assisted in the conduct of voter and civic education particularly as it relates to hate speech crimes.

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