

A REVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the campaign strategies used in the 2007 elections in Nigeria and their outcome. The gaps between the Nigerian and global situations are also discussed and recommendations made on how to improve the situation in accordance with the electoral reforms proposed by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in his inauguration address in Abuja. The paper focuses predominantly on the presidential campaigns of the three leading political parties in the country, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC).¹

INTRODUCTION

Elections play a significant role in deepening democracy in many parts of the world in the sense that they enable the governed to decide who governs them. However, an election is not just an *event*, it is, more importantly, a *process* involving a multiplicity of activities and stakeholders. Campaigns are one of these essential activities. They play an important role in the catalytic relationship between election candidates and voters (Barnes & Kaase 1979; Dinkin 1989; Thurber 2004) and enable candidates to motivate people to vote for them on the basis of the values and issues they present for consideration. Thus, campaign strategies are an important element in discussions about electoral democracy.

The data for the paper came from a variety of sources, the most fundamental of which is the data base of the consortium of IFES, Global Rights (GR), and the Nigeria Office of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA-Nigeria),

¹ Most of the other parties lacked any serious campaign machines and cannot be said to be active in the strict sense. Their staggered campaigns were largely designed to enable them collect their official grants from the government.

which was set up by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to support the 2007 elections. The three organisations worked with political parties, security agencies, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organisations in an attempt to ensure that the elections were credible. The consortium produced weekly reports detailing political activity in the country.

IDASA-Nigeria, for which the author of this paper worked as a consultant during the 2007 election, and of which he is now Country Director, focused its interventions on issues relating to the reduction of violence before, during, and after the elections (see Albert, Marco & Adetula 2007; Albert & Marco 2007; Idasa 2007). The organisation produced a quarterly *Conflict Tracking Dossier*, which contains information on some of the issues discussed in this paper. Additional information was obtained from interviews, focus-group discussions, analysis of the content of media advertisements, news reports, and non-participant observation of political campaigns in different parts of country as an independent conflict analyst.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES: A GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The *Open Encyclopedia* (open-encyclopedia.com/Political_campaign) defines 'political campaign' as 'an effort to reach a certain goal. In particular, the term refers to involving (or trying to involve) mass participation with a particular issue, candidate or proposition, most often through winning an election'. *Wikipedia* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_campaign), an online free encyclopedia, defines it as 'an organised effort to influence the decision making process within a group'. The goal is to reach as many people as possible and persuade them to support the campaign. This kind of political activity is as old as the earliest attempts to establish representative democracy.

Campaigning involves political advocacy, lobbying, and communication (Idasa 2007, p 89). It is a matter of 'knocking the other side' (Mayer 1994, p 115), with political campaigners frequently torn between the quality and quantity of the 'knocking'. There is much reliance on the mass media, most especially in the form of commercial advertising. Campaign strategies are usually dictated by candidates' reasons for running for office. A careful reading of the extant literature on campaigning shows that there are four possible reasons why people run for office:

- An obviously unpopular candidate may use the campaign period and process to attract attention to him or herself.
- An unpopular but public-spirited candidate may run not necessarily to win but to use the campaign period and strategies to educate people

about strategically important public policy issues that need to be underscored in an election season.

- The candidate's goal may be to build a community of like-minded people for strategic social and political action.
- The goal may be to win the election and take office.

Baron 1994

Voters can be divided into three main campaign targets. The first are those who are already committed to a candidate or political party. No matter the situation, such voters would vote for the particular candidate or party. The second are the 'hopeless voters', who have already made up their minds not to vote for a candidate or political party. The third are the undecided voters, who may vote either way and need to be convinced by the manifestoes of the candidates and what the party has to offer. West (1995) argues that the third group constitutes the principal target of political campaigns.

The point must be made from the outset that political campaigns start long before the candidates are announced – they start with the decision of the candidate to run for office. Two sets of candidates emerge at this level: those already known to voters and those unknown to them. The pre-campaign activities of both must be informed by their status in society. While those already known might merely have to announce their intention to run, those who are unknown must 'introduce' themselves. These factors help to explain why some campaigns are more rigorous than others. In all cases the candidates must begin by conducting some research and engage in (i) issue (ii) stakeholder (iii) context (iv) cost and (v) response analyses.

Issue analysis has to do with gaining a thorough understanding of the priority issues in the society. What do the people lack? What do they want? Which of their needs is the most important in an election season? What are the existing socio-economic, religious, ethnic and other cleavages in the society that could become critical issues in the election? Which issues are rooted in history and therefore combustible during an election season? Are the people interested in political change? What issues are involved in such popular demand for change? What kind of leaders do the people have and what kind of leadership are they clamouring for? What conflict-sensitive campaign strategies would be needed to engage the issues constructively?

Stakeholder analysis is the identification of the individuals, groups and institutions the campaign process must engage. Who are the stakeholders in the society? What constituencies are controlled by particular stakeholders? Which of the stakeholders are rooted in history? Which epitomise the collective interests of the people? Which constitute evidence of the decadence of the society? What do

the people really know about the stakeholders, their activities, and their altruism, or lack of it? What is the level of polarisation of the stakeholders? What is the power base of each of the stakeholders? Which of the stakeholders is the strongest? Which is the weakest? What kind of conflict-sensitive campaign strategies would be required to engage each of the stakeholders constructively?

Context analysis is research into the social, economic, political, environmental and security factors that shape issues and make stakeholders behave in certain ways. It identifies the sensibilities of the people and the precautions that need to be taken during the campaign.

The results of the analyses are collated for use in planning campaign strategies. While pre-campaign research activities lead to an understanding of the issues, the actual campaign has to do with directly engaging voters. The media, particularly advertisements, play a significant role in this stage of the campaign. Advertisements, according to West (1995, p 100), are 'developed to stir the hopes and fears of the 20 to 30 per cent of the electorate that is undecided, not the 70 to 80 per cent that is committed or hopeless'.

The use of the media in campaign processes differs from one part of the world to the other. In the United States (US) campaign messages are packaged as commercials and propaganda on television (West 1992, 1995; Schoenbach 1987; Kolbert 1992; Parisot 1988). While commercial advertising focuses on why one product should be preferred to another, propaganda has to do with influencing opinions or behaviour through indoctrination. Politicians rely more on propaganda as, in some cases, they have no concrete ideas to market. Propaganda techniques, according to *Wikipedia*, involve:

... patriotic flag-waving, glittering generalities, intentional vagueness, oversimplification of complex issues, rationalization, introducing unrelated red herring issues, using appealing, simple slogans, stereotyping, testimonials from authority figures or celebrities, unstated assumptions, and encouraging readers or viewers to jump on the bandwagon of a particular point of view.

The goal of propaganda is to evoke strong emotions. It helps a political candidate to bridge the gap between the real world and the imaginary world he wishes voters to envisage.

While playing down the less glamorous aspects of their life, some political campaigners try to exaggerate their worth through propaganda and commercial advertisement. Similarly, using a strategy known as 'negative campaigning', they demonise or discredit their rivals or opponents. This strategy is said to have originated in the United States (Swanson & Mancini 1996; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha

1995, p 207) but is now commonly practised throughout the world. The widely used 'negative campaign' strategy is to focus a campaign on attacking the personality of one's political opponent in media advertisements. Such campaigns are usually bereft of issues and often slide into mudslinging or smear campaigns in which the candidate who has been attacked launches his or her own negative campaign. It is such tactics that lead to politics being labelled a 'dirty game' (Jamieson 1993).

Other campaign strategies include conventional face-to-face contact, door-to-door canvassing for votes, public meetings, whistle-stop tours, and the use of mass communication systems such as the television, radio, newspapers and magazines, websites, online communities, solicited and unsolicited bulk e-mail, and mobile phones.

PHASES IN THE 2007 CAMPAIGN

The organisation and conduct of political campaigns during the 2007 elections in Nigeria cannot be fully understood outside the political context of the elections. The elections were the third to be organised in the country since the transition from military to civil rule. The first was the 1999 election, which brought Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to power after many years of military rule. The 2003 election gave Obasanjo his second term in office.

The 2007 election was thus the first election in which an elected president would be transferring power to another elected president. Within this framework, the election generated deep interest across the globe and was widely considered to be a litmus test of Nigeria's commitment to electoral democracy and the wider democratic ethos.

The first major threat to the success of the 2007 elections, which later had an impact on the campaign strategies of the candidates, came from Obasanjo's supporters when they attempted to change Nigeria's Constitution to enable the president and state governors to enjoy a third term in office as opposed to the two terms laid down in the 1999 Constitution. Most Nigerians were opposed to this 'third-term agenda', which even led to schisms within the ruling party. For example, Vice-President Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, who felt it was his turn to rule Nigeria, rallied support against the president. The latter blamed the failure of the third-term agenda on his deputy and, resolving to frustrate Atiku's presidential ambitions, accused him of having corruptly enriched himself through the management of the Petroleum Trust and Development Funds (PTDF). The case was hurriedly referred to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the vice-president was indicted. The president instituted an administrative panel on 28 August 2006 to further investigate the matter and

make recommendations based on the report of the EFCC. Atiku was pronounced guilty for a second time. This, and the allegation that the vice-president was disloyal, became a reason for denying Atiku the ruling party's presidential ticket. Atiku went to court to challenge the two major grounds upon which his presidential ambition was frustrated by the ruling party and won. The decision of the Court on the question of disloyalty to Obasanjo is interesting:

I have painstakingly reproduced both the oath of allegiance and oath of office of the vice president and can find nowhere in both oaths where loyalty and faithfulness and true allegiance is owed to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I agree that the Vice President should have an undivided loyalty but that loyalty is due to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and not, I repeat not, to Mr. President nor Peoples Democratic Party who in any case is a stranger to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Court of Appeal Judgment CA/A/23/2007

Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua, the former governor of Katsina State, benefited immensely from the Obasanjo/Atiku conflict – with Obasanjo's support he emerged as the PDP's presidential candidate. It was a strategic decision. Atiku and Yar'Adua were the two most influential members of the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), a powerful political block that played a significant role in the PDP between 1999 and 2004, when Obasanjo began to assert himself in the ruling party.

While Atiku presented himself or was perceived by some Nigerians² as the leader of the political bloc, Yar'Adua wielded great influence as the younger brother of the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. The junior Yar'Adua is, in fact popularly believed to have been given the PDP presidential ticket partly to disempower Atiku and prevent other members of the PDM from leaving the PDP in support of Atiku's presidential ambition. The ploy seems to have been successful to some extent. Many former PDM members who would not want to risk their chances of gaining some benefits from remaining with a party that was certain to win abandoned Atiku and remained within the PDP.

Atiku left the ruling party for the newly created Action Congress (AC), which later nominated him as their presidential candidate. Constricted by grudge and seduced by malice, the campaign trains of the PDP and AC attacked each other

2 Atiku tried to prove this point by making one of the largest contributions to the construction of the Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja, contributing more than ₦10-m to the project, compared with Obasanjo's ₦1-m (information from the plaque in front of the centre).

violently at both national and state levels. Many people were killed and maimed in the process.

As in the 2003 elections (Albert, Marco & Adetula 2007), there were three campaign phases in 2007. The first, which was informal and clandestine, began immediately after the 2003 elections and terminated during the first half of 2006. Those involved in the campaign were those who had lost out (for whatever reason) during the 2003 elections but were assured by their political parties, godfathers (see Albert 2005(a) and Omotola, p134 in this journal), or their supporters of positions in 2007. In addition to strategically positioning themselves within their parties, most especially in terms of making large donations and engaging in public debate in which the activities of their parties were blindly defended, such candidates organised lavish social events with full media complements as a strategy for calling attention to themselves and currying favour with the leaders of the political parties. Some desperate politicians in this category sponsored visits by members of the public 'begging' them to run for certain positions.³

The second category of campaigners was those who succeeded in carrying their campaigns through to the second half of 2006, when their political parties formally lifted the embargo on campaigning. At this stage, many candidates who had been campaigning underground came out to announce their decision to run. This 'campaign period' ended with the party primaries (between December 2006 and January 2007). Before the primaries the candidates visited traditional rulers, prominent political godfathers, and their communities to announce their political interests. The 'philanthropists' among them began to invest in 'community development programmes'.

As the date of the primaries drew nearer, the number of campaigners in this category thinned out. There are four possible reasons for this. Some aspirants dropped out when they could no longer bear the campaign expenses. Some were paid off by (financially stronger) rival candidates. Some candidates voluntarily left the race having realised that the positions they were campaigning for (probably since the 2003 elections) were not available either because they had been 'sold' by godfathers to their godsons or because they had been handed out by their political parties to more strategically positioned candidates. For example, it took the third-term saga to bring Atiku Abubakar to the realisation that the PDP presidential ticket he had been spending money on since 2003 was not available; Obasanjo wanted a third term and when he could not have it, he turned spoiler by 'dashing' the presidential slot to Yar'Adua, who was widely reported not to

3 Nigerian politicians learned this strategy from General Sani Abacha (Albert 2005), who, having overthrown the regime of Chief Sonekan in 1993, tried to transmute into a civilian head of state by means of diverse crude strategies, one of which was to stage self-sponsored solidarity visits. Nigerians refer to this ploy as 'rent-the-crowd' visits.

be prepared for the position. Many other PDP presidential aspirants halted their campaign trains as soon as the intentions of President Obasanjo, who doubled as leader of PDP, became popular knowledge. Those who could not bear the shock decamped to other political parties to pursue their presidential ambitions.

The most interesting were those forced out of the race, whether directly or indirectly, by the EFCC, which became a 'clearing house' for candidates. The anti-corruption campaign produced a long list of 'indicted candidates', all of whom were automatically disqualified from contesting the election without being taken to any court of law. Most of the politicians targeted by these politically motivated anti-corruption prosecutions were associates of Vice-President Atiku and those who were likely to be strong contenders against Yar'Adua in the PDP primaries. The most prominent was Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State, who was rated, in the months before the PDP primaries, as the leading contender in the presidential race, a rating confirmed by the Chairman of the EFCC, Nuhu Ribadu, who claimed in a media interview: 'Odili would have been president. We stopped him' (Ogunlana 2007, p 1).

Some candidates resolved to continue to pursue their political ambitions despite the odds against them within and outside their political parties. A few died in the attempt, the most prominent among them Engineer Funso Williams, a leading Lagos State gubernatorial aspirant standing for the PDP and Dr Daramola, PDP gubernatorial candidate for Ekiti State.

Those who were not killed were humiliated by being allowed to take their campaigns as far as the party primaries, many of which were conducted outside clear democratic rules. Many were manipulated out of the race at the end of the exercise and the constitution of the parties prevented them from seeking redress in any court of law.

Where it was difficult to manipulate the outcome of the primaries, names of the 'unwanted winners' were substituted by the party leadership in the nomination papers sent to INEC in contravention of s 34(1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2006, which states that an application for substitution of candidates must give cogent and verifiable reasons. Many of the cases were thus taken to court for settlement. It was often difficult for the PDP, which was largely implicated in this kind of political malfeasance, to provide cogent reasons for its actions. In most cases, the party compounded the matter by expelling those who dared to go to court. Commenting on the extent of this problem, the EU Election Observation Mission (2007, p 17) noted that:

In some cases, where candidates challenged their substitution, political parties responded by expelling such candidates from the party, thereby creating new legal issues to be resolved by the judiciary. This was so

in the case of Mr. Ifeanyi Ararume and Mr. Rotimi Amechi, who went to court to challenge their removal as the PDP gubernatorial candidates for Imo and Rivers States. The case of Mr. Amechi was still pending on the date of the election...the situation was exacerbated by the sudden, unexpected and unprecedented declaration of public holidays which prevented some of the cases being resolved prior to the state elections. As a result, it was not possible for many candidates to redress the decision of disqualification.

The third and last phase of the 2007 political campaign cycle in Nigeria took place after party primaries in December 2006 and lasted until election day in April 2007. While the earlier campaigns were intra-party, the latter were inter-party and involved candidates cleared by INEC for the elections. Most of the candidates who reached this phase of the 2007 political campaign combined the messages, money, and machines of the candidates from the other two stages. The rest of this paper focuses on this stage of the campaign.

NATURE OF THE POST-PRIMARIES POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

As noted above the 2007 campaign was dominated by candidates from the PDP, the ANPP and the AC – none of the other parties campaigned seriously at national level. Candidates attacked one other verbally and physically in a manner that gives politics a very bad name. The ruling PDP was attacked by both the ANPP and the AC and, in turn, attacked the two rival parties. United by the goal of pulling the ruling party down, the AC and the ANPP did not wage much of a campaign against one another, though they did not pool their resources either, each fighting a separate battle against the PDP, with their presidential candidates, General Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP) and Atiku (AC), refusing to step down. For this reason Yar'Adua would have won the 2007 elections even if they had not been rigged by the ruling party.

In addition to the conventional face-to-face contact and door-to-door canvassing the parties conducted their campaigns by means of public rallies and whistle-stop tours; media advertisements and communication by internet and mobile telephone.

Public Rallies and Whistle-stop Tours

Rallies were organised at ward, local government, state, and national levels, their venues and the extent of the programmes determined by the positions being contested. The presidential campaign is used as an illustration here. In addition

to a big national rally (held in Abuja) each of the three major presidential candidates (PDP, ANPP and AC) travelled the country canvassing support. Campaigns at state, local government and ward levels were picked up from there by gubernatorial, senatorial and House of Assembly candidates.

The dates of the presidential rallies were fixed in advance and widely publicised in newspaper advertisements as well as the websites of the candidates. In most cases a dress code was specified for the occasion. The presidential candidate, leaders, and other prominent members of the party were expected to wear the appropriate 'uniform' (usually dress depicting the culture of the area). Musicians, praise singers, and media consultants were hired to enliven different stages of the event. At its height the national chairman of the party, the state chairmen in the geo-political zone, the presidential candidate, the gubernatorial candidates (in the zone) and other prominent leaders of the party would address the rally. In most cases speeches (and the abusive songs that accompanied them) focused more on what the 'opposition' had failed to do or had no capacity to do than on what the campaigner would do with power if voted into office. The crowd would shout, yell, and boo in acknowledgement of the tone of the speeches and songs.

President Obasanjo's insistence on participating in all campaigns organised by the ruling party turned some PDP rallies into whistle-stop tours for him, with campaign teams making brief appearances in many towns in a day. These are different from normal political rallies in that those engaged in them have little time to give detailed treatment to any campaign issue. The main goal is to reach as many places as possible within a short time. They are often 'solidarity visits' rather than anything else.

The President and the PDP presidential candidate would breeze into the rally in one state capital, address party members and race back to the airport to catch the flight to the next city for a similar function. The brief appearance of the president and the party leadership was a tacit way of formally boosting the campaign of the PDP presidential candidate in all the states. It was also a strategy for endorsing the candidature of the other candidates who were to address the rallies at different locations. It was difficult for the other political parties to engage in this kind of campaign strategy because of the cost and the logistical and security implications.

While presidential candidates conducted their campaigns in state capitals other categories of campaigns took place at local-government level, their structure not much different from that of the presidential campaign. The state chairmen of the political parties and the candidates took turns addressing the gathering. House of Assembly candidates added to their campaign strategies town hall meetings in many parts of the country.

Media Reports, Advertisements and Discussions

Media advertisements form an important component of the campaign process because of their supposedly hypodermic influence. The general belief is that a media message frequently repeated is absorbed hook, line and sinker by a mass audience, thus affecting the view of a particular candidate or political party. Media advertisements also affect the view of the important issues in an electoral process. For this reason election candidates all over the world invest heavily in advertising and the content of the advertisements is considered to be a medium for assessing the extent to which a society permits electoral participation and freedom of speech (Miskin & Grant 2004, p 11). The main goal is to influence positively the decision of voters.

The bulk of media advertisements for the 2007 elections in Nigeria were placed by the three leading political parties – the other parties were unable, financially, to use such media. In an article in *The Nation* Okoeki (2007, p 43) quoted a presidential candidate from one of the newly registered parties as asking: ‘...how many Nigerians read newspapers, how many voters would see my advertisements in the newspapers if I resort to campaign through that process, for me it is waste of money. I prefer to reach out to the people through other means.’ Most of the advertisements appeared in newspapers and some on televisions. More than 80 per cent of the advertisements were placed between December 2006, when most parties held their primaries, and April 2007, when the elections took place (see Albert & Marco 2007; Marco & Albert 2007).

The content of the advertisements is as interesting as their quantity. The PDP presented Yar’Adua and Goodluck (the vice-presidential candidate) to Nigerians as ‘First class intellectuals who have proven that integrity is still a driving force in public service’ (*Daily Trust* 16 April 2007, p 55). Unable to fault his moral integrity and academic credentials, the ANPP and AC tried to present Yar’Adua as an Obasanjo stooge who might not be able to do better than the outgoing president. It was argued that Yar’Adua could not have won the PDP primaries had the nomination process been free and fair. Against the background of popular knowledge that Yar’Adua has a kidney problem and is constantly on dialysis, the PDP presidential candidate was represented as a ‘walking corpse’ or as a Trojan Horse for achieving Obasanjo’s failed third-term agenda.

This school of thought predicted the death of Yar’Adua before the end of the election. On his death, Obasanjo would invoke s 37(1) of the Electoral Act 2006, which enables INEC to postpone the presidential election indefinitely. This would enable Obasanjo to continue ‘reluctantly’ in office as president with the connivance of the electoral body, led by another Obasanjo stooge (Albert & Marco 2007, p 68).

With a view to demonstrating that the claims of the opposition about his health were exaggerated Yar'Adua challenged his rivals to a game of squash (Reuters 2007). The response of the opposition was still awaited on 6 March 2007 when the PDP presidential candidate collapsed at a political rally. He was immediately rushed to Germany for treatment. The PDP blamed the incident on exhaustion, while critics of the party considered it to be a confirmation of their argument that Yar'Adua was unfit to rule. Rumours spread around the country the following day that Yar'Adua had died. The PDP used the incident to boost its presidential campaign. For example, the PDP-controlled government of Benue State placed the following advert in the *Weekly Trust* in March 2007 (p 46):

The elements of the opposition who chose to play God by spreading falsehood about your death have unwittingly boosted your presidential campaign tremendously. The genuine concern expressed about your health by Nigerians from all walks of life confirms the depth of acceptance, affection and support you command among our people from north to south, east to west. By playing this sinister card, the opposition has also exposed itself as untrustworthy and Machiavellian as it is bent on using foul means to attain power.

Atiku (AC) and Buhari (ANPP), like Yar'Adua Muslims from Northern Nigeria, tried not to attack Yar'Adua directly, turning their venom instead on Obasanjo, despite the fact that he was not standing. The logic was that if voters could be convinced of Obasanjo's failure as the country's leader they would not vote for Yar'Adua. In this context, they portrayed Obasanjo's eight-year rule as 'years of the locust'. In the process of defending Obasanjo the PDP portrayed Atiku as corrupt and Buhari as a religious fundamentalist.

Atiku's main criticism of Obasanjo was that the president had been a party to the PTDF scandal which had resulted in Atiku's exclusion from the ruling party presidential ticket. The result was that Atiku's campaign lost focus as, in his criticism of Obasanjo and his efforts to defend himself against the charges of corruption, he had too little time to address any other concrete campaign issues.⁴

By contrast, Yar'Adua's advertisements focused on his seven-point political agenda:

4 The court judgement forcing INEC to allow him to stand as a presidential candidate was delivered a few days before the election. To the extent that his attention to his campaign was effectively diverted by the charges against him and by INEC's refusal to confirm his participation early enough, Atiku's campaign can technically be characterised as a 'flash campaign'; 'a last minute entry into the political process due to unforeseen circumstances' (www.moveon.org). Such a candidate cannot be expected to be as successful as those who have had sufficient time to organise their campaigns

- Fight corruption.
- Resolve the Niger Delta crisis.
- Boost the oil and gas industry.
- Economic reform.
- Deal with the fuel shortage.
- Foreign policy trust.
- Deal with ethnic and religious mistrust in the country.

Responding to this agenda in the context of the perceived failure of Obasanjo's regime Buhari urged Nigerians to break their silence: 'You deserve more than megawatts of promises; what you need is uninterrupted power supply for your business and well-being. It's so easy. It doesn't take eight years to realise a dream. Vote right this time. Vote for Muhammadu Buhari' (*Leadership* 26 March).

In an interview Yar'Adua promised to achieve the following within his first 100 days in office:

- Make the power sector a national emergency.
- 100% compliance with the rule of law.
- Restore the federal government's moral authority and credibility.
- Make education and health urgent priorities.
- Make payment of salaries a priority.

Responding to this, the London chapter of the ANPP asked the the following questions:

QUESTION	ANSWER
Which party has been in office for the past 8 years?	PDP
Which party promised to restore and expand the power supply within 6 months of taking office in 1999?	PDP
Which party voted over a trillion Naira on power supply, only to guarantee us a future of darkness?	PDP
Which party has consistently defied court orders?	PDP
Which party has lost all moral authority and credibility in governance?	PDP
Which party neglected education and health?	PDP
Which party has failed to pay salaries and pensions, and refused to pay debts owed to long suffering local contactors?	PDP

IS YAR'ADUA REALLY PDP'S CANDIDATE?

For credible Leadership, trust Muhammadu Buhari

As Buhari raked up more and more reasons why the ruling party should be voted out of power the PDP changed its campaign strategy, devoting more than 80 per cent of its advertisements to demonising the ANPP candidates. Advertisements carried the photographs of prominent Nigerians (Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Abubakar Rimi, Adekunle Ajasin, Lateef Jakande, Umaru Dikko, the Emir of Kano, Aper Akur, Sam Mbakwe, Shehu Shagari, Ndugar Irabor, Tunde Thompson, and so on) from all the major geo-political regions in Nigeria who Buhari had jailed or subjected to structural, psychological and physical violence while he was Nigeria's head of state in the 1980s. Nigerians were asked if they wished to go through same painful experience again. If not, they should vote for Yar'Adua.

A related anti-Buhari advertisement targeted the Muslim community of Northern Nigeria, where Buhari had most of his political followers. The advertisement featured pictures of Buhari in military uniform and of Umaru Dikko, transport minister under the Shehu Shagari administration (1979-1983). The quotation on top of the advert, taken from Usman Dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, reads: 'A nation can endure with unbelief, but it cannot endure with injustice'. The central message was: 'This man allegedly sent terrorists to kidnap Alhaji Umaru Dikko in London so that he can be sent to Nigeria in a crate. Let us forgive him, but must we forget?' (*ThisDay* 15 April 2007, p 87).

One other area on which the media made a significant impression during the 2007 political campaign was in the facilitation of open debate between and among the candidates. All over the country both the state-owned and private television stations, particularly the Nigerian Television Authority, provided the opportunity for the candidates individually and collectively to 'sell' themselves to the electorate.

The most interesting of these brought the candidates together to be interviewed by panelists. Viewers at home participated in these programmes, sometimes being given the opportunity of phoning the candidates to ask questions. Some professionals also organised similar programmes. For example, in the run up to the gubernatorial elections in Oyo State, the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) organised an interview session for the candidates, each of whom was asked to tell the local government workers and the invited audience how he would improve the life of the people of the state. The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) in the state held a similar session.

Billboards and Banners

The use of billboards for political campaigns is not new to Nigeria but there was a significant improvement in the use of this communications medium during the 2007 elections. A few months before polling day most of the billboards used by

marketing companies were taken over by politicians and new ones were added. The billboards were located in strategic positions – usually at popular road junctions and commuters were thus ‘forced’ to see them every day. This attempt to add an aerial campaign to the media mix, we were told in interviews with some candidates, cost them 25 per cent less than advertisements in the electronic or print media.

Added to the billboards were glossy banners featuring campaign messages. The latter were also hung at locations where candidates were campaigning.

Internet and Mobile Telephone

The use of the Internet is a novel addition to campaign strategies worldwide (Foot & Schneider 2006). Though it was unable to replace grassroots campaign activities during the 2007 elections, e-technology provided some candidates with a cheap opportunity to get their message across to voters, to raise funds from far and wide, to defend themselves against negative campaigning, to research opponents and communicate effectively with campaign staff and volunteers. Most of the leading presidential and gubernatorial candidates created campaign websites.⁵ A close look at the websites shows that they contained more useful information about the candidates than was shared with voters through rallies and advertisements.

For example, Atiku’s website clearly identified some salient ‘national key priority areas’ with which the vice-president intended to engage if voted into power. These included wealth/job creation, poverty reduction, infrastructure, democracy and good governance, education, health and social services, and the Niger Delta crisis. The campaign team also identified a number of national emergency issues and how the AC government would solve them. Trying to defend himself against the PTDF scandal Atiku devoted two pages of the website to how he made his money and described himself as an anti-corruption crusader. Quoting from his published authorised biography, *Atiku: The story of Atiku Abubakar*, the vice-president claimed to have a ‘passion for entrepreneurship, wise investments, hardwork and luck’. He described himself as a large-scale farmer, wholesaler of imported goods, and an oil-servicing magnate. In addition to funding political activities, Atiku claimed to have channelled some of his wealth into building and equipping schools, mosques, churches and health centres (www.atikuforpresident.org/mymoney.htm).

5 The following are the websites of the three leading candidates: Yar’Adua/Goodluck campaign team: www.yaraduagoodluck.com; Muhammadu Buhari campaign team: www.buhari.org; Atiku Abubakar campaign team: www.atikuforpresident.org.

Buhari's campaign website also identified a long list of core issues to which the ANPP would give immediate attention when voted into power. These included defence and security, economic management, agriculture and water resources, power supply, transportation, telecommunications, industrial development, the petroleum sector, solid minerals development, education, youth development and empowerment, sports, women's development, health, housing, environment, foreign policy, science and technology, cultural institutions, traditional institutions and information and media. Trying to rake up anger among the Nigerian youth against the PDP-led government, Buhari devoted several pages of his 18-page manifesto on the website to lamenting how Nigerian leaders had failed to invest in the future of the young, preferring instead to exploit them to achieve selfish interests (www.buhari.org/The_Buhari_Programme.html).

Dr Kayode Fayemi, the former Executive Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development and the AC gubernatorial candidate in Ekiti State, ran and still runs a vibrant website (www.kayodefayemi.com) discussing several issues relating to the election in the state and in other parts of the country. One of the hyperlinks in the site contains the eight-point agenda of the gubernatorial candidate.

On his website Senator Isaiah Balat, a PDP gubernatorial aspirant for Kaduna State, presents information about his achievements as both administrator and politician. Like Fayemi, the former president of the Nigerian Labour Congress, Adam Oshiomhole, the AC gubernatorial candidate in Edo State (www.oshiomhole.com) established a website, as did other gubernatorial candidates. The interactive sites enabled the candidates to share their vision and mission with other Nigerians.

Some of the candidates, particularly those standing for positions at lower levels (Senate, House of Representatives and Houses of Assembly) sent text messages to their friends, urging them to use a relay system to get the message across to others. Many of the presidential campaign text messages concerned Obasanjo. Members of the public also used text messages to track trouble spots during the campaign. As soon as political violence was noticed in a particular place Nigerians warned one another to keep away.

AN APPRAISAL OF THE STRATEGIES

There are three key elements to a political campaign: message, money, and machine (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_campaign). The 'message' refers to issues raised by candidates. 'Money' refers to campaign finance and the 'machine' refers to the human resources mobilised to run the campaign. Assessed against these three elements the 2007 campaign in Nigeria can clearly be regarded as having fallen

below acceptable global standards. The campaigns were bereft of issues and characterised by physical, structural and psychological violence (Albert & Marco 2007). There was also an absence of transparency and accountability in campaign spending (EU 2007, p 2).

Message

As indicated above the 'messages' of the 2007 campaigns were not focused and voters had a problem identifying serious campaign issues as candidates concentrated on name-calling rather than on policy. Atiku was represented as 'corrupt', Buhari was a 'religious fanatic' and Yar'Adua an unhealthy Obasanjo stooge. In the process of engaging in this character assassination candidates 'forgot' to address the educational, health and energy crises in the country.

All the candidates used the media to get their messages across. They did this in two ways: independent reporting on campaigns by media houses, and advertisements placed by the candidates themselves. The legal framework for media reporting on campaigns during the 2007 elections include the Electoral Act 2006,⁶ the Nigerian Broadcasting Code, the law on political advertising, and professional and in-house regulatory mechanisms such as the Code of Ethics of the Nigerian Press and the in-house codes for political reporting of some media houses. All these require that political campaigners be given equal access to the media.

IFES (2007), Arogundade (2007), SERI (2007) and the EU Observation Mission (2007) have reported in different contexts that the laws and codes regarding balanced reporting were not respected by campaigners in many parts of Nigeria during the 2007 elections. The problem was largely blamed on media owners. The federal and state governments own about 90 per cent of the electronic media houses in Nigeria, in particular the National Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), which have the widest coverage in the country. More than 80 per cent of these media houses were under the control of the PDP. It was thus not surprising that the government-owned

⁶ Section 102 of the Electoral Act states as follows: (1) A government owned print or electronic medium shall give equal access on a daily basis to all registered political parties or candidates of such political parties. (2) A denial of such access and equal time constitutes an offence punishable in the first instance with a maximum fine of ₦500 000 and the withdrawal of the license of the offending electronic media house by the National Broadcasting Commission for a period of 12 months on any subsequent violation. (3) A person other than a political party or a candidate who procures any material for publication for the purposes of promoting or opposing a particular political party or the election of a particular candidate over the radio, television, newspaper, magazine, handbills or any print or electronic medium whatsoever called during 24 hours immediately preceding or on polling day is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a maximum fine of ₦50 000 or imprisonment for six (6) months or to both.

media houses over-reported PDP campaigns and under-reported⁷ those of other political parties (Arogundate 2007, p 3). Most of the private newspapers in the country were also pro-government because of their ownership.⁸ The campaign trains of some candidates were grossly disadvantaged by this factor, yet the National Broadcasting Commission failed to do anything about this lack of balanced coverage.

Money

Money plays a significant role in any modern political campaign. It determines who is able to contest an election, the quality of a candidate's campaign in terms of access to the media, the number of people who can be mobilised and reached, the number of politically relevant court cases a candidate can fund, and even the extent to which a candidate can corruptly influence the electoral process (IFES 2006, p 7). Election campaign funds are an important factor in the evaluation of a campaign process largely because of their corrupting influences and ability to disadvantage some candidates.

With a view to curbing such problems many of the world's democracies have campaign funding regulations detailing how candidates can obtain funds and / or setting limits to contributions for political campaigns (Ewing 1992; Porta & Vannucci 1999). These laws are aimed at ensuring that candidates compete on equal terms and also prevent 'the use of public office for unauthorised private gain' (see Pinto-Duschinsky 2002). There is, however, a worrying gap in many parts of the world between these laws and the actual practice of campaign funding. Desperate politicians still find their way around the laws, and only a few are caught. This is why the number of reported campaign fund scandals around the world is insignificant. Those involved in reported scandals are often members of the 'opposition' and victims of selective justice (Walecki 2006, p 19).

Conscious of this fact, s 225(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 stipulates that no political party should hold or possess any funds or other assets outside Nigeria. It also forbids political parties to retain any funds or assets remitted from outside the country. The Electoral Act 2006 puts a ceiling on the amount of money candidates may spend on their campaigns.

7 The government frowned on attempts to provide alternative information on the political situation and campaigns. For example, the State Security Service (SSS) raided the Abuja office of AIT on several occasions to stop the broadcast of programmes paid for by the 'opposition'. Many other private television and radio stations suffered the same fate (EU 2007, pp 23-4).

8 The following are the newspaper owners: ex-governor Orji Kalu – *The Sun*; ex-governor James Ibori – *Daily Independent*; ex-governor Bola Tinubu – *The Nation*; ex-governor Peter Odili – *National Interest*, and Governor Gbenga Daniel – *The Westerner*.

Before the Second Republic (1979-1983), political campaigns in Nigeria were traditionally funded by political parties (Onuoha 2002, p140) which generated the necessary resources from membership registration fees, monthly / annual dues, donations and contributions from members, economic activities, loans, and government grants. The situation changed in the Third and Fourth republics with the parties receding in importance in the funding of political campaigns. The candidates now bear the cost of their campaigns⁹ and those unable to raise sufficient money bring themselves under the influence of one political 'godfather' or the other. Both situations lead to corruption, as both politicians who fund themselves and those funded by godfathers strive after the elections to recoup their 'investment' in the 'political business'. The opinion of a former Senate President, Chief Adolphus Wabara, on this subject is very interesting. 'Membership of the National Assembly is an investment because most of us sold our houses to get to the Senate ... the maturity is there but it is the ability to recoup whatever you spent legitimately that is the problem' (*Sunday Punch* 5 June 2004).

Candidates whose campaigns are funded by godfathers usually find themselves in more trouble after elections than those who have funded themselves as, once they are in power, the godfathers force them to repay their 'debt' plus a substantial 'profit margin' using state resources (Albert 2005(a)). Most of the godfather vs godson conflicts recorded in Nigeria since 1999 have related to the desperate bid of godfathers to recoup their investment (Albert 2005(a)).

In the process of conducting their campaigns, incumbent political parties at both federal and state levels have openly contravened Article 103(2) of the Electoral Act, which states that 'State apparatus, including the media, shall not be employed to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election'. Resources used by these candidates include state media, vehicles, civil servants, public funds, aid programmes, and public buildings, including stadiums.

According to the EU report (2007, p 19):

During the campaign, there were widespread reports of abuse of state resources ... These included the distribution of funds and motorbikes throughout Zamfara State by the agency responsible for the poverty alleviation programme (ZAPA) and the use of 60 official cars for election rallies by the incumbent candidate in Zamfara state. In Borno,

⁹ Section 91 of the Electoral Act 2006 provides for the allocation of money to political parties to assist them in their operation, including political campaigns. The amount is, however, usually less than that needed for any serious campaign and some political parties received even less than the amount budgeted for them (EU 2007, p 19).

the incumbent Governor was videotaped while using government vehicles on the campaign trail, from which he threw bundles of money into the crowds. Several cases of the use of state resources for campaigning were observed. For example, in the State Government premises in Abia, EU observers saw three buses with the PPA Governor's campaign slogans painted on them. In Akwa Ibom, in Sokoto and in Ondo States, allegations of the abuse of state resources were confirmed by EU observers at PDP rallies where government vehicles were used. In Cross River State, PDP campaign posters were placed in local government buildings.

The most outrageous example was the deployment by President Obasanjo of all the presidential jets in Nigeria in Yar'Adua's campaign rallies while some commercial airlines were coerced into refusing to allow their planes to be used by other political parties, most especially the AC. At one stage the government of Kaduna State denied the AC the right to use the Kaduna stadium for its rallies.

Machine

The goal of a political campaign is to build a relationship between candidates and voters. 'Campaign machines' require human capital, the 'foot soldiers' needed to build this relationship. In a normal society these 'foot soldiers' are true supporters of the candidate and serve as volunteers or provide money. The volunteers do door-to-door canvassing and make phone calls on behalf of the candidate.

The campaign machine of an average candidate in Nigeria consists of youth, women, ethnic, and religious networks, and people recruited from business who, rather than being voluntary supporters of the candidates, are interested in a transactional relationship with them based on the principle of 'you-rub-my-back-and-I-rub-yours'. The 'business' partners of the candidates, as noted above, are usually the godfathers who fund campaigns for some future pecuniary benefit.

It is customary in Nigerian politics for godfathers to surround their godsons with militant youths whose responsibilities include ensuring the candidate wins the election by any means. While the thugs provide security for their principals, they organise all manner of disruptive and morale-affecting activities that ensure that rival candidates do not enjoy their own campaigns. Such activities, as manifested during the 2007 elections, included organising counter-rallies with a view to generating violence. Thugs picketed the meetings of rival parties and damaged or defaced rivals' campaign posters and billboards. Among them were those hired to assassinate or physically harm political opponents.

Few women were nominated to contest the 2007 elections and those who were were frequently the wives, daughters and concubines of incumbent politicians. The role of other women in the 2007 campaign machines was largely limited to that of caterers and choirs during the political campaign, a situation reminiscent of that in Malawi under President Banda, who ordered Malawian women to be present at political rallies dressed in party uniforms. They were expected to sing and dance in praise of the president (Hirschmann 1991, pp 1679-94).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A key issue that emerged from the research for this paper is that the environment within which candidates in the 2007 elections campaigned was neither positive nor equitable. The campaigns were not conducted within agreed rules, either those of the parties concerned or those specified by the Nigerian Constitution and the Electoral Act of 2006. Party leaders who should have been seen to be fair to all were partisan, imposing candidates on the parties and, in the process, sowing the seeds of factionalism. Where party leaders were not partisan they found it difficult to keep the activities of their members within the established policies, guidelines, and generally acceptable standards of democracy.

In some extreme cases aggrieved members were forced to decamp to other parties. The campaign strategies of those candidates who were nominated by their parties openly violated the rights and freedoms of Nigerians to seek and hold office. Most problematic were the post-party-primary campaigns, which were characterised by the misuse of money and the media. Other problems included the use of threats, restrictions, intimidation, 'deals', pressures, and other unethical practices.

In the process, most of the candidates failed to address fundamental questions of Nigeria's development such as the energy, education, health and environmental crises. The campaign strategies also contributed significantly to post-election violence in many parts of Nigeria. If these problems are to be corrected, the constitutional framework of electoral democracy in Nigeria must be further strengthened, particularly in the area of campaign financing and the conduct of politicians during campaigns.

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