

Curbing Hatred: The Ethnic Diehards' Agitations and 2015 Presidential Election Campaign in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria witnessed bouts of hate speeches during the buildup to the March 28, 2015 Presidential election. Politicians and their allies made use of acerbic words, half-truths and outright lies during their electioneering campaigns. The election was regarded as a 'do-or-die' affair by the politicians. Their activities were alarming and apprehensions were rife about the success of the election and peaceful transition of power. Hence, the two major contestants, Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari along with nine party leaders signed the 'Abuja Accord' on January 14, 2015.

Furthermore, the country experienced a season of acerbic comments, issuance of quit notices and calls for secessions by ethnic jingoists. These activities heated up the polity and caused panic among the citizens of the country. On June 6, 2017, the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum comprising of 19 Northern states of Nigeria issued a 90-day ultimatum to South-Eastern residents in the North to vacate the region before October 1, 2017.

This article explores the use of hate speech in electioneering campaign drawing from secondary data i.e. newspaper excerpts; and through the lens of ethics using relevant Communication Practice Codes, Nigerian Press Council Code, Nigerian Broadcasting Code, 2012 and relevant sections of Electoral Act 2010. It also examines the issue of the ethnic diehards' agitations and quit notice and its implications for national peace, security and justice. The argument and submission of this paper highlights ways of curbing hatred, advancing of peace, acceptance, tolerance and justice.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Presidential election, Ethnic diehards, Peace.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society. There are over 250 ethnic groups in the country. These groups have diverse cultural orientation, languages, belief system and demands. Most times, ethnic jingoists are caught in the web of championing ethnic-specific agenda at the detriment of national unity. Taking ethnic jingoism into the political arena, politicians and supporters engage in throwing tantrums, acerbic comments and casting aspersions on personalities in order to gain popularity. The idea behind the use of hate speech is to instil fear, erupt emotions and cause divisions, thereby making it clear that an ethnic war is on-going. Ikeanyibe (2018) defines hate speech as a “speech that provokes insults or promotes hatred of groups on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin. Its interpretation is often problematic because of the constitutional rights to freedom of expression as enshrined in constitutions of various countries” (p. 119).

Noriega and Iribarren highlight four types of hate speech. These include: false facts, flawed argumentation, divisive language, and dehumanizing metaphors (as cited in Muluka, 2016). According to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) (2014), provides five groups of hate speech. These include: speech that attacks the dignity of groups or individuals, speech that manifests explicit incitement to hatred, prejudice or discrimination, implicit incitement to hatred, prejudice or discrimination, derogatory, demeaning or insulting language and attempt to incite groups or individuals against one another.

Defining Hate Speech

Some argue that hate speech is difficult to define. Citing Jordan Peterson, a Canadian professor of psychology in Jason & Jason (2016), rather than canvas against hate speech, free speech should be promoted. However, the Criminal Justice Act of 2003 defines hate speech as any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it may incite violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group. This law may identify a protected individual or a protected group by certain characteristics. For the European Union (EU) Charter of Fundamental Rights (2009) refers to speech as “the incitement and encouragement of hatred, discrimination or hostility towards an individual that is motivated by prejudice against that person because of a particular characteristic, for example, their sexual orientation or gender identity” (para. 1). Also, the American Bar Association defines hate speech “as a speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, colour, religion, national origin,

sexual orientation, disability, or other traits.” This definition was adopted because it is in line with our scope of study.

Joel (2013) furthers the discussion by writing:

hate speech is manifested more in stereotyping and abusive denotation of mannerisms of other ethnic groups, particularly Northerners. While it can be argued that there exists stereotypes about every ethnic group, the vitriol and violence that pervades its manifestations between Northern and Southern Nigeria is unequalled (p. 3).

While Adelakun (2017, p. 31) defines hate speech as “any speech that is used to demean persons based on their identifiers such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and predispose them to acts of violence.” In the same vein, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe defines hate speech 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, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. (Council of Europe, 2017, p.10)

Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, and Martinez (2015) note that “at critical times, such as during elections, the concept of hate speech may be prone to manipulation: accusations of fomenting hate speech may be traded among political opponents or used by those in power to curb dissent and criticism.”

In a bid to forestall further use of hate speech, the Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo while speaking at the National Economic Council security retreat in August 2017 declared hate speech as “intolerable” and an act of terrorism.

Intimidation of a population by words or speech, an act of terrorism and will no longer be tolerated by the President Muhammadu Buhari administration. As I have said, we have drawn a line against hate speech, it will not be tolerated, it will be taken as an act of terrorism and all of the consequences will follow. In the strongest possible terms, hate speeches that promote violence against an individual or a group, especially when such speeches come from people of your own faith, tribe or group. (Osinbajo)

In Jimoh and Opara (2018), a new bill sponsored by the spokesman of the Senate, Senator Aliyu Abdullahi in the Nigerian Senate is seeking the establishment of an Independent National Commission for Hate Speeches.

In addition, the bill notes that anyone convicted of hate speech shall die by hanging in Nigeria.

A person who uses, publishes, presents, produces, plays, provides, distributes and/or directs the performance of any material, written and/or visual, which is threatening, abusive or insulting or involves the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, commits an offence, if such person intends thereby to stir up ethnic hatred, or having regard to all the circumstances, ethnic hatred is likely to be stirred up against any person or person from such an ethnic group in Nigeria.

In the political landscape of Nigeria, hate speech is deployed to prepare the ground for acrimonious political contestation in the build up to many general elections. In this way, it fuels centrifugal tendencies especially widening the line between the predominantly Northern Muslims and the Southern Christians as well as between the different ethnic groups in Nigeria (as cited in Ikeanyibe, 2018). This approach has been adopted by politicians as an easy way of whipping up the sentiments of voters. In May 2010, the then president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua from the North died after three years in power. After his death, the then Vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan, a Southerner, became acting president. On September 15, 2010, Jonathan declared his intention to run for the post of the president in the 2011 general elections. The campaign for the elections began with politicians traversing the country and seeking for the votes of citizens. Through the rostrums at campaign venues, the social media platforms and traditional media, the use of hate speech resurfaced at the 2011 general elections in Nigeria. During the preparations for the 2011 elections, the North was pitched against the South due to what some northerners considered as a lost chance for the presidency. (Ikeanyibe et al., 2018). This was also the case in 2015. Ogwezzy-Ndisika (2015) highlights that the 2015 general election in the country was a “show unguarded, offensive, uncouth, uncultured and absolutely damning inexcusable statements emanating from the two major parties” (p. 1).

In October 2018, the ruling party, All Progressives Congress released a song titled: “Atiku is a thief” to demean the presidential candidate of the opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. In a swift response, Citing Wale (2018), the spokesperson of Atiku, Segun Sowunmi notes: “On our part we have signed up to running an issue based campaign and if it is not too hard for the Muhammadu Buhari administration and the APC to understand, we call on them to do the same. There is greater value in doing so. Nigeria is the most populous black nation on earth and we owe it to ourselves and the black race to be above board. We are trying to present our idea on how the country should be led and not

interested in anything else. And by so doing, set Nigeria and its people on the path of working again” (p. 30). As the nation prepares for the 2019 general elections, it is hoped that hate speech does not ruin the electioneering process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ogwezzy et al., (2016) note that the subject of hate speech and the role the media play can be related to media ethics which has been on from the 20th century. The authors draw from the submissions in *Four Theories of the Press* by Wilbur Schramm, Fred Siebert, and Theodore Peterson written in 1963. One of the theories relevant to this study is the social responsibility theory. It has its roots in mid-twentieth century society and revolves around ethics in the media, but has always existed as an ideal. In Folarin (1998), McQuail (2013), Baran and Davis (2012) and Anaeto et al. (2008) the theory (social responsibility) notes specific functions of the media. This includes: “. . . the political system by making information, discussion and consideration of public affairs generally accessible; to inform the public to enable it to take self-determined action [and] to serve the economic system; for instance by bringing together buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising” (Folarin, 1998, p.31).

McQuail (2013) argues that the media irrespective of its owners has an ethical obligation to the society without any discrimination on the basis of *sex* (emphasis ours) orientation and they should discharge their duties in a truthful, fair and objective manner in order to make it relevant to all members of the wider society. This theory brings to fore that the need for the media to be responsible in performing its functions as stated by Harold Lasswell’s 1948 article titled: “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society”. These functions include: surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of society, cultural transmission and entertainment.

To further this conversation on hate speech, this paper explores the use of hate speech in electioneering campaign from secondary data i.e. newspaper excerpts; and through the lens of ethics using relevant Communication Practice Codes as frameworks. In addition, drawing from the Nigerian Press Council Code, Nigerian Broadcasting Code, 2012 and relevant sections of Electoral Act 2010, this paper submits that there is need for the media to be socially responsible.

Hate Speech: The Nigerian Trajectory

Acerbic remarks go a long way in altering unity, peace and tranquillity of a group. These remarks are said in order to elicit a kind of reactions. In

Nigeria, the chronicling resultant effect of hate speeches dates back to the second republic, precisely 1979 to 1983. The second republic was as a result of the handover of power from the military to the civilians. The Shehu Shagari-led presidency was after ensuring the return to normalcy. According to Orie (2017), the political arena of the Second Republic, 1979 to 1983 was highly charged as a result of hate speeches, thereby balkanising the nation. Those hate speeches which were freely published in the newspapers and the electronic media equally splited (sic) several families, students in the higher institutions and market women. Then, Nigerian Newspapers were awash with hate speeches.

One can recall the daily column maintained by a columnist of Nigerian Tribune, other columnists of the same paper and news reports which carried scathing comments on the person of President Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria. Those comments were not directed to his administration's policies, but to his person. He was even referred to as an illiterate on the pages of Tribune and Daily Sketch. The Hausa/ Fulani politicians were not spared by these disparaging comments in the South West Newspapers including politicians from this region. Late Chief M. K. O. Abiola was equally harangued by these papers for not belonging to Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN. The New Nigeria Editors and their columnists equally responded with derogatory comments directed towards Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the nastiest manner. The Maigani column of Sunday New Nigeria and Candido column of same paper used all the period fighting the leader of the UPN and his Yoruba race. Indeed, it was a descent into hate which Nigeria politicians and their followers regaled themselves. The Satellite Newspaper established by a governor of the Southern East was also deeply involved in the publication of hate speeches. No one, particularly the political leaders attempted to caution or halt the vituperation against eminent Nigerians and politicians. It will be recalled that certain newspaper men were unable to continue with their jobs because of the intense polity raising form hate speeches spewed through the media. Some newspaper editors lost their jobs because they could not join the madness. Those who retained their jobs were reassigned to "*Siberia*." Siberia here refers to a place of redundancy and idleness.

Since the beginning of the fourth republic in 1999, there has been use of acerbic words, half-truths and outright lies by politicians during the electioneering period. As the nation prepared for the 2007 elections, the then president, Olusegun Obasanjo while campaigning declared: "this election is a do or die affair for me and the PDP. This election is a matter of life and death for the PDP and Nigeria." This statement "depicts his perception of politics and electoral competition as a continuation of warfare by some other means. It is also in consonance with the Machiavellian principle of

politics as a power game. By likening politics to warfare, as well as power game, Obasanjo tends naturally to see political opposition groups not as worthy competitors, but as enemies to be crushed. That view of politics therefore is a zero sum one where the winner must necessarily take all; the values of fairness, competition and moderation are discountenanced and the rules of the game have little or no relevance.” (Tenuche, 2009).

Prior to the election in 2011, the political arena was tense. Many Northern politicians vehemently kicked against the candidacy of Jonathan. “Following the insistence of former President Goodluck Jonathan to contest the 2011 Presidential Election against the zoning arrangement of the party, some politicians of Hausa/Fulani extraction with megalomaniac inclinations decided to use every available means to ensure the return of political power to the Northern region. These politicians who operated under the aegis of the Northern Political Leadership Forum (NPLF) made use of different strategies, including hate campaigns, to undermine the candidature of Mr. Jonathan. It was under this platform that politicians like Alhaji Lawal Kaita, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, General Ibrahim Babangida, Dr. Burkola Saraki, Junaid Mohammed, and General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau, among others, made various provocative, incendiary, calumnious and hate speeches against the aspiration and candidature of Mr. Jonathan. Similarly, other Northern politicians outside this forum like Shehu Sani (former civil rights activist) and Mr. Muhammadu Buhari (frontline opposition politician and first runners up during the 2003, 2007 and 2011 Presidential Elections) also contributed to the enmeshment of the political atmosphere with hate speech. For instance, Alhaji Lawal Kaita stated that the North was determined to make the country ungovernable for President Jonathan or any other Southerner who found his way to the seat of power on the platform of the PDP against the principle of the party’s zoning policy” (*Tribune*, 13 October, 2010).

Before 2015 general elections, the activities of the two major parties - People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) were engaged in verbal and non-verbal attacks. It was observed that the two parties gave hate speeches during the electioneering process. In our personal observation, 2015 political campaigns in Nigeria appear to be the most challenging in the history of political campaigns. Through the print medium, adverts which spewed hate speeches were placed at strategic positions and sponsored by members of the two major parties: APC and PDP.

There are numerous examples of hate speeches spewed by the supporters and politicians of the two major political parties (see tables in Appendix A). Table 1 highlights the hate speeches as published in major newspapers in the build-up to the elections. In one of the examples, a pro-PDP group was quoted to have said: ‘No matter how many pretty robes you wear once

a tyrant always a tyrant' in a bid to puncture the candidacy of APC's Muhammadu Buhari. The statement refers to Buhari being a tyrant from his days as a military leader and will always remain as one. Table 2 highlights few examples of the documentaries and campaign statements aired on major television stations to in order to devalue the candidacy of the candidates. For Table 3, hate speeches made during different campaign rallies are highlighted. In one of the examples, Patience Jonathan, the wife of the then president was quoted to have said: 'Stone Any One Who Supports Change' during a campaign rally in Calabar, Cross River State. The statement incited the people to oppose anyone who supported the opposition and its candidate, Muhammadu Buhari. 'Change' refers to the promise mantra used by the opposition during their campaigns.

Meanwhile, Table 4 highlights examples of statements made on billboards placed at strategic places in the country. A billboard placed at a Orita –Olaiya Junction Osogbo Osun State read thus: 'Vote good governance not Goodluck'. The billboard which was sponsored by a pro-APC group enjoined citizens of the area to vote for 'good governance'. In addition, the billboard asked citizens not to vote the president whose first name is 'Goodluck'. Apparently, the billboard insinuated that the government in power had delivered bad governance. Tables 5 and 6 highlights few examples of hate speeches made online.

Hate Speech and the Ethnic Dimensions

In 2017, Nigeria experienced a season of acerbic comments, issuance of quit notices and calls for secessions by ethnic jingoists. These activities heated up the polity and caused panic among the citizens of the country. On June 6, 2017, the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum comprising of 19 Northern states of Nigeria issued a 90-day ultimatum to South-Eastern residents in the North to vacate the region before October 1, 2017. Part of the quit notice reads: "the North, a critical player in the Nigerian project, hereby declares that it will no longer be disposed to coexisting with the Igbo and shall take definite steps to end the partnership by pulling out of the current federal arrangement. This conclusion is necessitated by the realization that it since ceased to be comfortable or safe to continue sharing the same country with the ungrateful, uncultured Igbo who have exhibited reckless disrespect for other federating units and stained the integrity of the entire nation with their insatiable criminal obsessions. The North hereby openly calls on the authorities and other national and international stakeholders to acknowledge this declaration by taking steps to facilitate the final dissolution of this hopeless union that has never been convenient to any one of the parties."

The group promised to forcefully evict them if they fail to obey their ultimatum. This was in response to the sit-at-home protest held by pro-Biafra groups in the South Eastern part of the country: Independent Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The protest was organized to remember the Biafra secessionist war that took place in 1967. The war lasted for three years and saw the loss of three million people. The Biafra secessionist under the leadership of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared an unconditional cease-fire. As a result, the then head of state, General Yakubu Gowon accepted the cease-fire and made an infamous statement: 'no victor and no vanquished.' Despite the cease-fire, the Biafra secessionists under its British-Nigerian leader, Nnamdi Kanu are agitating for a separation from Nigeria. The Kanu-led secessionist group continue to heat up the polity with caustic comments through the London-based *Radio Biafra*. Also, followers of the group incite the public through their comments on social media networks. There are several videos online showing Kanu being regaled by followers with different titles. The titles include: 'His Excellency,' 'The Supreme Leader,' 'Offo Nri' and 'Greatest Biafra Warrior.' Some of the videos posted online showed followers prostrating before Kanu while he walked round his house.

Despite the efforts of IPOB to secede, there are dissenting voices within the group. According to the co-founder of the group and former President General of Ohanaeze, a recognized group of Eastern Nigeria, Dr Dozie Ikedife, the method adopted by the group was inappropriate. Ikedife who was part of the war in 1967 notes that he is not in support of any other brand of Biafra agitation that would involve physical engagements, assault or insults and preaching ethnic hatred. "I know many people across Igboland and beyond are yearning for Biafra. But the Biafra agitation I support is a peaceful one. A Biafra founded through a referendum or legislative process and backed by law and not violence." In a similar vein, a strong-worded statement distancing themselves from the Kanu-led agitation for secession was issued by the five South-Eastern states' governors in June 2017. The communiqué reads: "Ndigbo are in support of a united Nigeria where peace, love, fairness, justice, equity and equality of opportunity are paramount regardless of creed, ethnicity, gender or political affiliation."

On the part of the Federal Government, ethnic jingoists have been warned to desist from crossing the 'national red lines. This was contained in President Muhammadu Buhari's presidential broadcast on August 21, 2017. Part of the speech reads: "In the course of my stay in the United Kingdom, I have been kept in daily touch with events at home. Nigerians are robust and lively in discussing their affairs, but I was distressed to notice that some of the comments, especially in the social media have crossed our national red

lines by daring to question our collective existence as a nation. This is a step too far. In 2003 after I joined partisan politics, the late Chief Emeka Ojukwu came and stayed as my guest in my hometown Daura. Over two days we discussed in great depth till late into the night and analysed the problems of Nigeria. We both came to the conclusion that the country must remain one and united. Nigeria's unity is settled and not negotiable. We shall not allow irresponsible elements to start trouble and when things get bad they run away and saddle others with the responsibility of bringing back order, if necessary with their blood. Every Nigerian has the right to live and pursue his business anywhere in Nigeria without let or hindrance. I believe the very vast majority of Nigerians share this view. This is not to deny that there are legitimate concerns. Every group has a grievance. But the beauty and attraction of a federation is that it allows different groups to air their grievances and work out a mode of co-existence." Also, the government launched military operations in the Eastern part of the country. This was in a bid to quell the tension created by the agitators. In September 2017, the leader of the group was declared missing by his community in Abia state as a result of the military operations. However, on October 19, 2018, there were videos and pictures shared on popular social networking website, Twitter and Radio Biafra about Kanu's appearance in Israel.

Insights from Media Ethics

Ibarra-Collado et al., define ethics as 'the "relationship between individual morality and organisationally prescribed principles assumed to guide personal actions" (as cited in Omojola, 2014, p. 386). Journalists are expected to uphold moral standards while discharging their duties in the society. This section examines the relevant laws that guide the practice of journalism in Nigeria. These laws include: *Electoral Act*, 2010; Nigerian Press Council's Code of Ethics; the *Nigerian Broadcasting Code*, 2012; and *The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice*, 2005.

Sections 99 and 100 of Electoral Act (2010) stipulates the conduct of the media during electioneering process. In section 100(2), the "state apparatus including the media shall not be employed to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election." While section 100(3) simply states that, "media time shall be allocated equally among the political parties at similar hours of the day." In order to ensure equality in coverage of candidates and political parties, section 100(4) stipulates that "at any public electronic media, equal airtime shall be allotted to all political parties or candidates during prime times at similar hours each day, subject to the payment of appropriate fees."

On the one hand, according to Eze (2010), the Electoral Act of 2010

stipulates how the media should act. However, this remains far from the truth in reality. In 2007, the then ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party was the most covered party by the media. This was the same in 2011 and 2015 presidential elections. However, 2015 was slightly different. Two major parties were largely covered by the media. In Abubakre & Oyewo (2015) and Amakoh (2015), the Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressives Congress candidates received the most coverage by the media. It remains to be seen how the media will cover the 2019 presidential elections. As at October 25, 2018, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the submission of 70 interest forms from political parties for the position of the President. So far, the candidacy of the incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressives Congress and former Vice President and candidate of the opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party, Atiku Abubakar has received the most coverage in both traditional and online media.

The Nigerian Press Council's Code of Ethics stipulates the ethical standards for every journalist. It emphasizes the importance of factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting as well as promoting the universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity and peace. Essentially, the Nigerian Press Council Code of ethics for journalists promotes fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event, which for the purpose of this paper is election.

In Section 5.2 of the 2012 *Nigerian Broadcasting Code* is centered on Political Broadcasts. Section 5.2.3 stipulates that "all broadcasters shall carry out their civic responsibility of transmitting all aspects of political enlightenment." While, Section 5.2.4 states that "partisan political broadcast shall be only those in which parties seek to explain their views and policies". The section is on the transmission of partisan materials such as party manifestoes and all forms of election promises by candidates and their political parties, which is partisan political broadcast. Furthermore, Section 5.2.8 states that: "In adherence to the principle of pluralism, equal air time shall be provided to all political parties or views, with particular regard to amount of time and belt during electioneering campaign periods."; Section 5.2.14, provides that "A broadcaster shall not use any vote obtained at different polling stations or exit polls, to project or speculate on the chances of the candidates"; Section 5.2.16, provides that: "In the interest of fairness and balance, any form of commercialization of political news is not allowed." and Section 5.3.4, stipulates "In the coverage of live political campaigns/rallies, the broadcaster shall be held responsible for the content of the broadcast." Therefore, live coverage should align with the broadcast ethos. It further states that each political advertisement shall be issue-ori-

ented only and devoid of abusive statements or reference, distorted or unsubstantiated claim or misrepresentation.

On advertising, the Electoral Act 2010, Section 95 (1) states that “A political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings”. While Section 95 (2) states that, “Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or insinuations or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions shall not be employed or used in political campaigns.” Furthermore, Section 2.3 of *The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice* (2005) is on the essence of good advertising. It states that “all advertisements in Nigeria shall: be legal, decent, honest, truthful and respectful and mindful of Nigeria’s culture; be prepared with a high sense of social responsibility and avoid misinformation or disinformation. . . conform to the principles of fair competition generally accepted in business, and of fair comment expected in free human communication”.

Again, Arogundade (2014) states that “The performance of campaign platform and public forum role of the Nigerian media during elections requires deference to the right of parties and candidates in elections to equitable media access especially as envisaged by legislative and institutional frameworks and other relevant instruments including the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended), the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (as revised) and the Nigeria Press Organisation Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists [The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice (2005)]. It also requires giving opportunity to all represented groups or political parties to express their views. So, looking at the professional codes and the provisions of the 2010 Electoral Act, it is very clear that the law and codes have given all participants irrespective of their party affiliation and groups’ equal right to sell themselves through the media to the electorates. Despite these, some sections of the press have been accused of unethical practices; and giving little or no opportunity to the under-represented groups, which for this paper has been the cause of the active role the media has played in the nexus of all the activities that has occurred.

Election Campaign, Hate Speech and the Media Regulatory Instruments

Onyacho (2008) posits that “one strategy critical to electoral victory of candidates, apart from political party size and influence, as well as the odds that sometimes play themselves out in political calculations is the ability of the candidate or his party to articulate sellable ideas and programmes”. These ideas and programmes which must be packaged to meet the needs of the electorates are often delivered in form of news, feature, cartoon, advertisements, speeches, political rallies, events (indoor and outdoor) campaign,

live coverage of events (i.e. mass media messages) amongst others are often delivered through different media of mass communication. These mass media messages are usually planned, and presented in a coordinated manner (campaign) to win the support of the electorates. Sadly some of the messages have been criticised as unedifying. They have been assessed as offensive, derogatory of tribe, religion, etc. Professional ethics abhor this because of the attendant consequences.

According to Arogundade (2014), hate speech and other forms of incitement could lead to violence and threaten the democratic fabric of a society. Hence, the social obligations of the media during elections therefore include the prevention of hate speech. As such, journalists are expected to make use of temperate language in reporting ethnic related issues, electoral processes; and presenters of live programmes should refrain from airing pejorative comment. Therefore, on ethical grounds, it is the responsibility of media organisations to reject any material intended for publication or airing by parties, candidates and other interests that contains hateful or inciting words and messages; refrain from publishing or airing abusive editorial comments or opinions that denigrate individuals or groups on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender or belief; meticulously monitor the content of its social media platforms to stop the spread of hate and inciting messages; and prior to a recorded or a live political debate, request participants to endorse a no-hate speech memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing them not to use words or gestures that disparage others on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender or belief.

Despite these and the peace pact by GEJ and GMB in the countdown to the 2015 general elections, in the course of the campaign, some people with misguided enthusiasm carried out some acts that are anything but civil. The personal attacks were not limited to sardonic jabs, the psychological war was also deployed in media advertisements, social media spaces and, in extreme cases, inter-personal discussions.

Since election is the process of determining or electing representatives, and it is a process that involves pre-election, during elections (i.e. voting, collation of results, announcement of results) post-election (after the results have been announced, swearing in ceremonies, assumption of duties, etc); let us consider some samples of hate speeches along these periods.

Pre-election: “Any Igbo who votes for APC is a bastard and an enemy of Biafra” – Governor Willie Obiano; and Post-election: “Please, don’t neglect the Igbos. Give us ministerial positions” – Governor Willie Obiano (Source *APC News Alert*). Also, shortly before the governorship and state assembly elections, the Oba of Lagos, Rilwan Akiolu in his palace made an unedifying comment on his wish for the “settlers” to respect his political wish and support a candidate of his choice to secure the governorship seat,

failing which, according to his reported statement, any violator would end up in the lagoon. The comment which went viral, raised dust and generated bad blood, especially among the Igbo community in Lagos State and across the nation. The unfortunate words, said to some notable Igbo residents who were the Oba's guests, were considered weighty enough to be a threat to the peaceful coexistence of two of the country's major ethnic groups (*The Guardian*, 2015). Although, there were claims by the palace that there was a gap between Akiolu's delivery and what was transmitted, the message which went viral almost disrupted peace in the State.

In another development, APC publicity secretary in Ekiti state, Taiwo Olatubosun in a statement released on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 says "[Fayose is an] unconscionable character who ought to hide his head in shame over his sundry activities that marked him out as a tragedy on the question of integrity." This is derogatory and disparages the personae of Ayodele Fayose, a sitting governor. Furthermore, Lai Mohammed of APC also accused President Goodluck Jonathan of plot to rig Lagos State Election without evidence. This accusation is in bad taste as it was a mere anecdotal assertion.

On the part of PDP, Patience Jonathan while campaigning for her husband in Calabar, Cross River State, told the supporters of the PDP to stone anyone canvassing for change in the State. In addition, President Goodluck Jonathan during a rally in Enugu said that the All Progressives Congress candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), cannot remember his own mobile phone number; while, Fani-Kayode in a media briefing alleged that the APC flag bearer was receiving funding from terrorist groups including the Boko Haram and ISIS. These were carried live by the State media, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). These contravene Section 5.3.4, of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, which stipulates "In the coverage of live political campaigns/rallies, the broadcaster shall be held responsible for the content of the broadcast." So, it is the social obligations of NTA to prevent such hate speeches from being aired. Again, it is the responsibility of NTA prior to the live coverage, to request the client to endorse a no-hate speech memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing them not to use words or gestures that disparage others because live coverage is no more than an extended news report. As such, live coverage should air messages that are decent and uphold professional broadcast ethos, which abhors hate speech, obscene and vulgar language.

In addition, Governor Ayo Fayose also called Buhari "a diaper-wearing old man surrounded and being funded by notoriously corrupt people cannot fight corruption." The governor made the comments on Thursday, March 11, 2015 in a statement released by his media aide Lere Olayinka in response to GMB promise to fight corruption? This was in bad taste and

mere blackmail and misrepresentation of facts because the stand on GMB on corruption is unquestionable. So, carrying this without balancing the story with Buhari's antecedents on the fight against corruption is unethical. Furthermore, samples of some advertisements also revealed hate speech. For instance, "NIGERIANS BE WARNED! NIGERIA" . . . "I have set before thee LIFE & DEATH. Therefore, choose LIFE that both thee and thy seed may LIVE". The visuals that were used for this advert are that of Late Heads of State, Generals Muritala Mohammed and Sani Abacha; and late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua. Beside, these visuals was the photograph of General Muhammadu Buhari (GMB) with a question mark on the photograph and "AGE 72" written beside GMB's photograph. The copy further read "will you allow history to repeat itself? Enough of state burials. Nigerians VOTE WISELY. VOTE GOODLUCK JOHNATHAN. NORTHERN PRESIDENCY SHOULD WAIT TILL 2019". This message which appeared on the cover page of *The Punch* of Monday January 9, 2015 was sponsored by Governor Ayodele Fayose, a member of PDP. This advert suggests that GMB will soon die in office if elected, which is inciting and abusive. Furthermore, it plays up ethnic politics, which denigrates a tribe. The advert is provocative as it is practically wishing death on General Muhammad Buhari (rtd), the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

These sampled adverts contravenes Section 95 (1) of the Electoral Act (2010), which states that "A political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings"; and Section 95 (2), which states that "Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or insinuations or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions should not be employed or used in political campaigns." Essentially, the adverts are not decent, honest, truthful and respectful; and do not conform to the principles of fair competition generally expected in free human communication.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The laws guiding the practice of journalism in Nigeria -Nigerian Press Council's Code of Ethics; and the *Nigerian Broadcasting Code* (2012), and advertising practice- The Nigerian Code of Advertising Practice (2005) and Electoral Act, 2010 all states clearly how the media should operate. Failure to do so would result to contravening the stipulated laws. However, the media coverage during the 2015 presidential elections failed to live up to the standard. The campaign was a campaign of calumny against candidates through the various media platforms. From the observed samples in this

paper, politicians made unguarded, offensive, uncouth, and uncultured statements during the electioneering period.

This paper recommends that the media organizations must uphold the sanity of the media. There must be professional checks of campaign materials sent to media organizations. In a situation where such materials fail to meet the standard, media organizations must refuse to accept. There must be a drive to ensure politicians stick to issues while campaigning rather than resort to name calling and campaign of calumny. In addition, all political parties must be given equal airtime and space in the media. The media must refrain from focusing on few candidates thereby denying other candidates the equal opportunity to sell their candidacy to the public.

The media has a role to play in ensuring hatred is curbed. Ethnic jingoists use the established media organizations social media networks to push their agenda. This must be stopped. There should be prompt removal of hate comments made under stories posted on the website of the organization, live streams of broadcasts on YouTube or tweets on their Twitter feed. Also, there should be a regulation of discussions within these platforms. In this wise, the media can also promote peace and unity through regular public service announcements, regular live Twitter sessions and Facebook Live Chats on how Nigerians can live together in peace. We recommend that further studies can be explored focusing specifically on influence of hate speech on religious and ethnic crisis in the middle belt of Nigeria.

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APPENDIX A: TABLES

TABLE 1: PRINT: APC AND PDP

Date	Newspaper	Caption	Sponsor
Friday January 30, 2015	The Punch Newspaper	'No matter how many pretty robes you wear once a tyrant always a tyrant.'	The People for Change, a pro-PDP group.
Tuesday, February, 10, 2015	Vanguard	'Do elder statesmen speak like this?'	Concerned Nigerians, a pro-PDP group
Thursday, March 5, 2015	The Guardian	'See who is talking about Corruption'	New Nigeria group, a pro-PDP group
Saturday, March 14, 2015	Punch Newspaper	'11 reasons why all Nigerians must send Jonathan out of Aso rock Villa'- Femi Fani Kayode	National Volunteers for change 2015, a pro-APC group.
Sunday, March 15, 2015	ThisDay	'Na only you waka come production-Jonah and the Gang	New Nigeria initiative, a pro-APC group
Saturday, March, 21, 2015	Saturday Tribune	Never again-FRSC: Nigerian Roads second worst in the World.	Coalition for Change, a pro-APC group

TABLE 2: TELEVISION: APC AND PDP

Source	Hate Element	Speaker	Place
AIT	The Real Buhari	PDP Documentary	Ogun
Channels TV	General Buhari is too old	Fayose	Lagos
Channels TV	I saw evil, monster in the APC	Fani Kayode	Lagos

TABLE 3: CAMPAIGNS RALLIES: APC AND PDP

Source	Hate Element	Speaker	Place
Channels TV	'Stone Any One Who Supports Change'	Patience Jonathan	Calabar
Channels TV	'Buhari's Brain Is Dead'	Patience Jonathan	Kogi
Live Streaming By Lateef Raji	'BRF Bold Inexperience'	Babatunde Raji Fashola	Gbagada
Citizen TV	'Student-We Will Push Jonathan In The Water'	APC	

TABLE 4: BILLBOARD: APC AND PDP

Source	Hate Element	Speaker	Place
Vanguard	'Vote good governance not Goodluck'	APC South West Presidential Campaign Committee	Orita –Olaiya Junction Osogbo Osun State
	Hate element	Speaker	Place
	'Vote a democrat not dictator'	PDP Presidential Campaign Committee Osun State	Orita-Olaiya Junction Osogbo Osun State

TABLE 5: LITTLE MEDIA POSTERS: APC AND PDP

Source	Hate Statement	Speaker	Place
Online Media	'Because Stealing Is Not Corruption'	APC	Leventis
	'Facts Speak For Themselves'	APC	Iwaya Road

TABLE 6: ONLINE MEDIA: APC AND PDP

Source	Hate statement	Speaker	Place
FacebookTwitter	'Creative Liars'	Ambode Facebook Page	Lagos
	'Tax Evader'	Sunday Dare	Lagos
	'Heavy Weight Mis-Match'	Dele Momodu	
Vanguard	'Vote good governance not Goodluck'	APC South West Presidential Campaign Committee	Orita –Olaiya Junction Osogbo Osun State
	'Vote a democrat not dictator'	PDP Presidential Campaign Committee Osun State	Orita-Olaiya Junction Osogbo Osun State