

## HATE SPEECH AND ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Although extant literature agrees that election violence are caused by multilateral factors which include: pervasive poverty, weak institutionalization of democratic architectures particularly, political parties, election management bodies and the judiciary, they have not satisfactorily examined the effect of hate speech on electoral violence in Nigeria especially from 2010 to 2015. This paper explores the effect of hate speech on pre, during and post election violence in Nigeria. The paper relies on interview of religious leaders, youth leaders, traditional leaders and leaders of civil society groups selected from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Observation and secondary data supplemented the data generated from the interview. The paper also used content and discourse analyses. The paper argues that: hate speeches in Nigeria are mostly credited to political leaders and their ethnic, regional or religious based supporters. Again, political leaders in Nigeria neglect the provocative tendencies of hate speech so long as it enables them to capture and retain political power. More so, hate speech has been elevated to the status of political campaign strategy and it accounts for the escalation of pre, during and post election violence in Nigeria. This paper recommends among others that speaking out loudly against hate speech is no longer enough. Independent National Electoral Commission and other civil society organizations should identify and prosecute individuals and organization that breach relevant laws governing electoral campaigns and public speech in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Hate speech; Nigeria; Election violence; Ethnic groups; Political campaign strategy

## Introduction

The ‘third wave’ of democratization swept across Latin America, East Europe, Asia and later Africa between 1980s and 1990s. Diamond (2006) observed that the transformation in the nature of political regimes was remarkable as the number of democracies increased from 41 in 1974 to 150 in 2003. Nigeria, like most sub-Saharan African states transitioned from military rule to multi-party system. Meanwhile, Kayambazinthu & Moyo (2002) noted that transition to multi-party democracy in Africa have been dazzling as well as messy. Frequently, the new democratic leaders contravene the fundamental democratic principle in Africa.

For instance, Nigeria joined the league of democratic nations in 1999 but the capacity of the government to conduct a free, competitive and fair election has weakened from 1999 to 2015. Lynch & Crawford (2011) observed that setbacks trail African democracies. They highlighted seven areas of progress and setbacks in African democracy as follows:

Increasingly illegitimate, but ongoing military intervention; regular elections and occasional transfers of power, but realities of democratic rollback and hybrid regimes; democratic institutionalization but ongoing presidentialism and endemic corruption; institutionalization of political parties, but widespread ethnic voting and the rise in exclusionary (and often violent) politics of belonging; increasingly dense civil societies but local realities of incivility, violence and insecurity; new political freedoms and economic growth, but extensive political controls and uneven development; and the donor community’s mixed commitment to, and at times perverse impact on democratic promotion (Lynch & Crawford, 2011:275).

Nonetheless, these setbacks in African democracy were expected because democratization was not supposed to happen in Africa in the first place due to infertile terrain. Schraeder (1995) noted that African countries were too poor and culturally fragmented; insufficiently capitalist; lacked the requisite civic culture, weak middle class, more bureaucratic

than entrepreneurial and easily co-opted into authoritarian political culture. In fact, the most prevalent political system in Africa today, notwithstanding the democratic accolade claimed by every government is the electoral authoritarian regime. In Africa, the political system forecloses the political space and denies the people democratic freedoms, right and principles. In the absence of defined democratic rules to guide the actions of groups and individuals, violence becomes imminent especially during elections. Collier (2010) noted that elections in Africa are frequently marred by violence despite their claims to multi- party democracy. Most recent examples of electoral violence in Africa occurred in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Hoglund (2009) argued that the nature of politics and the level of development of the electoral commission are the other breeding grounds of electoral violence in Africa.

Historically, Nigeria has organized eleven general elections and numerous regional/state/local elections between 1954 and 2015. A review of these elections revealed that Nigeria has witnessed both pre and post election violence. Nwolise (2007); Campbell (2010) and Orji & Uzodi (2012) have traced electoral violence in Nigeria to animosity, religious dichotomy, pervasive poverty and weak institutionalization of democratic architectures such as political parties, election management bodies, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. The role of hate speech in electoral violence has been established in Africa. Most notable examples are the 2007 post electoral violence in Kenya and the 2011 post electoral violence in Nigeria (FGN, 2011; Chedotum et.al, 2013). Ezeibe (2013) examined the nexus between hate speech and post election violence in Africa. Drawing most of his illustrations from Nigeria and Kenya, he argued that the seed of hate speech/ campaign has matured in Africa but the phenomenon is largely understudied and underreported. Although these independent but related studies were apt and

scientific, none of them examined the effect of hate speech and or hate campaign on electoral violence in Nigeria from 2010 to 2015.

### **Meaning and Dimensions of Hate Speech**

Hate speech is any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action. Essentially, such speeches rob others of their dignity. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013:4) noted that hate speech includes:

(a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means; (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin; (c) threats or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (b) above; (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination; (e) participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination.

According to Neisser (1994:337), hate speech refers to “all communications (whether verbal, written, symbolic) that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons”. Neisser argued that apart from causing danger of physical assault, hate speech risks violent reaction. Put simply, Kayambazinthu & Moyo (2002) conceived hate speeches as wars waged on others by means of word.

Indeed, phenomenon of hate speech has taken an extensive dimension in Africa due to poor regulations. Hate speech has permeated every nook and cranny of Africa. It has become an important aspect of electioneering campaign today that numerous election related conflict in

Africa are credited to hate speech. Observably, hate speech has eaten deep into the bone marrows of Nigerians and it has continued unabated. The hatred between the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria has intensified as the use of hate speech continues unregulated. This hatred manifests mostly between the dominant ethnic groups- Hausaa, Igbos and Yorubas. The Igbos and Yorubas see the Hausas as ‘abokis’ which though means friend but derogatorily means a moron. Similarly, the Hausas and the Yorubas see the Igbos as lovers of money while the Hausas and Igbos see the Yorubas as cowards and saboteurs.

In a recent report, Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) (2015) shows that 70 percent of the people disseminating hate speech in the Nigerian social media space use their identity and can be reached for a follow up actions. Again, English language is the major language used for dissemination of hate speeches with a visible content in Hausa language in the Nigerian social media space. More so, over 65 percent of users of hate speech are males and a greater percentage of the contents of the posts use coded language that had been used in the past to generate violence/harm.

### **Legal Frameworks for counteracting hate speeches**

Hylton (1996) compared hate speech with free speech doctrine of J.S Mill which is enshrined in the constitutions of nations. He however noted that hate speech is not free speech. Hylton conceived hate speech as negative while free speech is a landmark achievement of democracy. Hence, most developed democracies added a clause on freedom of speech against the use of hate speech. For example, Article 10 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that “the exercise of freedom of expression...may be subject to such formalities,

conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law... the interest of national security... for the protection of the reputation or right of others”.

Impressively, most doctrines that established freedom of speech and expression in Nigeria added a clause to guard against hate speech, promote human dignity, societal cohesion and peace. For instance, section 39 (1) of the 1999 Constitution as amended in 2011 provides that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression...” More so, section 45 provides that nothing in section 39 shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.

Similarly, sections 95 and 96 of the 2010 Electoral Act prohibited the use of any language in campaigns that will hurt tribal, religious and/or sectional feelings. Other legal frameworks that abhor the use of derogatory language in Nigeria are the Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) and the Abuja Accord (2015). Despite these legal frameworks, there has been notable growth in hate speech before, during and after the 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria. In fact, instances of hate speech have been published in print and electronic media, social or digital media and preached in podiums of both churches and mosques.

### **Background to Nigeria’s culture of intolerance**

There are 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria of which only three- Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo are the majority and dominant. The remaining 371 are minorities and have been subordinated (Oтите, 1990). Some of these minor ethnic groups in Nigeria according to Ojelabi (1980) are Igala, Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Modakeke, Nupe, Kanuri, Ogoni, Kataft, Tiv, Gwari, Jukar, Edo, Ibibio, Efik, Idoma, Jukun, Biron, Agna, Ogoja and many more others. Notably, these ethnic groups were

independent territories prior to British colonialism (Eleazu, 1977). Ake (1981) remarked that these ethnic groups were merged to facilitate the integration of Nigerian economy into the global capitalist system.

At the time the World War II reached its climax, living conditions in Nigeria had deteriorated. The living condition was so low that an average Nigerian was living from hand to mouth. Purchasing power fell, famine was imminent, workers were restive and drastic change was demanded (Azikiwe, 1980). Following this crisis, the colonial government yielded to political independence in 1960 but this economic crisis of the colonial system in Nigeria (1900-1960) was transferred to the post colonial Nigeria (1960-present). In the face of this crisis, ethnicity becomes an instrument of sub-group security and survival (Nnoli, 1978). The mobilization of ethnic groups by the political leaders during elections intensified. For instance, in 1959 election, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) garnered 77 percent of their votes in the northern region especially among the Hausas and was unable to win votes in the south.

The oil boom between 1973 and 1978 worsened the crisis. Nnoli (1993) remarked that the speed with which the economy declined after the boom was never anticipated or predictable. Ethnic considerations continue to affect allocation of resources, employment in the public sector and admission in public institutions (Egwu, 1993). During the Second Republic in 1979, each of the parties that contested the presidential election maintained dominance in their ethnic bases. In 1983, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) maintained its lead in Northern Nigeria (mostly Hausas); Unity Party of Nigeria led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo won in Yoruba states in Western Nigeria while the Nigerian Peoples Party led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe won in Igbo states in Eastern Nigeria. This *ethnicization* of politics in Nigeria manifests in long series of inter and intra ethnic conflicts, election violence and civil war (Nwachukwu, Aghemalo & Nwosu, 2014).

Remarkably, ethnicity played an insignificant role during the 1999 presidential election. For instance, all the ethnic groups massively voted Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (a Yoruba native) of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Again, the 2003 and 2007 elections also followed a similar voting pattern.

However, a review of the voting pattern in the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections shows that ethnic cleavages re-emerged to play a major role in the outcomes of the polls. General Buhari's victory in North-West and North-East state as well as President Jonathan's victory in South-East and South-South during the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections did not come as a surprise, considering the rise in religious and ethnic polarization since 2010, following the death of President Musa Yaradua and the collapse of the PDP zoning arrangement. Recall that PDP adopted the zoning principle to counteract the problem of political inequality among ethnic nationalities. In line with the zoning arrangement, President Olusegun Obasanjo (a Southerner and Christian) was massively voted into power in 1999 and 2003 elections. Agreeably, at the expiration of a double four year tenure in 29 May, 2007, President Olusegun Obasanjo handed over to President Musa Yaradua (a Northerner and Muslim) who was massively voted across ethnic, regional and religious divides. Unfortunately, the death of President Yaradua in May, 2010 and the swearing-in of the then Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan (a Southerner and Christian) as the President in 2010, escalated the problem of national security. Meanwhile, the Northern elites had expected that President Jonathan would not contest the 2011 election to enable the northern region to complete their double four year tenure. As soon as President Goodluck won the PDP primary election for the 2011 presidential election, the obituary of the zoning arrangement was announced and mutual suspicion between religious, regional and ethnic



poles heightened. No wonder Campbell (2010: 2) noted that “a divided PDP poses problem to security and stability of Nigeria”

Nonetheless, religion is another social institution that promotes social cohesion and solidarity by upholding societal values and norms. Meanwhile, Karl Marx sees it as opium of the people, a tranquilizer that dulls the senses and hulls them into passive acceptance of the injustices of a capitalist economy (McGee, 1980). Although the colonial administration introduced and nurtured the religions that later began to block democratization due to their strong hierarchical structure and dogmas, Huntington (1993) observed that the religious bombs did not detonate during the colonial period. It was the First Republic political elites in Nigeria that began to manipulate these religious divides to serve their personal interests (retain political power for personal enrichment) (Coleman, 1986). For instance, in the 1970s, Northern political elites promoted the Sharia law to give national elevation to Islam over and above Christianity (Kukah, 1994).

Significantly, there had been a lot of religious crises since the 1980. Some of these religious crises include the 1987, 1993 and 2000 crises in Kaduna; 1986 crisis in Ilorin; 1991 and 1992 crises in Bauchi; 1980, 1982 and 1991 crises in Kano and the 2001 crisis in Jos (Lateju & Adebayo, 2006). In 2003, ‘the Nigerian Taliban’ emerged in Yobe and Borno states and by December, 2004, the Taliban group had clashed 200 times with the police. Between 2006 and 2009, the Taliban group re-emerged, primarily in Borno state, under a new banner ‘Boko Haram’. The mission of the sect was to establish an Islamic state where 'orthodox Islam' is practiced. Orthodox Islam according to Mohammed Yusuf (leader of the sect), frowns at Western education and working in the civil service because they are sinful. Hence, for their aim to be achieved, all institutions representing the West such as the police, military, school and

Christianity should be crushed. Since 2009, Boko Haram has attacked over 100 public institutions in Nigeria, killing thousands of civilians and destroying property worth millions of dollar (Eme, 2014).

Hence, Nigeria has been bedeviled by ethno- religious conflicts with devastating human and material losses from the 1980 Maitasine riot to 2009 Boko Haram insurgency (Ezeibe, 2010). In fact, ethnicity and *religiousity* are the major impediments to the democratization in Nigeria as they initiate and sustain the culture of intolerance. Despite the prevalence of these vices, Nigerian politicians notoriously introduce their speeches with the following phrase: “this great country of ours”, even when it is obvious that Nigeria is not a great country (Hudgens and Trillo, 1999:914). Agreeably, Nigeria is one of the most disorderly, corrupt, insensitive and inefficient places. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar.

### **Theoretical considerations**

The theory of the post-colonial state suffixes. At the point of decolonization, the predatory character of the Nigerian state had taken shape and the emerging elites conceived the nationalist struggle merely in terms of getting rid of alien rule and occupying the exalted positions of the Europeans in the civil-service and other vocations (Ikejiani-Clark, 1996). The nationalists who inherited political power from Britain did not have control of the economy and implicitly, there was no ruling class except political elites, who had attained political positions because they had championed the struggle for self-determination (Fadakinte, 2013). Consequently, Nigeria becomes a neo-patrimonial state where party politics and weak democratic institutions persist (Adesote & Abimbola, 2014). Importantly, this character of the state accounted for the collapse of the First, Second and the defunct Third Republics.

Despite that the nationalists were conscious of the necessity to fuse political power and economic power, the indigenous dominant class who had ethnic and religious cleavages could not agree among themselves on the *modus operandi for the* socio-economic and political processes in Nigeria. Ethnicity becomes the ideology for economy survival in the mist of scarce resources (Ake, 1981). The control of the state power by a particular ethnic group also means more wealth, more employment, more government establishments and more government appointments for members of that ethnic group at the expense of the others.

Politics assumes a zero- sum nature, whereby gains and losses are fixed and absolute. The winner takes all at the expense of the complete loss of other actors and vice-versa (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944). Jega (2012) corroborated the above position and argued that elections in Nigeria have zero-sum character. This zero – sum character of elections leads to negative mobilization of communal (ethnic) feeling by politicians. This negative mobilization of the populace by political parties and politicians is based on the message that if the elections are free and fair then ‘our party’ should win. The converse then is that if ‘our party’ fails to win the election, then the elections were not free and fair. It is this negative mobilization and the hateful language with which it is done that leads to electoral violence in Nigeria. Collier (2010) rightly observed that anything that affects the prospects of power in Nigeria is contested bitterly, lawlessly and violently. Thus, the Nigerian political history between 1999 and 2015 becomes the history of electoral crises; after all, control of political power is the easiest avenue to wealth accumulation.

Hence, strong individuals (ethnic nationalists and political leaders) and organizations (political party) block weak institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from implementing extant electoral laws including the laws that abhors the use of hate

speech. Although the legal frameworks guiding electoral campaigns and public speeches have outlawed hate speech, individuals and organizations that breached such laws are rarely prosecuted and punished. This is because the institutions of the state lack the capacity to check reckless/injurious utterances in Nigeria

### **Methodological Considerations**

The major problem of political communication is associated with the nature and quality of evidence to measure effects (McNair, 2011). Considering that this paper is exploratory, we triangulated the survey, observation and documentary methods of data collection. The survey design collected data using interview. Firstly, we asked our sample how the people around them have responded to certain hate speeches and then analyzed their responses. We used the questions to assess the seriousness of the hate speeches to determine their capacity to generate election related violence. The questions asked were carefully formulated to avoid simplification and exaggeration. Although the periodization of this study spans from 2010 to 2015, respondents were also asked question that warranted them to reflect on 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections. Secondly, we observed the political space especially during electioneering campaign. We observed the pattern of voting and the behaviour of member of ethnic groups living outside their ethnic home, especially during the 2011 and 2015 general elections. Extensive media monitoring was done over a period of five years (2010-2015) to obtain data about provocative media campaigns by parties and politicians. We observed the dimension of these hate speeches to determine whether they have party, ethnic or religious affiliations. Thirdly, secondary documents sourced through research journals, book, INEC and Human Right Watch (HRW) documents, newspapers/ magazines and social media links also supplemented the survey and observation. The qualitative descriptive method of analysis was used.

### *Our Sample*

In this paper, we purposively selected 30 people for interview. We stratified Nigeria into the following six geo-political zones:

1. Northwest -Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states
2. Southwest -Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Ondo and Ekiti states
3. Southeast -Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states
4. North-Central-Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Niger and Plateau states
5. North-East-Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states
6. South-South -Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom and Rivers states

We then selected five elites from each of these geopolitical zones for interview. Specifically, we interviewed Christian and Islamic leaders, youth leaders, traditional leaders and leaders of civil society groups based in Nigeria. Table 1 below shows the states from where our interviewees were drawn.

Table 1: States in each geopolitical zone from where our interviewees were drawn

Geopolitical zones	Christian leaders	Muslim leaders	Youth leaders	Traditional leaders	Leaders of civil society groups	Total
Northwest	Kaduna (1)	Kaduna (1)	Kaduna (1)	Kaduna (1)	Kano (1)	5
Southwest	Lagos (1)	Lagos (1)	Lagos (1)	Oyo (1)	Lagos (1)	5
Southeast	Abia (1)	Enugu (1)	Eboyi (1)	Anambra (1)	Imo (1)	5
North-Central	Kogi (1)	Kogi (1)	Kogi (1)	Kogi (1)	Kogi (1)	5
North-East	Bauchi (1)	Bauchi (1)	Bauchi (1)	Yobe (1)	Bauchi (1)	5
South-South	Rivers (1)	Rivers (1)	Rivers (1)	Rivers (1)	Rivers (1)	5
Total	6	6	6	6	6	30

**Source: Fieldwork by the Research, 2015**

We selected our interviewees based on the states within the geopolitical zone that was mostly affected by post election violence in 2011 and pre election violence in 2015.

## **The Evidence and analysis of hate speech in Nigeria**

Political leaders in Nigeria use hate speech to divide and rule the people already divided along ethnic and religious lines. Put simply, political leaders in Nigeria employ hate speeches in politicking and this incites coexisting ethnic and religious groups, thereby generating all forms of violence especially election related ones.

The use of hate speech in Nigeria dates back to the pre independence era but the colonial administration used the big whip to manage its negative manifestation. After Nigeria's independence, the First Republic politicians employed hate speeches fiercely. This tendency helped in heating –up the polity for electoral violence, sectarian killings, military coups and civil war. Some of the earliest notable hate speeches credited to the First Republic politicians in Nigeria include the following:

1. 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 - Late Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello
2. The God of Africa has created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from bondage of ages – The first President of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
3. 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- Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Seng, & Hunt, 1986).

Our interviews revealed that these hate speeches in Nigeria laid the foundation for the first military coup and counter coup; 1964/1965 electoral violence especially in the Western Nigeria; pogroms and civil war (1967-1970). The hate speeches identified above painted the Igbos as a dominant race, superior race and threat to Yorubas nation. No wonder, the Igbos were

the major victims of the pogroms and the civil war in Nigeria. Although successive military governments in Nigeria suppressed hate speeches and its negative manifestations during 1979, 1993 and 1999 elections, we observed that the use of hate speeches has been reawakened since May 2010 after the death of President Musa Yaradua and the abandonment of PDP's arrangement of zoning public offices between the north and south.

Despite that Nigeria has adequate legal frameworks (Constitution of Nigeria, 1999; Electoral Act, 2010; Political Party Code of Conduct, 2013 etc) to check hate speeches and hate campaign, political leaders and their ethnic/religious supporters continue to use hate speech as a campaign strategy. Some of the notable hate speeches in Nigeria from 2010 to 2015 are shown in table 2 and 3 below. Table 2 shows the litany of hate speeches credited to the religious, political and ethnic leaders in northern Nigeria comprising states in North East, North West and North Central geopolitical zones. Again, table 3 shows the hate speeches credited to religious, political and ethnic leaders in southern Nigeria comprising South East, South West and South South. Notably, the chronicling of these hate speeches in Nigeria was exclusive but not exhaustive.

**Table 2: Hate speeches in Northern Nigeria, 2010-2015**

S/n	Year	Hate speaker	Hate speech	Sources
1	2010	The former Governor of the old Kaduna State, 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.	Jason, 2011 (See references)
2	2010	Shehu Sani, a Kaduna based civil rights activist	President Goodluck Jonathan should not contemplate contesting the 2011 presidential election. Any attempt by him to contest amounts to incitement and a recipe for political instability	<a href="http://www.nigerianbestforum.com/shehu-sani-warns-jonathan-against-contesting">www.nigerianbestforum.com/shehu-sani-warns-jonathan-against-contesting</a>

3	2010	National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern Politicians, Dr. Junaidu Mohammed	It must be a Northerner or no Nigeria... If Goodluck Jonathan wins the PDP's endorsement to contest the 2011 presidential election, there would be violence.	Interview with Guardian Newspaper, 2 <sup>nd</sup> November, 2010
4	2011	Presidential Candidate of Congress for Progressive Change, General Muhammadu Buhari	God willing, by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood	Reported by Lika Binniyat in Vanguard Newspaper on May 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2012
5	2012	National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern Politicians, 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	Leadership March 29, 2012
6	2013	National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern Politicians, Dr. Junaidu Mohammed	There will be bloodshed. Those who feel short-changed may take the war path and the country may not be the same again	Reported by Kemy Oguns in Osun Defender, 2 <sup>nd</sup> December, 2013
7	2013	Abu King Shuluwa	Nigeria will disintegrate if Jonathan contests in 2015	Daily Independent Friday, March 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2013
8	2013	Former Chairman of PDP, Colonel Ahmadu Ali (rtd)	The Yorubas are ungrateful kind of people, who do not appreciate what others have done for them	Sun Newspaper, March 16, 2013
9	2014	Publicity Secretary of All Progressive Congress, 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	Leadership 21 <sup>st</sup> November, 2014; Sahara Reporters 22 <sup>nd</sup> November, 2014
10	2014	Governor Shema Ibrahim of Kastina 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	Reported by Premium Times on 19 <sup>th</sup> November, 2014
11	2014	An Islamic cleric, Ima Sadiq	Muslims, vote for Buhari. It is a sin to support a non-Muslim	Twitter handle, Saturday, 27 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
12	2014	Northern Elder Forum	Those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 will be considered an enemy of the north	Vanguard, 15 October 2014.

Source: Compiled by the author



**Table 3: Hate speeches in Southern Nigeria, 2010-2015**

1	2012	Chinua Achebe, a foremost Nigerian writer	The Igbo culture being receptive to change, individualistic and highly competitive gave the Igbo man an unquestionable advantage... Unlike the Hausa/ Fulani, he was unhindered by a wary religion and unlike the Yoruba, he was unhampered by traditional hierarchies	Achebe, Chinua (2012: 74)
2	2013	Femi Fani-Kayode, a former Aviation Minister	The Igbos are collectively unlettered, uncouth, uncultured, unrestrained and crude in all their ways...Money and the acquisition of wealth is their sole objective and purpose in life	Daily Post, August 8, 2013
3	2013	The leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Force (NDPSF), Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari	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	Vanguard Newspapers, May 5, 2013
4	2013	Chief Arthur Eze PDP Chieftain	That short man called Ngige, we gave him power and he joined the Awolowo people; the people that killed Igbos	Premium Times, November 13, 2013
5	2014	Asiwaju Bola Tinubu	It is going to be rig and roast. We are prepared not to go to court but drive them out	<i>Tell</i> , 7 July 2014.
6	2014	Former Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Godswill Akpabio	Those who want to take power through the back door will die. They will die	Punch Newspaper, 17 <sup>th</sup> July, 2014
7	2014	South East Self Determination Coalition (SESD)	We assure those cold blooded murderers that this time, their blood thirsty campaign will not go un-replied	Reported by Clifford Ndujihe in Vanguard Newspaper, 5 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
8	2014	Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari	2015 is more than do-or-die. You are a man and I am a man, we are going to meet at the battlefield	News Express 3 <sup>rd</sup> May, 2014
9	2014	Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari	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	<a href="http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/12/north-ungrateful-parasites-asari-dokubo">http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/12/north-ungrateful-parasites-asari-dokubo</a> ).
10	2014	Rivers States Governor, Rotimi	The challenge of the Nigerian military is not funding but corruption. Now they want	This day and Nations, Tuesday,

		Amechi	to kill some 50 officers for their own failure to equip them properly to fight terrorism. The soldiers have the right to protest for the federal government's failure to fully equip them	9 <sup>th</sup> December, 2014
11	2015	Wife of former President, Patience Jonathan	<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-</i> What is Buhari looking for? Old man that does not know his age. Your brain is dead.	At a PDP rally in Kogi state, Reported by <i>The Express New</i> , 4 March, 2014
12		Wife of former President, Patience Jonathan	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)	Presidential campaign in Calabar, <i>The Nation</i> , March 10, 2015
13	2015	Wife of former President, Patience Jonathan	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	The Complete Works of Patience Jonathan, <i>The Nation</i> on Sunday, 15 <sup>th</sup> March
14	2015	The Governor of Ekiti State, Peter 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	January 19, 2015, <i>ThisDay</i> and other national dailies
15	2015	Oba Akiolu of Lagos	On Saturday, if anyone of you, I swear in the name of God, goes against my wish that Ambode will be the next governor of Lagos state, the person is going to die inside this water...For the Igbos and others in Lagos, they should go where the Oba of Lagos heads to...	<i>ThisDay</i> Newspaper, 4 <sup>th</sup> April 2015
16	2015	Dr. Abraham Ariyo, U.S based Nigerian Doctor	You see how they (Igbos) are being slaughtered in South Africa. That is what is going to happen to them in Lagos... When are they (Igbos) going to be slaughtered in Abuja? We will continue to bus them to Onitsha	Facebook page of Dr. Ariyo, Reported in <i>Quick News Africa</i> , April 20, 2015.

Source: Compiled by the author

The tables above show that hate speech cuts across both northern and southern Nigeria. It also takes regional, ethnic, religious and political party dimensions. Comparing tables 2 and 3, we observed that 100 percent of hate speeches credited to northerners were aimed principally at

restoring the position of the President of Nigerian to the North while 56.25 percent of hate speeches credited to southerners aimed at retaining the position in the South. Table 3 also shows that 31.25 percent of the hate speeches were aimed at demeaning either the Igbo or Yoruba ethnic groups while 12.5 percent wanted to return the position of the office of the President to the North. Irrespective of the aim of hate speech, Adibe (2015) correctly noted that it is a catalyst for electoral violence and other sectarian killings in Nigeria. Our interview also shows that the escalation of hate speeches among Northern elites such as Alhaji Lawan Kaita, Shehu Sani and Dr. Junaidu Mohammed, especially since the year 2010 led to the 2011 post- election violence in Nigeria.

More so, threats of forceful change and hate utterances have characterized the Nigeria electoral space after the post electoral violence in 2011. In one of the speeches recorded in table 2, General Muhammadu Buhari, a former presidential candidate of Congress for Progressive Change threatened President Goodluck Jonathan to avoid using his power of incumbency to rig the 2015 election or something will happen (apparently, a repeat of 2011 post- election violence). The threat about the dog and the baboon in blood bath could mean severe fight between All Progressive Congress (APC) and PDP; Northern and Southern Nigeria; Christians and Muslims or even Boko Haram and Niger Delta Militants. Again, the utterance of Shema Ibrahim of Kastina State (An APC Chieftain) which referred to members of the opposition political party (Peoples Democratic Party, Labour Party and others) as cockroaches was one of the deadliest hate speeches in Nigeria. He encouraged members of his party to crush (kill) members of the opposition if they enter their territory. Shema Ibrahim emulated the popular hate speech in Rwanda, whereby the Hutus referred to the Tutsis as cockroaches and this led to the crushing (killing) of over 800,000 Tutsis within 100 days. Our interview specifically showed that

inflammatory utterances of some Northern elites led to the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2015 burning of two campaign buses belonging to the PDP in Jos by the supporters of the APC (also see, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/01/attack-campaign-buses-jonathan-buhari-war-words>).

Our interview also maintained that the multiplicities of hate speeches credited to the former First Lady, Patience Jonathan are behind the electoral violence in Rivers State. Put specifically, the hate speeches made it impossible for the APC to campaign in Okrika. Some of these attacks include: the bombing of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Secretariat in Okrika on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2015; the gunmen attack on the campaign ground of the APC, destroying the platform and other equipment on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the disruption of APC rally in Okrika (the home town of Nigeria's First Lady, Patience Jonathan) with explosions and sporadic gunfire on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2015.

Observably, these hate speeches are mostly rampant in consolidation elections than transition elections in Nigeria. Transition elections are relatively more peaceful than consolidation elections because they are manned by a coercive institution (colonial government or the military). For instance, the 1954, 1959, 1979, 1993 and 1999 elections took place without significant incidents of violence despite marked cases of irregularities unlike the spate of violence that characterize consolidation elections – 1964/1965, 1983, 2003, 2007, 2011 and the 2015. Consolidation elections are more prone to violence because contending forces in the political process are less able to compromise their common interest (Orji & Uzodi, 2012). This manifested greatly during the 2011 and 2015 elections as the PDP's rotational presidency arrangement had collapsed. During the electoral campaigns for the 2011 and 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria, hate speech/campaign was rife. For instance, during the build-up to 2015

presidential election, the PDP used the African Independent Television to broadcast documentaries of the apparent atrocities committed by General Buhari as a former Military Head of States of Nigeria between 1983 and 1985. The broadcast also showed how the military regime of General Buhari mediated the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Ghanaians without minding that such broadcast could incite a reprisal attack on Nigerians in Ghana or other African countries.

More so, tables 2 and 3 show that hate speeches in Nigeria are not systematically dissociated from incumbents especially in the build-up to 2015 election. Despite that the incumbents had comparative advantage to use alternative strategies to win elections such as manipulation of the electoral umpire, control or use of the members of the law enforcement agencies and vote buying; they indulged in hate speech and campaigns like the opposition party. We observed that before, during and after the election, both the PDP and the APC used discriminatory epithets to insult, discredit and stigmatize others on the basis of their religion, ethnic group, geopolitical zone and gender.

### **Consequences of Hate speech**

Electoral violence is the greatest consequence of hate speech. Fischer (2002) identified different manifestations of election violence as follows:

1. Pre- election day violence (it occur during registration period and can lead to massive disenfranchisement of voters due to psychological fear);
2. Campaign violence (it is during this period that major political meeting and rallies are held. This period is a prominent stage with high tendency for electoral violence);

3. Election day violence (it manifests in the forms of burning of election offices and material including ballot boxes and papers, intimidation of voters, snatching of ballot boxes, rigging and diversion of election materials;
4. Post-election day violence (violence can also occur hours and days after elections. This can emanate from dispute over election results and the inability of judiciary system to handle election dispute fairly. The manner in which election result are announced might also lead to electoral violence

Straus and Taylor (2012) examined African national elections from 1990 to 2008 and observed that 10 percent of the elections involved the highest level of violence and a further 10 percent involved substantial, though lower violence. Another 38 percent had limited violence and 42 percent had no substantial violence.

Notably, the Nigerian political history has been very unstable. Electoral violence in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial era, through the First, Second, and Third Republics to the Fourth Republic in 1999. In fact, violence has become a regular character of election such that the democratic process, values and institutions are prevented from developing because power is gained and retained through violence. Like the proliferation of small arms, peddling of hate speeches sustains the culture of intolerance and electoral violence in Nigeria. We observed that electoral violence in Nigeria manifests in forms of killings; looting, destruction and damage of property; assault and death threats; bombings; forceful dispersion of political rallies; destruction of campaign billboards; fighting among political parties; violent street protests and hooliganism; arbitrary detentions and arrests without warrant and abduction. These manifestations threaten democratization in Nigeria.

Electoral violence is positively linked to electoral fraud and ethnicity in Nigeria. Electoral fraud survives because successive political generations in Nigeria have the impression that politics is a lucrative business. Most individuals and groups therefore seek political power for personal aggrandizement and this ambition is often pursued at all cost (Ejiofor, 2007).

Evidence of fraud during the 1999 elections abound. There were cases of vote buying and selling, snatching of ballot boxes and other sensitive materials (result sheets, ballot papers and result validation stamps) and kidnapping of election officials on Election Day. Expectedly, these malpractices led to small scale violence (Aremu & Omotola, 2007). Despite the elaborate evidence of fraud surrounding the 1999 elections, the results were accepted because Nigerians wanted to end the long years of oppressive military rule (Wantchekon, 1999).

In 2003, at least one hundred people were killed and many more injured during the elections in Nigeria (Human Right Watch, 2004). The majority of the violence was perpetrated by supporters of the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The highest level of violence was recorded in the South West and South East, where PDP governors and supporters desperately resisted opposition. Environmental Right Action (2003) observed in parts of Rivers and Bayelsa states that the elections were characterized by armed struggle between the leaders of the Niger Delta militants- Asari Dokubo and Ateke Tom.

Despite that the two major candidates during the 2007 presidential election were both Northern Muslims from the same state (Kastina), HRW (2007) reported that there were about 967 incidents of electoral violence in which at least 300 people were killed. High level of violence was not unrelated to the level of electoral fraud. Ahead of the 2007 elections, former President Olusegun Obasanjo reportedly declared the election was going to be 'a do-or-die affair for PDP'. Thus, the election was going to be a matter of 'life and death for the PDP and Nigeria

(Tenuche, 2009). This explains why the 2007 electoral rigging was direct, brazen and daring. Hence, Ibeanu (2009) remarked that the direct seizure of votes and mandates was unprecedented.

Notably, the 2011 presidential election was the first genuine political contest between the predominantly Christian south and the Muslim north since Nigeria was swept into the ‘third wave’ of democratization. The presidential election divided the country along ethnic and religious lines. Violence during the party primaries, campaigns and the Election Day killed at least 165 people. Although the April 2011 elections were heralded as among the fairest in Nigeria’s history, they were also among the bloodiest. Post election violence began with widespread protests by supporters of the main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim and the presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change. They protested the re-election of incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a southern Christian. The protests degenerated into violent riots or sectarian killings (targeted mainly against the Christian and southerners) in the northern states and reprisal attacks in southern Nigeria (Human Right Watch, 2011). Table 4 below identifies the incidents of electoral violence in Nigeria by geopolitical zones from February to June, 2011.

Table 4: Incidents of electoral violence in the 2011 by geopolitical zones, February-June

Month	North East	North West	North Central	South East	South South	South West	Total
February	7	10	6	8	9	35	75
March	23	10	7	10	13	34	97
April	47	44	33	13	14	14	165
May	5	42	2	-	14	5	68
June	11	-	-	-	4	4	19
Total	93	106	48	31	54	92	424

Source: Nigeria Election Violence Report, 2011



The table shows that a total of 424 incidents of electoral violence were recorded in 2011. Significantly, the highest number of electoral violence was recorded in the North West while the least was in the South East. The total number of electoral violence in the months of February and March shows that pre election violence was rife in all the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Again, a total of 165 incidents of electoral violence occurred in April, the election month and all the zones recorded varying levels of Election Day violence. Again, post election violence took place between April and June mainly in the North West, North Central, North East, South South and South West. Out of the 943 deaths recorded in the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria, 827, or over 80 percent, occurred in the southern Kaduna (FGN, 2011; Ndujihe & Idonor, 2011). Our interview in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria confirmed that a well build culture of intolerance among ethnic and religious groups collided with hate utterances of political leaders during campaigns to generate the 2011 post electoral violence.

Like in 2011, the major candidates for 2015 presidential elections were General Muhammadu Buhari (an indigene of Kastina state in North West zone) and President Goodluck Jonathan (Bayelsa state in South-South zone). Again, Nigerians voted along ethnic and or zonal (regional) lines. The final INEC result shows that each candidate received block votes from their respective ethnic/regional groups. For instance, General Buhari received 81.34 percent of total votes cast in North West while President Jonathan received 89.66 percent of votes cast in South South (INEC, 2015).

Meanwhile, the report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 2015 shows that hate speech preceded the 2015 presidential election and this accounted for the high level of pre election violence. Our interviews also confirmed that ethnic and religious

polarizations collided with hate utterances of political leaders during campaigns to generate the pre electoral violence in Nigeria. Our interview revealed that from 2011 to 2015, the political atmosphere in Nigeria was saturated with all forms of campaigns, vitriol, name calling and outright insult between and among politicians. These hate statements credited to politicians and their supporters generated pre election violence in the forms of attack on campaign buses, secretariats and rallies of political parties. No wonder, Adibe (2015) concurred that hate speech is a catalyst for violence.

Despite the prevalence of adequate regulatory frameworks to ensure a violent –free 2015 election, cases of pre election violence was recorded in Lagos, Kaduna, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Buachi and Jos. NHRC (2015) noted that within fifty days, beginning from December 2014 to February, 2015, a total of 61 separate incidents of pre- election violence occurred in 22 states, cutting across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The report shows that about 58 persons were killed and many more injured. Lagos (south-west), Kaduna (north-west) and Rivers (south-south) states were the three most volatile areas during the 2015 pre-election violence. Figure 1 below shows a picture where people run for safety after violence broke out during a presidential campaign rally of All Progressives Congress (APC) at Taslim Balogun Stadium in Lagos on January 30, 2015.

Figure 1: picture where people run for safety during 2015 APC rally in Lagos



Source: *Punch Newspaper*, February 1, 2015.

Nonetheless, during the 2015 campaign tour of President Goodluck Jonathan, supporters of the opposition party, APC, obstructed the PDP campaign in the Northern parts of the country. For instance, the network news of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), on January 10, 2015, reported that youths in Jos burnt vehicles belonging to PDP, chanting the pro-Buhari slogans “Sai Buhari”, which means “It has to be Buhari”. On January 21, 2015, NTA also reported that President Goodluck Jonathan’s campaign train was attacked in Katsina state by a mob who chanted “Sai Buhari”. NTA also reported on January 23, 2015 that President Jonathan’s campaign team was attacked in Bauchi by a similar mob who chanted “Sai Buhari”. Figure 2 below shows the picture of a PDP campaign bus ablaze in Jos, Nigeria.

**Figure 2 President Jonathan’s campaign bus on flames in Jos**



Source : Premium Newspaper, February, 10, 2015

This bus among other vehicles was burnt by angry youth supporters of the Muslim North candidate of the APC, General Muhammadu Buhari. We observed that lack of adequate knowledge or information on politics, particularly the electoral process worsens the effect of hate speech on the people, especially the youth. Although it is difficult to track the profile of those that participate in election violence, our interview report shows that a group of people commonly referred to as ‘thugs’ are the key participants in election related violence in Nigeria from

antiquity to present. Our interview revealed that hate speeches may not matter to the educated individuals but ultimately provoke illiterate audience to violence. We also observed that the perpetrators of electoral violence are rarely educated, except the one given to them by their religion or ethnic leaders. Orji and Uzodi (2012) concurred with the above views and argued that the ethnic jingoists often mislead the illiterate masses during electioneering campaign.

The role of the media before, during and after elections has also been identified alongside electoral fraud, partiality of the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies, particularly the police as some of the factors that lead to electoral violence in Nigeria. In line with FGN (2011), our interview confirmed that the mass media was a major contributor to the post electoral crisis in 2011 as well as the pre election violence in 2015. The mass media broadcasts hate speeches, severe inter- ethnic and inter-religious relationships and heats-up the polity for electoral violence. This is akin to the observation in Kenya, where post election violence is attributable to incitement by powerful politicians and the spread of hate speeches and negative mass media reports before and after the 2007 elections (Chedotum, 2013).

We also observed that the worst victims of hate speech and electoral violence in Nigeria are women and children. Although the economic costs of election-related violence cannot be easily quantified, widespread election-related violence reverses economic gains. The electoral violence affects the general economic activities such as commerce, agriculture and food production. For instance, the post electoral violence in Kenya between 2007 and 2008 costs the government its revenue from tourism while the 2011 post election violence in Nigeria, costs Nigeria a whopping sun of N 40 billion (forty billion Naira) (FGN, 2011; Chedotum, 2013).

## Conclusion

Hate speeches directed at gaining political power lead to electoral violence. Nigeria's background of intolerance provides ample grounds for the use of hate speech. Directly, it was hate speech and indirectly it was ethnic and religious intolerance that led to the surge in electoral violence in Nigeria from 2011 to 2015. This paper argues that ethnic, religious and regional leaders in Nigeria elevated hate speech to the status of campaign strategy in May, 2010 after the death of President Yaradua and the abandonment of the PDP zoning consensus to rotate the office of the president between the south and the north every eight year. This hate speech has escalated the incidents of electoral violence. Notably, the litany of hate speech in Nigeria increased between the 2011 and the 2015 presidential elections. Both the print and electronic media in Nigeria also played an antidemocratic role during this period as they were seen in the forefront of documenting and reporting these hate speeches and campaign for individuals, ethnic group, political parties and geopolitical zone. This paper argued that hate speeches broadcasted in Nigeria in the build up to the 2015 presidential election accounted for the high incidents of pre election violence. In fact, the accumulated tension in the Nigerian polity following the intensification of hate speech failed to lead to post election violence in 2015 as expected because President Jonathan conceded defeat and congratulated the opposition.

The paper recommends that speaking out loudly against hate speech is no longer enough. INEC and other civil society organizations such as the Nigerian Human Right Commission should identify and prosecute individuals and organization that breach relevant laws governing electoral campaigns and public speech. Government and civil societies in Nigeria should also

monitor the media, especially the native language radio stations who use hate speech to fan the ember of ethnic division.

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