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Campaigns and Electioneering: Reflecting on the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria

Abstract: Historically, campaigns are recognized as a vital part of electioneering since it contains the ideas that the candidate wants to share with the voters, especially regarding policy issues and the administration's focus. It aims to get those who agree with their ideas to support them when running for a political position. The message often consists of several talking points about policy issues. However, a study of Nigeria's situation, with specific reference to the 2015 Campaigns and Electioneering, revealed that the main content of campaigns was hate speeches. Therefore, this paper seeks to bring out the main issues of campaigns in Nigeria's electoral system and why it has often led to electoral violence over the years. The qualitative method is used for this particular research. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical approach. It includes historical, descriptive, and analytical approaches based on gathered evidence. This research's primary source is based on field investigations conducted in the Nigerian area and surrounding territories. Among other things, the data collection process includes semi-structured interviews with selected individuals. The research also uses historical documents from the national archives, relying on previous research conducted on society, administrative development, and documentary data taken from newspaper accounts, diaries, letters, and verbal reports. This research's position is that campaigns over the years in Nigeria, unlike what is obtainable in some parts of the world where policy issues form the backbone of campaign message have basically on persons, character assassination, violence, and abusive (hate) speeches. The paper argues that this campaign strategy often leads to electoral violence before, during, and after elections. The paper, therefore, concludes that only issue-based campaigns can guarantee peaceful and credible elections in Nigeria.

Keywords: *campaign, electioneering, Nigeria, elections, democracy*

Introduction

Elections are crucial to the principle and practices of democracy all over the world. It becomes more evident in the perspective of the collapse of a traditional primordial system and the emergence of the modern state, and significant advancement made in terms of the popular will as the source of sovereignty, as opposed to the whims and caprices of rulers. The election has offered a way through which the people exercise their right to determine those they intend entrusting with the mantle of leadership. In light of the above, experts argue that elections could be best considered one procedure of aggregating preferences of a particular kind, as it offers a choice to the electorates who can choose between two or several alternatives. Similarly, election confers a lot of legitimacy on those elected, as such a political recruitment process reflects the wishes and aspirations of the people. In addition to choice, which is an essential ingredient of democracy, election promotes accountability, in the sense that the threat to defeat at the polls exerts pressure on those in power to conduct them responsibly and to take account of popular interests and wishes in their decision (Adekanye, 1990; Ibrahim, Egwu, 2007; Egwu, 2003).

In Nigeria's case over the years, political contestations between various social classes and stakeholders have come to be associated with persons and character assassination, violence, and abusive (hate) speeches. With particular reference to hate speech, these issues, offensive, destructive character campaigns, and electoral violence have provided the context and background for how elections are conducted. These are also responsible for how political and social classes play the game of politics. More importantly, these issues are critical to understanding the trials and tribulations, and prospects of the future of democracy in Nigeria.

Campaign and Electoral Violence: Interrogating the Nexus

In the most advanced world, political campaigns are considered a vital part of the electoral process. It involves organized efforts that seek to influence the decision-making process within a specific group or environment. It is because it provides the mobilization of forces either by an organization or individuals to influence others to effect an identified and desired political change. It is important because it shows people and particularly political candidates' ability to sensitize the political community to consider them as potential and better representatives of the people (Lynn, 2009).

A critical analysis of the above shows that for a political campaign to act effectively and efficiently as the mobilization force that will eventually influence the people's decision, the campaign's message must be convincing and attainable. It is in line with this that the paper aligned with Lynn (2009) when he opined:

What seems to be very important in any political campaign is the 'message' that is sent to the electorates. A campaign message is an important and potent tool that

politicians use to express views and feelings to the public to reshape and redirect the electorates' opinions to align with theirs. The message should be a simple statement that can be repeated severally throughout the campaign period to persuade the target audience or influence voters' act in the candidates' favor. The campaign message ought to contain the salient ingredients that the candidate wishes to share with the voters and these must be repeated often in order to create a lasting impression on the voters. As a matter of fact, good campaigners prefer to keep the message broad to attract the voters. In other words, appropriate use of language calls for the proper identification of the kinds of electorates targeted for mobilization during or after a political campaign.

Having the above standards, scholars have argued that political campaigns in Nigeria, especially during campaigns, have deviated from the original norm. Instead of the political actors sensitizing the political community about making the community consider them as potentials and better representatives of the people, they engage more in hate speeches. Thus, in the nation's political arena, hate speech is fast becoming so pervasive that it is doubtful if many Nigerians are entirely free from the vice. This school of thought is that people who usually complain of being insulted by other ethnic groups often use even more hateful words in describing the groups they feel have insulted them. The outcome of this exercise is that at the end of the day, there is a widening of the social distance among the different ethnicities that make up the country and exacerbate the crisis in the country's nation-building. It is in line with this that, Adibe (2015) defined and described Hate speech:

Speech that employs discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatize others on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other forms of group membership. It is any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action. There are individuals and groups in this country who openly relish the freedom to rain insults and profile others by appropriating to themselves the role of ethnic and religious champions. The problem is that hate speech is often the gateway to discrimination, harassment and violence as well as a precursor to serious harmful criminal acts. It is doubtful if there will be hate-motivated violent attacks on any group without hate speech and the hatred it purveys.

Commenting on the dimension of political campaigns in Nigeria, especially with the post-1999 processes of elections, Kukah (2015) opined that the political class and gladiators missed and mixed up the significant ingredients of a political campaign with hate speech. In his view, the campaign's manifestos' main contents were hate speeches aimed as denigrating political opponents and persons or a group based on ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual

orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristics. In the view of the scholar, hate speech is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display and usually marks incitement, violence or prejudice against an individual or a group". Kukah's (2015) position complies with the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued in 1997 covering the internationally accepted definition of the term. Accordingly, "the term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance." As a result, it generates stigmas, stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices against those who are constructed as being different".

It is in line with the above that the paper considers dangerous/hate speech in the Nigerian context as a speech act that:

- Insults people for their religion,
- Abuses people for their ethnic or linguistic affiliation,
- Expresses contempt against people because of their place of origin,
- Disparages or intimidates women or girls because of their gender,
- Condone discriminatory assertions against people living with a disability,
- Abuses or desecrates symbols of cultural or religious practices,
- Denigrates or otherwise ridicules traditional or cultural institutions of other people,
- Deliberately spread falsehood or rumors that demeans or maligns or otherwise ostracizes other people based on religion, ethnicity, gender, or place of origin for the accident of one form of disability or the other (Umar, 2015).

Although this is fast becoming the norm in Nigeria, International Law and national legal frameworks both prohibit such speech. For instance, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law. Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) also provides for states to declare an offense punishable by law "all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another color or ethnic origin" (Agrinya-Owan, Mordi, 2015).

In his analysis, Jega (2007) argued a strong relationship between the campaign of calumny (hate speech) and electoral violence. As far as history is concerned, elements of this have often characterized elections in Nigeria. He painted a graphic picture of this:

Elections in Nigeria have historically been conflict ridden. The campaigns preceding elections are invariably marked by pettiness, intolerance and violence ... including abduction and assassinations. And elections and their outcomes have often been neither free nor fair' characterized by violations of the process (both inadvertently and willful), corrupt conduct by officials, rigging of results and so on.

Emphasizing the above, Abbas (2007) opined:

With unprecedented political thuggery and uncontrollable violence characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property, election period in Nigeria is best described as warfare...incidence of intra party and inter-party conflicts and violence have led to endemic abductions and assassinations of opponents and innocent victims, flagrant and official rigging of election results. Further violations of established process have invariably transformed election periods in Nigeria to a matter-of-do-or-die or a matter-of-life-and-death ... or that of hook or crook ... this electoral politics has, of course signaled serious dangers for democratic and partisan politics in Nigeria.

In line with the above, Ibrahim Jibrin has argued that the problem with politics and its practice in Nigeria is the lack of civility and exclusionary politics. He wrote:

Civility is one quality that is largely absent in political party life. The most important aspect of the internal functioning of political parties in Nigeria since 1978 is that they have a persistent tendency to factionalize and fractionalize. As people go into politics to seek power and money, the battle for access is very intense and often destructive. Thugs, violence and betrayal are often the currency for political party engagement. Indeed, the period leading to each election is marked by the assassination of party leaders and contestants for various offices. The political field's reality is that political 'godfathers' who use money and violence to control the political process essentially operate many political parties. They decide on party nominations and campaign outcomes and when candidates try to steer an independent course, violence becomes an instrument to deal with them. The result is that they raise the level of electoral violence and make free and fair elections difficult. Although parties have formal procedures for the election of their leaders, these procedures are often disregarded; when they are adhered to, the godfathers have means of determining the outcomes. The level of violence, thuggery, and monetization of Nigerian politics provides a significant disincentive for women to take part as candidates, and the monetization aspect also makes young people less likely to influence politics in an effective way due to their lower level of access to resources.

From the above, it is clear that the relationship between hate speech and electoral violence is a strong one and has been mostly responsible for post-electoral destructions in most parts of the world, especially in the Third World countries, in which hold-on-to-power at all cost syndrome is strong.

2015 Campaign of Calumny: People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC) War of Words

Up to the eve of the 2015 General Elections, instead of the political parties rolling out their manifestoes, what was common in all their rallies were inciting, insulting, and instigating words, with little or no promise to the electorates. In this way, hate speeches fast assumed a common place in the various campaigns. During this period, hardly could one hear a politician or group of politicians addressing issues without using abusive expressions, especially during political rallies, which became avenues for raining hate speeches. In some other instances, contestants from even the same religious group openly incited their members against others. The same was the case even among people that professed the same faith but different denominations. In some other instances, ethnic groups were freely denigrated. To illustrate this, there is the need to examine some cases during the Presidential rallies during the period under study. These include:

- Governor Ayo Fayose of Ekiti State placed Obituary adverts on Buhari in some national dailies,
- The wife of President Jonathan, Mrs. Patience Jonathan, called him (Buhari) dead brain,
- Femi Fani Kayode (Director of Media and Publicity of President Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Organization) called General Muhammadu Buhari (the Presidential Candidate of the A.P.C.) a person of low intellect,
- Doyin Okupe (The Senior Special Assistant to President Goodluck Jonathan on Media and Publicity) was intensely personal and abusive,
- Vice President Namadi Sambo urged northern Muslims not to vote for General Buhari because he associates with Christians,
- Yemi Osinbanjo (the vice-presidential candidate of the opposition party) was alleged to have over 5000 Churches by Vice President (Arch) Namadi Sambo,
- Africa Independent Television (a private television station) and Nigerian Television Authority (a government-owned media outfit) air all types of negative documentaries, some half-truths, some doctored. National Broadcasting Corporation's rules regulating such activities were disobeyed.

Also, Ayo Fayose (who was the governor of Ekiti state) took his smear campaign a notch higher when he implied that Buhari, who was around the same age as his mother, wears baby 'pampers' as he no longer has control of his body system. On the other hand, Fani-Kayode (the Director, Media and Publicity of the PDP Presidential Campaign Organization) alleged that the APC flag bearer was receiving funding from terrorist groups including Boko Haram and ISIS. It is important to note that the APC also claimed the PDP-led government had security men specially trained as snipers to eliminate those opposed to President Goodluck Jonathan's re-election bid. On the other hand, the Vice President tried to use religious senti-

ments to divide the country and incite Muslims against Christians. He specifically stated that “Buhari ya dauko pastor a matsayin mataimakinsa kun san coci nawa yake dashi? Yana da coci 5000, don haka karku zabe su”. (The translation is – “Buhari has selected a pastor as his running mate, do you know how many churches he has? He has 5000 churches, so based on that, don’t vote for them”).

Through the vice president, the party made it clear that the ruling party was the most Islamic Party in Nigeria because nobody can be more Muslim than himself, arguing that his name is Namadi, which is a derivative of Namadina, meaning someone from the Medina in Saudi Arabia. At the Rally in Jigawa State, Sambo also stated that he goes for the Hajj every year.

Coincidentally, as all these were being displayed, the people were getting confused and panicking. In some cases, people started to move away from areas where they had lived all their lives but now felt were unsafe for them. On the other hand, thugs and other miscreants were warming up to take advantage of the situation. Therefore, it was not surprising that different groups (under various names) began to emerge in the name of preparing to protect their own when the chips were down.

The Nigerian Media: Guardian or Dagger on Democracy

In most countries of the world, during elections, the media plays the role of effective management of reportage to maintain peace and stability. However, in most countries in Africa, the media’s role has not helped matters. It was the case up to the eve of the 2015 Presidential Election, which has made scholars question the assumption that the media should protect democracy. Much earlier, Mu’azu (2003), had argued:

In the era of politics, assumption is that the media would serve as platform not only for the provision of information to the citizenry, but also as important instruments in the mobilization of the people and providing civic education for them to play their role in the democratic process. There is a desire to create a discerning and critical electorate. One of the goals of this political education is to provide a convivial environment for the choice of political leaders through elections with rancor and violence, make peaceful legitimate demands on political leaders, tolerate and accommodate dissenting or opposing political opinions. The public is expected to see through the exploitation of primordial loyalties including acts of thuggery at the expense of issues in the drive to capture political power. Expectedly, the people are to resist being drawn into acts of violence and blind support for political parties and politicians. The media are therefore required to become agents and promoters of peace to the electorate so that they can make informed political choice and take control of their political destiny. There is an expectation that this would contribute to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

It was rather unfortunate that the media continued to play the devil's advocate as they became alarmists and instruments of destruction in the hands of the politicians. At a time, a wealthy owner of a popular media outfit was even made the head of a party's campaign team. In this way, it was expected that he put into effective and efficient use of his media outfit for the party. For example, it was noted during this period that while the Imo Broadcasting Corporation was used by some politicians to systematically, ceaselessly portray Jonathan as a hater of the Igbo so that General Buhari will be seen as a better alternative, the Africa Independent Television and Nigerian Television Authority were employed to air damaging documentaries on Buhari. As systematic as the orchestrated campaigns were designed, clothed, and executed in languages that could enrage the people against Jonathan and Buhari, the operators of these media outfits were smiling to the banks. Madukwem (2015) particularly noted the situation:

It is worthy of note that some campaigns have been in tandem with specification of the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC. Others have degenerated into campaigns of blackmail, falsehood, character assassination, distortion of facts and figures and outright deviation from discipline, decorum, decency and tolerance. The essence of all these campaigns which climaxed to conclusion is to market the various candidates. But the choice of candidate must be dependent on truth, facts about such candidate. Nigerians are intelligent enough not to be hoodwinked; those whose credibility, image and ability are shrouded in doubt should not be voted into power, notwithstanding what such a candidate must have spent. Unfortunately, while some media houses have failed in the task of maintaining neutrality, others have allowed their platforms to be used by over-zealous politicians, whose only stock in trade is to impose candidates, heat up the polity and preach hate in the news, programmes and jingles.

The immediate effect was that groups were turned against each other while the lives of the employees of such outfits were at risk. For example, it was alleged that the opposition party members had to set ablaze a famous television outfit in Benin, southwest Nigeria. In some other cases, there were incidents of attacks on political opponents and setting vehicles and offices ablaze. It was indeed a dangerous situation as scholars have argued that a critical study of the Rwandan saga, especially as it relates to the genocide in Rwanda against the Tutsis, began just precisely the same way. For example, as far back as 1999, it was noted that the media played a significant role, as indicated by Abubakar (1999):

They, then, use media propaganda effectively, to propagate hatred against this target group. The propaganda helps in brainwashing militant youth organized in militias, that are used, not only to control the actions of the national, or, ethnic group of the genoddaires, but also to exterminate the target group. The control of the national,

or, ethnic group whose fanatical militants are being prepared to perpetrate genocide, includes the elimination of rational and liberal members of that group who are opposed to genocide. They are called traitors from within. Extreme “tension, crisis and fear are also generated by the organizers (the genocide within both the target group and their own group. In most cases, they capitalize on serious national crisis - economic or political - to unleash their violence on innocent people. In doing so, those of them who are placed in strategic state institutions, use these institutions, national and/ or local, depending upon their strength, in the implementation of their genocidal plans. Above all, their fashion extreme racist ideology, which they use to fuel a fanatical determination in their militants to engage in extremely barbaric and brutally inhuman annihilation of the target group. As elucidated with precision by Africa Rights, on pages 46–47 of their well-documented book, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance, “Killing huge numbers of people in a short space of time is a complex task requiring sophisticated mobilization”. But it can take place even in a society without the modern infrastructure and the sophistication of Nazi Germany.

These types of propaganda often employed by the politicians have, over the years, worked in helping them to destabilize the country as a way of achieving their aims. Thus, up to the eve of the elections, the headlines of the major newspapers and other print/visual media have been as outlined below; *Rumbles in the Land, Freedom War Declared TSM Magazine, Now, Nigeria is Finished – (TELL), Make Up or Break Up – The African Guardian, Nigeria Breaks – (The NEWS), Ohanaeze Can No Longer Guarantee Peace In The East – (<http://www.punchng.com>), Tension in Onitsha as Hausa residents flee city – (Punch), Kano Multiple Blasts: There’s A Grand Design To Set Nigeria On Fire – Sultan – (Leadership), MASSOB Will Soon Declare War On North – (<http://nationalmirroronline>), Nigerian Crisis Worsens as the Igbo issue Ultimatum to All Muslims to Quit the South-East – (This Day), The Killing of Igbos in Northern Nigeria Has Started!, US Army Prepares for Nigeria’s Possible Break-up (2015) – (<http://www.newsrescue.com/2009/08>), WAR DRUMS – Northerners flee Asaba, Southerners flee Northern part of Nigeria... (huhuonline.com), Boko Haram Supports Buhari Candidacy, Nigeria will burn if Buhari wins....Al-Qaeda wants to make Nigeria its next HQ – (elombah.com), Boko Haram plans massive bombings in seven states – (PUNCH).*

In the 2015 Presidential Election case, the media (with specific reference to television, radio, and newspapers) was at the highest bidders’ disposal. They were ready to publish or air any news as long as the client was prepared to pay, even when it threatens the nation’s corporate existence. This act contradicts the media’s major role in election issues, as opined by Iredia (2007). Iredia Tony, the former Director General of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) states the problem in this regard very clearly:

Through the media ... the people must be assisted to premise their choices of rationality and vote wisely during elections. They must have all information that is needed to elect the right candidates who can ensure good governance. Where such public awareness is lacking, those of us in the media must accept a share of the blame of failed elections in Nigeria.

It is clear that through the promotion of hate speech circulation, the media tactically neglected their responsibility as contained in Sections 22 and 39 of the 1999 Constitution, which bestow on them the power to inform the people rightly and to hold government and individuals accountable for their actions. It is even more dangerous because the Nigerian society's enlightenment level is such that many people still believe that any information in printed form or aired from the radio/television is the gospel truth.

After the 2015 National Elections: Any Lesson

Now that the 2015 Election is won and lost, it is clear that Nigerians still have a lot to learn. It is even more important when we consider that the processes involved in campaigning and electioneering in Nigeria are dangerous and capable of leading to the Nigerian state's disintegration. In this light, scholars have argued that the political class in Nigeria seems not to be learning from the lessons of history as it is fast becoming clear that at the end of every election in the country, there are always casualties who are mostly the masses. It has been amply captured by Usman (2002):

If you don't learn from history, you are doomed to repeat it ... For it seems that as we head towards ... general elections ... politicians and other political actors in the country have adamantly refused to learn from our history, and are again taking our country towards the sort of crises of political succession that in earlier decades had wrecked our attempt to build a durable civilian democracy.

This view is better appreciated when seen in the light that politics is supposed to unify and not divide a people, as seems to be Nigeria's case. It is in line with this that Geoffrey and Peter's definition of politics (Babawale, 2007) becomes even more relevant. According to the scholars, politics involves everything, like the activity of the individuals and their groups, for the reconciliation of conflicting interests without undermining or destroying a sense of security and participation among members of the community. In developed parts of the world, the people will always tell you that at the end of the elections, the country will remain, and as such, the people must work together to maintain peace and orderliness before, during, and after the elections. It was the case demonstrated by Hillary Clinton, when in her acceptance speech after she had been declared the winner as the Senator representing the State of New York on November 7, 2000, she noted, "Today, we voted along party lines

as Democrats and Republicans; tomorrow, we are going to live together as New Yorkers”. Commenting on the import of this, Ayo-Aderele (2015), opined:

This was a remarkable statement, considering that the entire elections had been a keenly contested one, especially between the Democratic candidate/incumbent Vice-President, Al Gore; and the Republican candidate/son of a former president, George W. Bush. Then outgoing President Bill Clinton had beaten the older Bush hands down in the 1992 presidential elections, effectively making then President George H. W. Bush one of the few American presidents who failed to secure a second term. Clinton held on to the presidency for two terms of eight years – an unnerving experience for the Republicans. It’s perhaps one of the reasons why the American ways of doing things remain one of the few positive examples nations sometimes draw from.

The above possibly gave credence to the position maintained by Adediran (Armstrong, 1999), when he opined:

Even in politically stable nations like the United States of America (USA), inter-group frictions exist. But even the most resistant groups in the USA, have become Americanized, conforming to national identity, the characters of which are clearly understood by the constituent units. The US has rightly been referred to as the melting pot of diverse groups of immigrant communities from numerous different and assorted cultures. The synthesis in the US is a testimony to the fact that it would take the diffusion of diverse political, ideological and scientific movements to change thing; hence plurality in the Nigerian nation should be seen as an asset rather than a burden.

Research has established that while Nigeria still treats hate speeches and their perpetrators with kid gloves, most countries consider it and its perpetrators as enemies of the state. For example, hate speech is prohibited by law in several jurisdictions such as Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and South Africa. In the United Kingdom, under Section 5 of its Public Order Act (POA), Harry Taylor, an atheist who placed drawings satirizing Christianity and Islam in an airport prayer room, was convicted in April 2010 and given a six-month prison sentence. In South Africa, Julius Malema, the former ANC’s Youth League leader, was in 2011 convicted of hate speech for promoting the song “Kill the Boer”. In France, right-wing politician Jean Marie Le Pen, runner-up in the 2002 presidential election, was in 2005 convicted of inciting racial hatred for comments made to Le Monde in 2003 about Muslim immigration’s consequences in France. Unfortunately, just weeks to the 2015 General election in Nigeria, Prof. Chidi Odinkalu, the Chairman, Governing Council of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), informed a gathering that the NHRC was

still planning to establish Election Violence Incidence Centre (EVIC), in addition to other precautionary measures aimed at checking the incidence of hate speech and other negative tendencies capable of disrupting the polls (Tartius, 2015). International Law and national legal frameworks both prohibit such speech.

At the International level, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law (ICCPR, Article 20 (2)). The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Article 4 also provides for states to declare an offense punishable by law “all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another color or ethnic origin”. However, in Nigeria, it is clear that we are not taking the effect of this hate speech and its attendant impact seriously.

It is in line with the above that there is the need for the country to begin a legitimate, transparent, and open process and mechanism of legislation that will eventually culminate in the making of an effective law against the use of hate speeches, whether in rallies, campaign, religious gatherings or on social media.

There is also the need to develop, in conjunction with critical organs of the society such as media owners and practitioners, the taxonomy of what constitutes hate speech. It has been the position of scholars and experts who have keenly watched the Nigeria political landscape since the return of democratic rule. To make this more effective, media houses through their unions must ensure that they incorporate these as part of good journalism practice and impose sanctions on erring members who publish or broadcast hate speech laden materials. According to the Nigerian Press Council, the Nigerian media have fallen victim to manipulations by the government and politicians. The Council went on to express this fall in the standard:

We are being witnesses to the fallen standard of journalistic profession and its negative contributions to nation building through a hackneyed uncouth and indiscrete reporting of events and issues... ethnic polarization of media houses and consequent undue influence on power and political tussles. As a result, in moments of crisis, the media become ready tools for those actively involved in the power crisis.

There is also the need to begin to re-emphasize that part of our culture that promotes the individual's respect. In most of our villages, it is clear that the unwritten constitution of the land frowns at hate speeches, especially when it denigrates the person/people or family involved. In most cases, the minimum punishment for such an act is ex-communication.

Conclusion

Generally, hate speech took center stage as it almost became a legal instrument of the campaign. It became even more worrisome when the major political parties tried to outdo each other in terms of hate speeches during this period. It had so much negative impact on both the people, their disposition towards the elections, and the candidates. Thus, up to the eve of the 2015 General elections, the general impression was that it had been turned into a theatre of hate speeches and campaigns colored in a form that defies logic and common sense. Some days to the election, the National Human Rights Commission reported evidence of an established footprint of pre-election violence that had spread beyond the 22 states, while election-related violence in some form was already widespread in nearly all the states of Nigeria. Evidence of these was found in some states in the northern parts of the country. For instance, on January 10, 2015, some youths in Jos burnt cars belonging to the People's Democratic Party's Campaign Organization. Also, the presidential candidate and sitting president Goodluck Jonathan was a mob in Katsina state while on a visit to the family of Yar'adua, who was at a time president of Nigeria. While the paper argued that this is not good for the country's political development, it also advised that the government, in conjunction with the Independent National Electoral Commission and other relevant agencies, including those in the academic circle, must work together to prevent such occurrence in future. It is also vital that those who have taken to politics as their primary business and occupation should help save the country from collapse by desisting from speeches and acts capable of setting the nation ablaze.

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