

ETHNICITY AND ELECTION OUTCOMES IN NIGERIA

Interrogating the 2015 Presidential Election

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to investigate the effects of ethnicity on the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the descriptive-statistical analysis of the official election results released by the country's Election Management Body (INEC) as well as a historical analysis of past presidential elections in Nigeria was adopted. The findings revealed that the major contestants received bloc votes from their various states and geo-political zones. This indicated that candidates appealed to ethnic sentiments to garner votes. The policy implication of this scenario includes the fact that ethnic bloc voting destroys inter-ethnic accommodation and efforts at nation building. It is, however, recommended that efforts should be intensified towards providing a compelling statutory set of principles for nation building and national integration which will in turn guarantee the peaceful co-existence for people of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Keywords: ethnicity, voting behaviour, elections, rational choice, ethnic bloc voting

INTRODUCTION

Periodic free and fair elections constitute one of the most significant institutions of liberal and participatory democracy. Elections involve a democratic process of choosing who governs a particular group, society or state. As a critical aspect of democracy elections can take different forms depending on what the polity in question deems appropriate for use (Robert & Obioha 2005). However, Ujo (2008) makes the distinction between elections and voting. He asserts that election is an umbrella word with a wide coverage that includes other activities before, during and after voting. These activities include planning, voter registration, constituency delimitation, arrangement of the polling stations, polling procedure, vote counting and announcement of results. However, voting is the actual process in which individual choice is made from various alternatives.

The extent to which elections contribute to the development and sustenance of democracy, particularly in those that are new and developing, is largely dependent on factors which influence the electorates in making their choice. Studies have been conducted to show the interplay of electoral choice and ethnic structure (Norris & Mattes 2003; Glaeser 2005; Posner 2006). These studies demonstrate that African elites often manipulate ethnic cleavages to win elections, thereby showing that election results in African countries usually follow ethnic lines.

Nigeria is undoubtedly one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. With a population of over 186 million (Worldometers 2015), Nigeria is also the most populous black nation with over 250 ethnic groups and several sub-groups (Olayode 2015, p.13). Despite these characteristics, the country's political scene is dominated by three major ethnic groups, namely Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. Other sub-groups exist but are regarded as minorities. The existence of sub-groups among the large and dominant groups raises the fear of dominance of the minority groups by the major ethnic groups. Consequently, politics is played by these ethnic groups and sub-groups in such a manner as to maintain the domination by the majority groups or to prevent and resist domination by the minority groups.

Presidential elections in post-colonial Nigeria have always generated tensions, anxieties and controversies, particularly among the electorate. This is connected to the fact that electioneering periods are characterised by hate speeches which in most cases have an ethnic undertone. In particular, the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria generated more tension and controversies than ever before. Apart from being held in a period of insecurity largely orchestrated by the Boko Haram sect, the 2015 general elections have been described as the most competitive election to be held in post-colonial Nigeria. It was claimed that prior to the elections there had been increasing tension between the north and the

south. This was attributed to what the northerners saw as a golden opportunity to reclaim the presidency which, in their opinion, would reverse the perceived economic marginalisation of their region (Olayode 2015, p. 3).

All these factors aggravated the traditional ethnic, regional and religious cleavages which have characterised Nigerian politics since independence (ibid.). This is the background to an examination of the extent to which ethnicity influenced the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The study uses both a descriptive statistical analysis of election data provided by the Independent National Electoral Commission and an analysis of historical and empirical data. Data was analysed through the use of tables to ascertain the effect of ethnicity on the voting behaviour of the electorate and consequently on the election outcome. This paper has four sections. The first part contains the introduction which provides a generic background to the study and the methodology adopted in the study. The second part consists of a conceptual exposition of ethnicity and voting behaviour as well as the theoretical framework. The third section contains an overview of the 2015 presidential election and an analysis of results, and the fourth section discusses these results. The final section considers the implication of ethnic bloc voting on democratic advancement.

ETHNICITY AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR: A CONCEPTUAL EXPOSITION

Ethnicity

In contemporary heterogeneous societies ethnic group affiliation gives each member of that society an ethnic identity. Ethnicity, like any other social science concept, has several definitions. According to Afkhami (2012, p. 6) 'ethnicity describes a collective identity and is based on the assumption that a collectivity has its roots in common ancestry, heritage, religion, culture, nationality, language and a territory'. To Nnoli, (1978, p. 5) ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups.

These definitions suggest that ethnicity is characterised by social-cultural phenomena including ancestral descent, culture and norms and the feeling of nationhood. This suggests that ethnicity can only exist in heterogeneous societies. In a more radical approach, Enloe (1978, p. 33) conceived of ethnicity as 'an as unreal, an artificial basis of identification and collective organisation, conjured up by outsiders looking for an efficient instrument of political and economic control'. To Azeez (2009, p.2) ethnicity is a strategic weapon chosen by a disadvantaged group as a new mode of seeking political redress, or by a privileged group in order to protect its advantages. In similar vein, Oladiran (2013, p. 698) suggests that the phenomenon of ethnicity should be expected in any situation where a

group of people, irrespective of size and with distinct cultural and linguistic qualities from other groups, uses a feeling of oneness as a medium to interact with others (Edlyne 2000 cited in Oladiran, 2013 p. 698). Put succinctly, ethnicity can be defined as the feeling of oneness and solidarity of a group based on socio-cultural phenomena such as language, norms, tradition and ancestral origin which distinguish this group from others.

Voting Behaviour

One of the effective means through which citizens in a democratic dispensation take part in the governance process is through casting votes in elections. It is the most distinguishing political tool possessed by citizens to ensure that government responds to their needs. Gordon (1998) observed that voting is the principal mode of participating in politics and that the specialised study of voting behaviour is one of the most developed sub-fields in political science.

Voting behaviour thus refers to factors that determine the manner in which a particular group of people vote for a specific political party or candidates in elections (UK Essays 2013). It can also describe that form of electoral behaviour which explains how and why decisions are reached by public decision makers, or how a voter make his or her choice of candidate in elections.

Chronology of Ethnic Politics and Election Outcomes in Nigeria

The start of ethnic politics in Nigeria can be traced to the emergence of political parties and party politics made possible by the Clifford Constitution of 1922. Consequently, the first political party to be established was the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). Other political parties which emerged after this were based on ethnicity. Oladiran (2013, p. 699) observes that during this period the seed of ethnic politics was sown, germinating in the First Republic and then spreading to subsequent republics. In pre-independence Nigeria party politics and the formation of political parties assumed an ethnic colouration. Prominent parties of the pre-independence era and the First Republic emerged from ethno- and socio-cultural organisations in the country. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), later renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizens, was led by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe; the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Sir Ahmadu Bello was an offshoot of a Hausa socio-cultural group called Jamiyar Mutanen Arewa (association of the people of the north).

Similarly, the Action Group led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo developed from a Yoruba socio-cultural organisation called the Egbe Omo Oduduwa

(the association of the descendants of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestors of the Yoruba). The National Party of Nigeria drew the bulk of its membership from the northern part of the country. In a similar vein, the Action Group drew most of its support from the western region. Other parties which existed included the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Aminu Kano, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka, the Bornu Youth Movement (BYM) and the Dynamic Party (DP). All these political parties championed ethnic courses and drew membership from their ethnic bases. What aggravated the politics of ethnicity in the pre-independence era was the adoption of the principle of regionalism as contained in the Richards Constitution of 1946 (Oladiran 2013, p. 700). This led to the association of major political parties with the major ethnic groups and the three regions, i.e. Western, Eastern and the Northern regions. The tensions and conflict generated by ethnic politics and the acrimony between political parties led to a breakdown of law and order and consequently the premature termination of the country's first attempt at democracy.

In an attempt to ensure that political parties registered to contest elections in the Second Republic did not emulate those of the First Republic, the then military government included a clause for the registration of political parties in the 1979 Constitution. This clause stated that political parties willing to be registered should have a national outlook and national spread. This was to ensure that membership of political parties in the Second Republic should not be drawn from their ethnic bases alone but should include members beyond these ethnic boundaries. Consequently, the following five political parties were registered to contest the Second Republic general elections: Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and People's Redemption Party (PRP). These parties were copies of the First Republic political parties. The Unity Party of Nigeria was a derivative of Action Group and was led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, while the National Party of Nigeria emerged from the remains of the First Republic Northern People's Congress. The Nigerian People's Party was led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) by Ibrahim Waziri. The People's Redemption Party also adopted the nature and character of the First Republic political parties. These parties were described as old wines in new bottles because their forms and ideology were no different from those of the First Republic (Adamolekun 1983, p. 73). Consequently, Second Republic elections were characterised by the same politics of acrimony and ethnic grudges which characterised First Republic politics. This was reflected in the result of the 1979 presidential election results presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
State by state result of the 1979 presidential election

State	Registered voters	NPN	UPN	NPP	GNNP	PRP	TOTAL
Anambra	2,601,548	163,164	9,053	1,002,082	20,228	14,500	1,209,028
Bauchi	2,084,059	623,989	29,960	47,314	154,218	143,202	998,683
Bendel	2,376,410	242,320	356,381	57,629	8,242	4,939	669,511
Benue	1,563,413	411,648	13,864	63,097	42,993	7,277	538,879
Borno	2,753,400	246,778	23,885	9,642	384,278	46,385	710,968
Cross River	2,442,227	425,815	77,775	50,671	100,105	6,737	661,103
Gongola	2,284,500	227,057	138,561	27,856	217,914	27,750	639,138
Imo	3,465,198	101,516	7,335	999,636	34,616	10,252	1,153,355
Kaduna	3,420,839	596,302	92,382	65,321	190,926	447,771	1,381,712
Kano	5,174,447	243,643	14,960	11,041	18,468	907,136	1,195,248
Kwara	1,085,163	190,142	140,006	1,830	20,251	2,376	354,605
Lagos	1,811,973	59,515	681,762	79,320	3,943	3,824	828,364
Niger	1,040,753	287,072	14,155	4,292	63,273	14,555	383,347
Ogun	1,603,004	46,358	689,655	2,343	3,974	2,338	744,668
Ondo	2,422,714	57,361	1,294,666	11,752	3,561	2,509	1,384,788
Oyo	4,520,120	177,999	1,197,983	7,732	8,029	4,804	1,396,547
Plateau	1,618,378	190,458	29,029	296,666	37,400	21,852	548,405
Rivers	1,409,472	499,114	71,114	98,754	15,025	3,212	687,751
Sokoto	3,756,139	898,994	34,102	12,499	359,021	44,977	1,349,593
Total	47,433,757	5,688,857	4,916,651	2,822,523	1,686,489	1,732,113	16,846,633

Source: *Nigerian Muse* (2006) Note: 48,279 votes rejected in Plateau

This table lists votes won by the major political parties in the 1979 presidential election. Out of a total number of 47 433 757 registered voters, the NPN Presidential candidate, Alhaji Shehu Shagari (from Sokoto in North West Nigeria), emerged as winner with a total of 5 688 857 votes. A critical observation of the election result reveals that the NPN presidential candidate received most of his votes from the geo-political zones of North West, North East and North Central. The UPN presidential candidate, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, from the South West, came second with 4 916 659 votes, receiving a substantial portion of his votes from the South Western states of Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Lagos and the Mid-Western state of Bendel. The NPP presidential candidate, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Anambra) came third with 1 764 762 votes. This party received a large portion of its votes from the South-East states of Anambra and Imo and South-South states of Rivers and Cross Rivers. However, despite the clause in the Constitution guiding against the registration of sectarian parties, political parties still had strong ties and appeals to their ethnic affiliations. This election attracted criticism from all quarters due to the fact that the Supreme Court delivered a controversial decision on the winner of the election, Alhaji Shehu Shagari. This was based on a questionable mathematical theory introduced to determine the winner instead of the use of an electoral college as provided for in the Constitution (Nwolise, 2007).

The 1983 presidential elections were contested by six political parties. These included the five political parties which contested the 1979 general elections together with the newly registered National Advance Party (NAP) headed by Chief Tunji Braithwaite. The second phase of the First Republic was short-lived as it was terminated by a military coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida. The presidential election on 12 June 1993, which would have ushered in a new democratic dispensation, was truncated before the election results could be announced. The ethno-political dimension which characterised the elections of the First and Second Republics again manifested in the 1999 general elections. This time there were three parties, namely: the All Peoples Party (APP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The APP was seen to be dominated by the Hausa-Fulani, while the AD was identified with the Yoruba tribe and was seen as a reincarnation of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). The dominance of this party was felt mainly in the south-western states where it won all the gubernatorial seats. Only the PDP won a pan-Nigeria mandate as it was able to win seats in all six geo-political zones. In 2003 the PDP maintained its leadership when it won the presidential election, returning the then-incumbent President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the president-elect for the second time. Ethnic politics during this period was downplayed as the AD, which in the previous election had a firm grip of the six South West states, lost five states to the PDP. These includes: Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. The party was however able to retain Lagos state. The 2007 general elections were described as the worst to be conducted in post-independence Nigeria. According to Egwu, Leonard, Matlosa, and Smith (2008) 'widespread malpractice occurred throughout all stages of the elections, with failures in the late delivery of voting materials, late commencement of polls in most of the states, ballot box stuffing, allocation of votes where voting did not take place, falsification of votes, deliberate denial of election materials to perceived strong-holds of the opposition, and other such action'. These downplayed other factors which might have influenced the election outcome.

The result of the 2011 presidential election revealed the influence of ethnicity on the outcome of the election. Though the presidential election was won by Acting President Goodluck Jonathan, he had fewer votes in the northern part of the country though Oladeji (2015, p. 22) noted that the only exception occurred in Borno state. This was 'due to the general perception of citizens of the state that the state had suffered so much and lacked much of federal presence simply because they have always been in opposition' (ibid.). The major contestants in the election were Goodluck Jonathan who was the flag bearer of the PDP, Mohammadu Buhari who represented the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Nuhu Ribadu of the ACN and Shekarau for the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP). Tables 2 and 3 below illustrate the geo-political summary of presidential election results.

Table 2
2011 Presidential Election Result in the Southern Geo-Political Zone

Geo-Political Zone	Jonathan (PDP)	Buhari (CPC)	Ribadu (ACN)	Shekarau (ANPP)
South-West	2 786 417	321 609	1 369 943	30 906
South-East	4 985 246	20 225	25 577	20 357
South-South	6 118 608	49 978	144 141	11 026
Total South	13 890 270	391 922	1 539 601	62 289

Source: Authors compilation with data from INEC (2011)

Table 3
2011 Presidential Election Result in the Northern Geo-Political Zone

Geo-Political Zone	Jonathan (PDP)	Buhari (CPC)	Ribadu (ACN)	Shekarau (ANPP)
North-West	3 395 724	645 3437	146 216	612 514
North-East	1 832 622	3 624 919	84 273	198 837
North-Central	3 123 126	1 612 999	306 684	40 175
FCT	253 444	131 576	2 327	3 176
Total North	8 351 472	11 691 355	537 173	851 553
Total Country	22 495 187	12 214 853	2 079 101	917 012

Source: Authors Compilation with data from INEC (2011)

*Registered Voters 73 528 040; Total Votes (Voter Turnout) 39 469 484; Invalid/Blank Votes 1 259 506; Total Valid Votes 38 209 978 (Osimen & Ologunowa, 2013, p. 51)

Tables 2 and 3 above reveal that Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, who hails from Bayelsa in the South-South region, emerged as winner of the 2011 presidential election with 22 495 187 votes. It is, however, important to note that he polled 13 890 270 votes in the southern region. This accounts for 62% of the total votes he polled in the southern region of the country which comprises the South-West, South-East and South-South. He was followed by the CPC Presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari from Katsina state in North-West geo-political zone. Buhari came second with 12 214 853 votes of which 11 691 355 were in the north alone, accounting for more than 90% of the total number of votes he won in the entire nation.

It is equally worthy to note that CPC flag bearer Muhammadu Buhari received most of his votes in the northern part of the country which serve as his

base, compared with 391 922 votes which he won in the southern zone. Nuhu Ribadu of the ACN and Ibrahim Shekaru of the ANPP polled 2 079 101 and 917 012 votes respectively. This result indicates the impact of ethnicity on the voting pattern of the electorate during the election. The announcement of the results triggered unprecedented post-election violence in the northern part where Buhari had overwhelming support, particularly in the North-East and North-West. The supporters of the CPC presidential candidate believed that the election was rigged in favour of the incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan. Despite the fact that the 2011 general elections were described by both local and international observers as free, fair and credible, the outcome of the presidential election portends the danger of ethnic bloc voting in future. According to Jameel (2011) the results of the election exposed the ethnic and religion schism in the country. This was explained as follows:

Elections in Nigeria are not necessarily about issues but about ethnicity, religion and regionalism. It is the first time in Nigeria's recent history (Fourth Republic) that the election result has exposed the huge division between the Muslim north and Christian south. Incumbent Goodluck Jonathan had won in nearly all southern states, which are predominantly Christian except for one (Osun), while his main challenger Muhammadu Buhari won in the Muslim north-east and north-west. This election, described by international observers as the most successful for decades, seems to be compounding the country's regional and ethnic divisions.

Jameel, 2011

Ethnic Voting Behaviour and the Rational Choice Theory

The Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is one of the major theories explaining and predicting the socio-political and economic tendencies of human behaviour. This theory tends to explain human behaviour as being based on logical and explicable principles. According to Bakalova (2013, p.104) 'RCT offers a formal analysis of the process of rational decision-making under the assumption that individuals are capable of making reasoned choices based on their goals and beliefs'. Downs (1957) popularised the RCT when he applied the theory to electoral behaviour and party competition.

The basic assumptions of the RCT as espoused by Turner (1991) are that human beings act purposively in order to archive certain set goals, and that human beings have sets of hierarchically ordered preferences or utilities. In the

political context, the rational choice theory of ethnic bloc voting assumes that 'a voter tends to vote for a party candidate who is a member of the same ethnic group because of the higher probability that the candidate will keep his or her political promises to members of their own ethnic community and because of the lower costs of communicating with a candidate of one's own community' (Lander & Copeland 1995, p. 436). The assumption here is that 'voters belonging to a particular ethnic group are more likely to vote for candidates belonging to the same ethnic group especially if the ethnic group is small relative to other ethnic groups, than other voters' (ibid.).

The theory sees political parties in democratic politics as being similar to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. In order to achieve their aims, they formulate policies they believe will gain the most votes, just as entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain the most profits for the same reason (Ajiboye 2015). This implies that there is a relationship between ethnicity and voting behaviour. In demonstrating the nexus between ethnicity and voting behaviour Horowitz (1993) offered an explanation of the relationship between ethnicity, party systems and voting behaviour in developing societies. According to him 'ethnicity exerts a strong direct impact on electoral behaviour in ethnically-segmented societies, through generating a long-term psychological sense of party loyalty anchoring citizens to parties, where casting a vote becomes an expression of group identity. By implications, other social divisions become subsumed as secondary to ethnicity' (Horowitz 1993, p. 19).

This particular scenario, in the view of Horowitz (1985 p. 293) brings about what is known as ethnic parties. He defined ethnic parties as 'those that derive their support from an identifiable ethnic group and serve the interests of that group'. According to him, 'to be an ethnic party, a party does not have to command an exclusive hold on the allegiance of group members. It is how that party's support is distributed, not how the ethnic group's support is distributed' (ibid.).

According to Bratton, Bhavnani and Chen (2011, p. 1) scholars have described ethnicity as the predominant organising principle of society and politics. Horowitz (1985, p. 293) for instance, perceives the psychological relationship between certain ethnic groups and political parties in ethnically-segmented society to mean that ethnicity has 'a direct and unidirectional impact on political behaviour'. Consequently, he sees elections in such highly polarised countries as mere ethnic census that decides the numerical strength of such ethnic groups. To buttress Horowitz's view, Posner (2005) posits that sub-national groups expressing solidarity seek to elevate leaders from their own cultural background into positions of power, especially that of top executive, thereby gaining collective representation. Ethnicity is widely held to be the major variable influencing political behaviour in Africa.

Much as the rational choice theory of ethnic voting behaviour is crucial and applicable to the study of ethnic bloc voting, particularly in heterogeneous societies, this theory has come under criticism. It has been criticised for ‘mathematising the obvious’ (Roskin 2016). In searching for universal patterns, the theory is considered to have ‘ignored important cultural contexts, which thus rendered it unable to predict much of importance’. It has also been criticised on the grounds that the choices the theory sought to explain appeared rational only in retrospect (Roskin 2016). Despite these criticisms, the rational choice theory has remained a tenable model for explaining human behaviour and has reached an unrivalled position among theoretical models that explain human behaviour. According to Monroe (1991) this prominence cuts across all social science disciplines.

THE 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULT: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to the 2015 presidential election, INEC Chairman Attahiru Jega promised to announce the results within 48 hours after the close of polls. According to the European Union Election Observation Mission (2015, p.1) ‘the presidential collation process was completed within four days, with the declaration of results and certificate of return given to the winning candidate on 1 April’. The early commencement of the collation and prompt announcement of the result gave credence to the vote collation and counting process. The total number of registered voters for the 2015 presidential election was 67 422 005; the total number of accredited voters was 31 746 490, and the total number of votes cast was 29 432 083. The total number of valid votes stood at 28 587 564 while the total number of rejected votes was 844 519 (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015). Table 4 below shows the result of the presidential election result on state-by-state basis.

Table 4
State by State Results of the 2015 Presidential Election

S/N	State	APC (Buhari)	PDP (Jonathan)
1.	Abia	13 394	368 303
2.	Adamawa	374 701	251 664
3.	Akwa-Ibom	58 411	953 304
4.	Anambra	17 926	660 762
5.	Bauchi	931 598	86 085
6.	Bayelsa	5 194	361 209

S/N	State	APC (Buhari)	PDP (Jonathan)
7.	Benue	373 961	303 737
8.	Borno	473 543	25 640
9.	Cross-River	28 368	414 863
10.	Delta	48 910	1 211 405
11.	Ebonyi	19 518	32 653
12.	Edo	208 469	286 869
13.	Ekiti	120 331	176 466
14.	Enugu	14 157	553 003
15.	Gombe	361 245	96 873
16.	Imo	133 253	559 185
17.	Jigawa	885 988	142 904
18.	Kaduna	1 127 760	484 085
19.	Kano	1 903 999	215 779
20.	Katsina	1 345 441	98 937
21.	Kebbi	567 883	100 972
22.	Kogi	264 851	149 987
23.	Kwara	302 146	132 602
24.	Lagos	792 460	632 327
25.	Nasarawa	236 838	273 460
26.	Niger	657 678	149 222
27.	Ogun	308 290	207 950
28.	Ondo	299 889	251 368
29.	Osun	383 603	249 929
30.	Oyo	528 620	303 376
31.	Plateau	429 140	543 615
32.	Rivers	69 238	1 487 075
33.	Sokoto	671 926	152 199
34.	Taraba	261 326	310 800
35.	Yobe	446 265	25 526
36.	Zamfara	612 202	144 833
37.	FCT	146 399	157 195
	TOTAL	15 424 921	12 853 162

Source: Authors compilation with data from INEC (2015)

From Table 4 above it can be deduced that the APC Presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari won 15 424 921 votes which accounted for 54% of the total valid votes cast. The PDP presidential candidate and then incumbent Goodluck Jonathan won 12 853 162 votes, which accounted for 45% of the total valid votes cast. APC candidate Buhari, having satisfied the requirement of the Constitution and having scoring the highest number of votes, was declared winner and sworn in as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is, however, important to note from the table that each candidate scored the highest number of votes per state from the three states located within the geo-political zone from which they each come. Muhammadu Buhari scored 1 127 760 votes in Kaduna, 1 903 999 votes in Kano and 1 345 441 votes in Katsina, amounting to a total of 4 377 200 votes. His opponent on the other hand received 953 304 votes in Akwa-Ibom, 1 211 405 votes in Delta and 1 487 075 votes from Rivers states respectively. These totalled 3 651 784 votes. This implied that Buhari secured approximately 28% of the total votes he won from only three states within the North-West geo-political zone, including his home state of Katsina.

In a similar vein, Goodluck Jonathan received 28% of the total votes he won from three states of the South-South geo-political zone. This can be described as the result of ethnic and territorial bias, and can be better understood by a breakdown of the state-by-state result of the presidential election into that of geo-political zones. The country is divided into six geo-political zones: North-Central comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau states; North-East comprising Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states; North-West comprising Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states; South-East comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states; South-West comprising Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo states; and South-South which consists of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Cross-Rivers and Edo states. Table 5 below indicates the 2015 presidential election results based on the six geo-political zones.

Table 5
Six Geo-Political Results of the 2015 Presidential Election

S/N	Geo-Political Zone	APC (Buhari)	PDP (Jonathan)
1.	North-Central	2 264 614	1 558 623
2.	North-East	2 848 678	796 588
3.	North-West	7 115 199	1 339 708
Total	Northern Zone	12 228 491	3 694 919

S/N	Geo-Political Zone	APC (Buhari)	PDP (Jonathan)
4.	South-East	198 248	4 714 725
5.	South-West	2 433 193	1 821 416
6.	South-South	418 590	4 714 725
Total	Southern Zone	3 050 031	11 250 866

Source: Authors compilation with data from INEC (2015)

From Table 5 above it can be observed that the two presidential candidates secured more bloc votes from their various geo-political zones compared with other zones. Muhammadu Buhari secured 7 115 199 votes from the North West geo-political zone of the country which includes Katsina, his home state. Goodluck Jonathan on the other hand secured 4 714 725 votes from the South-South zone. Again, it can also be observed that the APC presidential aspirant made a tremendous impact on other parts of the northern zones. In the North-Central and North-East geopolitical zones, Muhammadu Buhari received more than double the votes of his counterpart, Goodluck Jonathan. In the South-East geo-political zone, Goodluck Jonathan secured a landmark victory with close to five million votes compared to Buhari's 198 248. The significance of this is that approximately 79% of Buhari's winning votes came from the Northern geo-political zone. In the same vein, Goodluck Jonathan received approximately 88% of the total votes he scored to come second with 12,853,162 votes from the Southern geo-political zone. The exception was in the South-West where both candidates gained a considerable number of votes. However, APC candidate Buhari received 611 777 more votes in this zone than his PDP counterpart, with 2 433 193 compared to his opponent Goodluck Jonathan's 1 821 416.

The analysis above clearly indicates that both Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan received bloc votes from their ethnic bases. The bloc votes garnered by the contestants from each candidate's geo-political zone can thus be described as being influenced largely by ethnic affiliation. The pre-election campaign period leading to the 2015 presidential election was dominated by anti-ethnic speeches. What can be regarded as the genesis of anti-ethnic hate speeches started in 2011 when Goodluck Jonathan declared his intention to contest the 2011 presidential election. This the northerners saw as a breach of agreement. At the death of the then President Ya' Adua, the northerners believed that since Ya' Adua was unable to complete his tenure as the president, another northerner should contest the 2011 presidential election based on the PDP rule of rotational presidency. Goodluck Jonathan's resolve to contest this election met with stiff opposition, particularly from the northern political elites.

It was clear that the northerners wanted a northern contestant and more importantly a northern president. However, the eventual triumph of Goodluck Jonathan at the 2011 presidential polls dashed their hopes. Consequently, they were set for a showdown with the south in the forthcoming 2015 presidential election. The pre-election period was also laced with anti-ethnic speeches from both northerners and southerners. The Arewa People's Congress was reported in the *Vanguard Newspaper* of 15 October 2014 as saying: 'those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 will be considered an enemy of the north' (Ezeibe 2015, p. 15). Similarly, Abu King Shuluwa was also reported in the *Daily Independent* of Friday 8 March 2013 to have said that: 'Nigeria will disintegrate if Jonathan contests in 2015' (Ezeibe 2015, p. 15).

*Ethnic Bloc Voting:
Implications for Democratisation in a Heterogeneous State*

Ethnic bloc voting has far-reaching implications for the development of democracy in deeply divided societies such as Nigeria. Scholars have for years predicted the possibility that elections in deeply divided societies would produce only ethnic consensus. Ishiyama (2012) considers that such elections create hindrances which erode inter-ethnic tolerance. Rather than give rise to harmonious co-existence and political stability, ethnic bloc voting can drive large-scale ethnic confrontation in ethnically diverse societies. Elections under these circumstances become mere expressions of ethnic bias or prejudice. This position contends that voters employ the act of voting to express (and hence register) their identities as part of an ethnic group.

During election periods political elites jostle for the support of citizens who in turn look up to their leaders for guidance. Having been politicised, ethnic groups are prepared for conflict with competing groups whose elites also embark on the same mission, and the end product is usually inter-ethnic violence (Okonta 2012, p. 13). However, the interrelationship between ethnicity and democratisation has been a subject of debate among students of politics. In the words of Ibeanu (2000, p. 55) studies on ethnicity and politics have 'focused principally on the reciprocal impact of ethnicity and multi-party democracy'. Parenti (1967) argues that multi-party democracy fosters ethnicity and therefore, he claims, there is a negative relationship between a multi-party democratic system and ethnicity. Others however argue that there is a positive relationship between the two and that through the use of egalitarian pluralism, democracy presents a promising environment in which to deal with ethnic differences (Osaghae 2008).

Ethnic bloc voting in highly fragmented societies poses a great challenge to efforts at nation-building. Votes cast along ethnic lines for a particular candidate who belongs to the same ethnic group as the voter constitutes a voting pattern

that translates to a 'psychological affirmation of group identity' (Horowitz 1985). This feeling of ethnic identity thwarts efforts geared towards achieving a strong and united nation amidst fragmented and highly distinct ethno-cultural linguistic groups. While voting based on ethnic affiliation undermines the legitimacy of the resultant regime, a candidate who emerges as winner with votes widespread across a heterogeneous country tends to have the support of the citizens irrespective of their ethnic and regional affiliation.

When an individual emerges as the winner with most of his votes from his ethnic base, the fear of exclusion may grip other ethnic groups who might have cast their votes for their co-ethnic candidates. This was exemplified in President Muhammadu Buhari's statement on international media that he does not expect to give equal treatment to those who give him 97% of the votes with those who gave him 5%. In an ideal electoral democratic system the equitable treatment of all citizens should be the priority of the government of the day, and is how electoral democracy is able to receive support from the majority of their population (Gjefsen 2012, p. 14).

Other Factors besides Ethnicity

The study of voters' behaviour and election outcomes is complex due to the fact that no single variable or factor can adequately explain voting behaviour and what determines voters' choices at the polls (Roth 1998). Scholarly literature which dwells on the determinants of voting behaviour and election outcomes indicates that variables such as money, religion, social status, political party affiliation and charisma shape voters' decisions (Agomor & Adams 2014; Akhter & Sheikh 2014; Goldberg 2014; Andrews & Inman 2009). While studying determinants of voters' behaviour in Ghana, Agomor and Adams (2014) investigated what determines the choice of the Ghanaian electorate in making voting decisions based on evaluative and non-evaluative variables. The evaluative variables include the characteristics and accomplishments of candidates, the performance of government and the policy platform of political parties, while the non-evaluative factors are political affiliation and family ties. However, findings from their study revealed that while ethnicity, gender, religion and money still exist as determinants, evaluative rationales such as education, health and the employment policies of the parties are major determinant of voters' behaviour in Ghana (Agomor & Adams 2014).

In a similar vein, Andrews and Inman (2009) adopted the 2005 Round 3 Afro-barometer survey to study why citizens in seven African countries (Benin, Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa), which hold regular periodic elections, turn out to vote and why they choose a particular political party or candidate. They concluded that citizens in these seven African

democracies display a complex and overlapping tendency to vote for a particular political party or candidate. They also discovered that retrospective evaluations of the performance of government serve as a major driver of voters' decisions in these countries. They asserted that retrospective evaluations such as economic performance and the corruption of the president have a significant impact on voters' choices. In essence, the better an individual's perception and evaluation of government performance is compared with previous years, the more likely it is that this individual will cast his or her vote for the president's party in the next election. In addition, evaluations of the extent of corruption of a president or government also have a tremendous impact on voters' choices. Thus, the more corrupt a president or government is the less likely it is that voters' will cast their votes for the president or his party in the next election (Andrews & Inman, 2009).

In their study of voting behaviour in India, Akhter and Sheikh (2014) assert that the determinants revolve around religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, the purpose of the polls and the extent of the franchise. They aver, however, that the use of money, religion and caste is detrimental to democracy as these have a negative impact on the democratisation process. In their view it is therefore imperative that such factors should be avoided in voter decision-making and that more emphasis should be placed on freedom of thought, expression and association. In this regard, the will of the people is expressed through a free and fair voting process which is devoid of undemocratic practices such as electoral malpractice and rigging (Akhter & Sheikh 2014). Goldberg's 2014 study focused on religion as a determinant of voting behaviour in Switzerland, looking particularly at the Christian Democrats and using a multilevel approach. It highlighted the significance of two issues in defining religion as a determinant of voters' choices: one is the religious community to which the voter belongs, and the other is the extent of individual religious attendance and belief (Dalton 2002). These two issues go a long way in revealing why religion plays a significant role in voting behaviour.

Some reasons have been advanced by Goldberg (2014) to explain why religion plays such a crucial role in determining voting behaviour or choice. The strong link between religious ideals and a range of general political and social principles, which are in turn connected to party choice, is one of the reasons why religion has such a great influence on voters' behaviour. Another reason has to do with the ability of an individual to determine his or her political point of view (Goldberg 2014). It has also been discovered that long-adopted value systems, identification with a religious denomination and the urge to vote for religious political parties are accountable for the recurrent influence of religion on voting behaviour (Schmitt 1984). Findings from the study revealed that citizens who live in strongly Catholic cantons are more prone to vote for the Christian Party than citizens who live in

cantons with less Catholic belief. This implies that religious considerations exert great influence on the preference to vote for the Christian Party, and further indicates that the behaviour of voters is likely to be determined by the extent to which such voters have strong beliefs in religious ideals and values.

The role of money and the charisma of candidates have also been established as crucial determinants of voter choice and election outcomes (Ovwasia 2013; Chressanthis, Gilbert & Grima 1991). Money politics has been described as a particular feature of the Nigerian electoral process. Ovwasia (2013) noted that money politics as manifested in vote-buying has been at the forefront of democratic politics in Nigeria. According to Ovwasia this is because political parties and candidates have demonstrated by their actions during electioneering periods that a quality party manifesto and the integrity of contestants are not enough to influence voters' choices and secure their votes, hence they engage in vote buying. In describing the rampant vote-buying in developing democracies, Fredric and Andreas (2005) observed that political candidates buy and the electorate sell their votes as goods in the market. This commercial act is regarded as a contract in which an individual voter has the obligation to cast his or her vote for a political party or candidates on voting day.

Vote-buying and the prevalence of money in politics in African democracies in general and in Nigeria in particular, do not occur in a vacuum; they are made possible by various enabling factors. Davies (2006) outlined some of these factors as follows: the inability of political parties to produce inclusive and understandable manifestoes for voters to base their choice on; pessimism expressed by voters that politicians are corrupt and that nothing can be done to change them; emphasis on individual rather than on campaign issues on the part of the voters; voter perception of the ostentatious lifestyle of politicians and the insatiable need of politicians to win elections at all cost and to retain elective positions by all means (Davies, 2006). Chressanthis et al. (1991) assert that the personal perception of voters regarding a candidate's charisma also determines the voter's preference for a charismatic candidate. According to Weber (1968) charismatic individuals are perceived as possessing a personality that distinguishes them as extraordinary persons and are thus treated as being endowed with exceptional qualities. Charismatic individuals thus enjoy tremendous personal loyalty from their followers by virtue of these characteristics, and so receive a commitment from the citizens to accomplish their electoral aims (Bryman 1993). While all the aforementioned variables determine voters' choices and election outcomes, the bulk of the literature on political behaviour, voters' choice and the determinants of election outcomes – particularly as these relate to Africa – suggests that ethnicity matters for political affiliation and voters' choice. As noted by Erdmann (2007) ethnicity is the major deciding factor for voting behaviour and the formation of

political parties, and as a result politicians are more likely to direct public and private resources to their ethnic base and Nigerian homeland. This buttresses the notion that African politics is embedded in ethno-religious sentiments. Other determinants of voters' choices and election outcomes therefore derive from an ethno-religious bias and how these manifest during elections.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Nigerian state is characterised by ethnic fragmentation and pluralism. This has manifested in the rise of ethnic militia and ethnic clashes across the country and ethnicity in the form of ethnic bloc voting has remained an impediment in the Nigerian democratic process. Ethnicity has been a prominent factor in the Nigerian political landscape from the time of its independence. Indeed, the formation of political parties in Nigeria was influenced by ethnicity in that political parties of the Nigerian First Republic emerged out of the socio-cultural organisations of the various ethnic groups in the country, therefore giving political parties an ethnic identity. Consequently, votes were cast during elections with ethnicity as the major determining factor. However, this paper notes that aside from ethnicity, there are other factors that shape the outcome of the 2015 presidential election. These include: money politics, religion, social status, political party affiliation and charisma.

The 2015 presidential election was keenly contested, with each contestant having a firm grip of his ethnic base. An analysis of the election results shows that each candidate had bloc votes from his geo-political zone. It has been demonstrated that ethnic bloc voting is inimical to Nigeria's democratisation process as well as efforts aimed at uniting and integrating the country. To establish a sound electoral democracy and a strong united country, the menace of ethnicity and ethnic bloc voting should be addressed. To achieve this, efforts should be intensified towards providing a set of principles for nation-building which should be included in the constitution. In addition, there should be commitment to an even distribution of socio-economic and infrastructural development. Uneven distribution of socio-economic and infrastructural development in a country breeds a sense of exclusion, and the fear of domination and marginalisation by the undeveloped segment of the country. Furthermore, there should be a formulation of policies and programmes to re-orientate those that are divided along ethnic lines in order to promote good relations among the different ethnic groups.

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