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Political Participation, Voting Behaviour and 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

¹Johnson O. Olaniyi, Ph.D.

Abstract

Voting is the cheapest form of political participation. People participate in political activities in various ways and for different reasons. This explains why there are often diversities in the voting behavior of electorate of any constituency. Election is one of the forms of political participation. It is also the most popular of all the various forms of political participation. The foregoing shows that there is a synergy between political participation and electoral activities. Voting is one of the forms of electoral activities. It is through it political analysts can test; voters' turn-out in an election; the voting behavior of a group of electorate; popularity of governments' policies; and the level of political sophistication of electorate, among others. This study is anchored on the synergy between political participation and voting behavior using the Presidential Election of 2015 as its case study. Other objectives include the examination of: (i) the imperativeness of political participation in a polity; (ii) issues that may determine the voting behaviour of electorate in any electoral dispensation; and (iii) factors that shaped the voting decisions of electorate in Nigeria during the Presidential Election of 2015. The study adopts historical cum comparative modes of analysis as its research methodology. Some of the findings of the study include: (a) synergy exists between political participation and electoral activities; and (b) the voting behaviour of Nigerian electorate during the 2015 Presidential Election was largely determined by issues revolving around the primordial cleavages of the Nigerian State rather than factors like party affiliation and social group. Based on its findings, the study recommends that in order to avoid the threat of disintegrative tendencies in Nigeria's future elections, Nigerian electorate need a prolonged sensitization and re-orientation period prior to the conduct of any election. The appropriate time recommended is immediately a general election has been concluded thus providing a time frame of four years. This panacea is necessary to guarantee a situation where by voting decisions in the country would rise above primordial sentiments.

Key words: Political Participation; Voting Behaviour, Presidential Election; Electoral Commission; Political Parties

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Introduction

Governance is predicated upon the principle of reciprocity. The established authority in any State has a number of obligations to make to the citizenry before it can be adjudged as a responsible government by analysts. Such responsibilities include; provision of social welfare services, security/maintenance of peace law and order and providing enabling environment for democracy to thrive. However, on their part, citizens have a number of civic duties to perform in a State before the stability of the country can be guaranteed and sustained. Some of such duties include; loyalty to the State, willingness to be prepared to promote and defend the interest of the state at all times, payment of taxes as at when due, participating in political activities which include taking part in national (political) debates, getting registered as prospective voters during elections, membership of political parties and partaking in campaign activities. Most of these activities are not usually given premium attention in most societies thus explaining why most citizens do not see them as their civic duties. But their importance to the political advancement of any State yearning for development cannot be over emphasized. This is where the importance of political participation and voting behavior comes in. Every citizen of a State that is of voting age (eighteen years plus as the case in Nigeria) has the statutory responsibility to take active part in political activities culminating in the choice of political leaders of the country at any point in time. Experiences have however, revealed some things to the contrary. At the end of every election when voters' turnout is determined, there is always a sharp discrepancy between the total number of prospective registered voters and the percentage that participated in the actual voting. Different reasons are usually adduced for this.

Nigerians have been participating in the elections of their representatives since October 1923 when the first election was held in the country. However, between that time and the current political dispensation (Fourth Republic) experiences have revealed that the voting behaviour of an average Nigerian electorate has always been a product of certain primordial interests. This raises the question of objectivity in their voting decisions. A voting decision will be deemed an objective one if what governed the judgment of an electorate is national interest as opposed to parochial or primordial interests. This usually brings to question the representativeness of the products of such electoral processes. Furthermore, it also poses a threat to the performance of such political office holders.

The foregoing will be analyzed vis-à-vis political participation and voting behaviour of Nigerian electorate during the Presidential Election of March 28, 2015. This work is divided into a number of sections; introduction, conceptual clarifications, political participation, voting behaviour and 2015 Presidential election; and conclusion.

Political Participation Conceptualized

Political participation as a concept in politics explains a situation where by the citizens of a State take part in issues that are political such as, getting registered as a prospective voter during Voter registration exercise, voting on election day, joining a political party, joining the campaign train of a contestant, participating in political debates /discourse and in extreme cases taking part in demonstrations (riots) or getting involved in political thuggery. This explanation shows that political participation can take two forms; positive (democratic) and negative (undemocratic). However, the negative side of political participation is seldom given much attention by political theorists while explaining the literature definition of political participation.

Stressing the importance of participation in any political system, Hoffman and Grahman (2009:108) posit that "democracy requires participation at different levels and in different ways". According to them, it is in view of its indispensability in any polity that has brought about the idea of 'compulsory voting' in some clime. Following from this position, Mclean and McMillan (2009:391) explain political participation as "taking part in politics". They however, argue that "the general level of participation in a society is the extent to which the people as a whole are active in politics". Furthermore, they posit that the understanding of what constitutes 'political participation' usually runs into a hitch because of the sense which politics connotes to some people.

McClosky (1968:117) explains political participation as:

Those voluntary activities, by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers, and directly or indirectly, in formation of public policy.

The above position links political participation mainly to electoral activities and public policy making process. In their own view, Roberts and Edwards (1991:93) explain political participation as:

A general model for political, social, and economic decision making based on the assumption that decision making processes are most effective under conditions of direct participation by those persons most affected by decision outcomes.

Roberts and Edwards' (1991) conception of political participation is in tandem with decision making process, any form it takes. Miller's (2001) main contribution to the discourse on political participation is seen in

'modes' or kinds. He identified three modes of political participation, namely: voting; electoral campaigning; and non-partisan lobbying- "particularly on local community affairs or even particularized contacts with officials to achieve some personal benefit or ventilate some personal grievance" (Miller, 2001:428). While the first two modes are electoral in nature, the third, non-partisan lobbying encompasses political activities.

Political participation usually varies with individual preferences. This explains why some individuals are more actively involved in political activities than others. Dahl (1976:100) summarized this position in the following words:

Some people are indifferent to politics, others are more deeply involved. Even among those who are heavily involved in politics, only some actively seek power. And among the power seekers, some gain more powers than others.

Dahl (1976) described the first category as the 'apolitical stratum', the second, 'political stratum', the third the 'power seekers' and the fourth, the 'powerful'. Lindblom (1968:30) referred to the fourth category as 'proximate policy, makers' explained by him as:

Those participants who are 'closest' or most proximate to the actual making of a decision. They are those who share immediate legal authority to decide on specific policies together with other immediate participants in policy decisions, like top party leaders, to whom the above have conceded extra legal authority or who, for any other reason are strong and immediate and participators in actual decisions on policy- excluding however, any of the above legal authorities who waive their control over decisions in favour of others.

In what appears to be a resemblance of Dahl's (1976) typology, a Sociologist, Milbrath (1965:18) (cited in Dowse and Hughee, 1979) classified political participation into four categories, namely; those performing, 'gladiatorial activities, described by Dahl (1976) as the 'powerful'; those performing 'transitional activities', regarded by Dahl as the 'power seekers'; those performing 'spectator activities', explained by Dahl as 'political stratum' and those regarded as 'apathetic', described by Dahl as the 'apolitical stratum'.

According to Dowse and Hughes (1979:289) people participate in politics in many different ways with different degrees of emotional involvement and at different levels of the system. A good example of such levels was the classification made by Dahl, Almond and Verba (1963). They classified levels of political participation into three, namely; 'participatory political cultures' (members of a society who play active role in the policy making process and expect benefits from governmental activities); 'subject political cultures' explained as a passive relationship in which individuals know very little about the activities of the government and do not expect to share in the decision making process); and 'parochial political cultures; (a state of indifference to politics). The authors argue that the first two types are often found in mixed forms in most societies. Thus leading to a situation where by we may have 'participatory- subject political cultures' in a system. However, all things being equal, societies with 'high political cultures' will have records of high political participation. On the other hand, societies with 'low political cultures' will have records of low political participation.

Why people participate in political activities

What reasons can be advanced to explain why people participate in political activities? Scholars have divergent views to explain why people participate in political activities. The various typologies of political participation made by some political theorists earlier reviewed in this work, give an insight of the answer this question. The hallmark of political theories in relation to the activities of a political man is seen in Aristotle's famous maxim- man is a political animal. The belief of the classic political thinker is that human species live together and it is only in rare cases they live in complete isolation. It is by interacting with the other individuals in the society that a man can develop mentally, socially and politically. However, apart from these positions, a summary of reasons explaining why people participate in political activities include the following:

- (i) To exercise their civic rights, as provided for by the country's constitution (for example, Sections 39 and 40 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on: Right to freedom of expression and the press; 'Right to Peaceful assembly and association', respectively.
- (ii) To partake in the decision making process, at least indirectly, through the elected representatives.
- (iii) In anticipation of certain benefits or rewards, in the form of provision of certain basic social amenities to an area by a government. The reward may also take the form of economy. Hence, it is argued that "men seek to advance their economic or material well-being through political means" (Dowse and Hughes, 1979:291).

- (iv) To avoid punishment in cases where benefits are tied to participation (for example, voting. This is what Dowse and Hughes (1979:291) described as a form of participation aimed at meeting 'psychological needs'. Hoffman and Graham (2009:109) also described it as 'compulsory voting'.
- (v) Expression of public opinion on certain national issues especially when people have become disenchanted about some of the policies of a government. This takes the form of 'political communication'. Issue voting has been strengthened by the Issue Theory on voting behaviour which advocates that voting should be issue oriented. That is past, current and future issues should shape the voting decisions of electorate (Ripley and Slotnick, 1989:250).
- (vi) To exercise their 'franchise' through periodic elections.
- (vii) To demonstrate their loyalty to their political parties. This reason has been further strengthened by the 'Party Identification Model' which is one of the theories of voting behaviour. The model is explained as a practice where by voters cast their votes primarily out of long-term loyalty to a particular Political Party" (Ripley and Stotnick, 1989:249). The main rule of 'Party Voting' is that when there is a choice between the candidate of the party with which you identify and the opposition party, vote for your party's candidate (Ripley and Slotnick, 1989:249).
- (viii) To promote the interests of their social group like the working class or the body they belong to. Proponents of the Social Group Theory of Voting behaviour had lent credence into this reason. According to them, "individuals are predisposed to vote in a particular way because of the social groups they belong to" (Dudley, 1982:221). For instance, trade union activists will all things being equal, vote for a political party/ candidate that /who promises to promote their welfare while in power.
- (ix) In order to promote and/ or protect their primordial interests particularly in plural societies where people are divided on several grounds. Towards this end, the outcomes of the voting patterns of electorate usually reflect sectional or regional interests. Scholars of the Sociological Model of the Voting behaviour have argued in this vein when they posited that:
The most theoretical principle underlying most African election studies has been a consensus that African Voters tend to make their electoral choice as communities rather than individuals (Cohen, 1983:80).

Voting Behaviour Explained

Voting behaviour is a sub-set of electoral behaviour which in turn, is a sub-field of political behaviour. The main feature of the electoral system in any polity is voting behaviour. As earlier posited in this work, voting behaviour is a sub-set of electoral behaviour which can be explained as the totality of the behavioural patterns of the electorate of any named constituency during an electioneering period. It is the scientific study of the voting decisions of the electorate of a constituency in an election. It provides insight into the sociology of voters, factors which influence their voting patterns and the direction of their votes. The foregoing explains why Onah (1997:289) argue that of all the various forms of participation in the political process in a country, "voting is perhaps the simplest, cheapest and most obvious form of participating in politics". In a similar vein Miller (2001:429) posited that: "The act of voting requires very little effort by the individual and involves a great deal of institutional-in this case party-conflicts".

According to Mclean and McMillan (2009:553) "there are three main subdivisions of the study of voting in Political Science: voting procedures, voting behaviour in mass electorates, and voting in smaller bodies such as legislatures". The scholars however, argued that the study of voting behaviour as opposed to voting procedures began in the twentieth century. It was one of the efforts aimed at making the study of politics scientific.

The voting behaviour of an individual or group of electorate can only be studied through the analysis of 'voter turn-out' explained as "the percentage of the population eligible to vote who actually vote" (Cohen, 1983:83)- on one hand, and 'voters' choice', on the other hand". Consequently, voting behaviour is a practical demonstration of political behaviour.

Furthermore, writing on the importance of voting behaviour, 'Cohen (1983) posits that the level of turnover can often be regarded as an indirect measure of such things as political participation' and 'system stability'

The synergy between Political Participation and Voting Behaviour

Links have been established between political participation and voting behaviour in this study. For a start, it was established that voting behaviour, which is a sub-set of electoral behaviour, is a form of political participation. It was also stated that voting is perhaps, the cheapest form of political participation. The relationship between political participation and electoral behaviour is seen in the fact that it is the citizenry which confers legitimacy on the 'ruling class' in a liberal democracy, through voting. Therefore, the refusal on the part of the citizenry to perform this civic responsibility can breed anarchy. Furthermore, according to Miller

(2001:432) "voting choice, like participation is not just a matter of personal preferences". They are conditioned by a variety of outside forces- in particular by their social and family background and by the way the parties are portrayed in the media.

Political Participation, Voting Behaviour and 2015 Presidential Election

The build-up to the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria started on May 5, 2010 with the demise of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua. He was the President of the country between May 29, 2007 and May 5, 2010. His predecessor in office was President Olusegun Obasanjo, a Southerner, who piloted the political ship of the country for eight (8) years, May 29, 1999-May 29, 2007. Before he completed his second term in office, his party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had zoned its presidential ticket to the Northern part of the country. Consequently, with that arrangement, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, a Northerner won the slot. Majority of other political parties in the country (for example, Action Congress and National Party of Nigeria) also zoned their presidential tickets to the North. Therefore, the convention that prevailed then was that North would also ruled the country for eight years as the South did. This was however, not to be as death truncated the plan after about three years.

With the death of Yar'adua, his erstwhile vice, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a Southerner, was sworn-in as the country's President in line with Section 146(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Attempts to prevent him from contesting the 2011 Presidential election by some Northern interest groups proved abortive as he was given a clean state by the Judiciary in February 2015 to contest the election. Another tangle of the representation debacle between the North and South came with the controversy surrounding the number of terms which President Jonathan would serve. While some Northern PDP members led by the former Governor of Niger State, Alhaji Babangida Aliyu, alleged that he (Jonathan) signed a one term agreement with them in 2010, President Jonathan denied ever doing so. This alteration precipitated band-wagon effects which went beyond party affiliations. Some Northern Leaders /interest groups exploited the situation to clamour for a return of political power to the North. Principal among such Northern leaders were Professor Ango Abdullahi, Paul Unongo and Lawal Kaita while socio-cultural associations like Northern Elders Forum and Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) whose Chairman is Alaji Ibrahim Coomasie formed the vanguard for a clamour for the return of power to the North.

Professor Ango Abdullahi commenting on the endorsement of President Goodluck Jonathan by the PDP Governors says: "The Governors in the North could not save Jonathan from being defeated in February 14, 2015 election". Condemning the ruling party's (PDP's) endorsement of Jonathan,

he says "since the PDP has already closed its doors, the North has closed its doors to the PDP" (Alechenu, Attah and Alagbe, 2015:8). In a similar vein, the Deputy Chairman of Northern Elders Forum (NEF), Chief Paul Unongo says the associations will not Support Jonathan in 2015. Rather, it will support any candidate presented by the APC in 2015 election because the decision of President Jonathan to re-contest had prevented aspirants from contesting on the platform of the party (PDP). He was quoted thus:

Our position has not changed. We don't mind him contesting, but we are not going to work for him to become President of this country again because we don't believe that we have had any President that has heightened religious tendencies, hatred, ethnic militancy, high rate of impunity and a tremendous amount of insensitivity. The majority of Northern elders and the majority of Nigerians will decide for us and for the APC. We are not into party-politics but the APC has shown respect and deference to the North by allowing the North to produce its Presidential candidate. But the PDP shut the door saying there is no body else but Jonathan; that he is the best for Nigeria. That is a lie. If not from the North, let somebody else come to contest, we will not support him (*Sunday Punch*, November, 2014:6).

The issue of Boko-Haram insurgency in some parts of the Northern geo-political zone, especially North -East which culminated in the adoption of some female students of Government Secondary School, Chibok on April 14, 2014 also affected the support of President Jonathan for his second term ambition in 2015 in the North. But in the same geo-political zone was found Northern Elders' Council (NEC) led by Tanko Yakasi which argued that President Jonathan be allowed to spend second term in office. Similarly, some pressure groups in the South-South geo-political zone, for example, Niger-Delta Patriotic Front (NDPF) led by Alhaji Assari Dokubo gave unflinching support to their own, President Jonathan, for his second term ambition. But in the same region was found, Governor Rotimi Amaechi, the then Governor of Rivers State who gave support to General Buhari. He was quoted to have said, "for good or for bad there must be change in Nigeria in 2015" (*Sunday Tribune*, 2 November 2014:10).

Even other geo-political zones which appeared not to be directly involved in the power tussle pitched their tents with either of the two blocs. For instance, the South West which had had the advantage of occupying the

office of the President for two terms of eight years between 1999 and 2007 was divided over whom to support. Chief Gani Adams, national leader of Oodua People's Congress (OPC) a Yoruba socio-cultural association, was unequivocal in his support for the second term ambition of President Jonathan. The reason he advanced being President Jonathan's disposition to the implementation of White Paper report on the 2014 Confab. However, there is another school of thought which argues that OPC supported President Jonathan because of the pipe-line surveillance contract he gave to them.

Yoruba leaders under the umbrella of Egbe Afenifere (a socio-cultural Yoruba association) also endorsed the second term ambition of President Jonathan, on 26th February, 2015. They hinged their support on the desire of President Jonathan to implement the Confab report (*The Guardian*, 27 February 2014:2).

In the South-Western part of the country were also found those who were opposed to the second term ambition of President Jonathan. They gave open support to the candidature of a northerner for the office of President in 2015. Among these were the APC leaders who rallied supports for General Buhari. They were led by the national leader of the APC, Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu who was one of the architects of the coalition that produced the party. Apart from the APC Chieftains, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, gave open support to the emergence of a Northerner as the country's President in 2015. His preference initially was Alhaji Sule Lamido, the then Governor of Jigawa State but when it dawned on him that Lamido could not actualize his ambition in the PDP, he shifted support to General Buhari of APC. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo alleged that President Jonathan promised to spend a term in office after when the seat would return to the North. In addition to this, he accused Jonathan's regime of corruption. For instance, speaking during an encounter with book writers in Abeokuta, Ogun State as part of the activities marking the popular Ake festival, Obasanjo when asked of his view on Jonathan's administration, said: "His performance is below average. I will not accept responsibility for his performance. There is no body that gets such a position, without being helped" (Lasisi and Alagbe, 2014:9). However, it is note worthy that prior to that time he had written a lengthy letter on the state of affairs in the country to Jonathan in December 2013.

The South-Eastern geo-political zone was equally divided on the issue of the section that would produce the President in 2015. However, majority of them threw their weight behind President Jonathan in his second term ambition. Their decision was not unconnected with circumstances that led to the Nigerian Civil war of 1967- 1970. The Ohaneze N'digbo, the umbrella socio-cultural association of the Igbo declared open support for President Jonathan. Similarly, Movement for the Actualization of Biafran Republic (a

socio-cultural cum militant group in the Igbo speaking states of Nigeria) was vehement in its support for the second term ambition of President Jonathan. Even Igbos living in the nineteen Northern states and Abuja, endorsed President Jonathan for the 2015 Presidential election on 28th February, 2015. Apart from these socio-cultural associations, some Igbo leaders did not hide their supports for President Jonathan. One of them was Chief Eze Ife, a Former Governor of Anambra State (1991-1993). He was quoted to have said: "Nigeria will break if Jonathan is not allowed to contest". He followed this 'threat' with another one ten days later, when he said: "stopping Jonathan in 2015 will have grave consequences" (*The Punch*, January 15, 2015:2).

Apart from the supports which President Jonathan received in the Eastern States, there were few individuals who opposed his second term ambition. One of them was Chief Rochas Okorocha, the Governor of Imo State. He led a factional group of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) to the coalition that produced, the APC. At the conclusion of his Party's primaries, that produced General Buhari as its flag-bearer, which he also contested, he shifted support to the emergence of a Northerner as the country's President in 2015.

The foregoing explanations have revealed that Party-politics did not play a dominant role in the 2015 Presidential Election. This was because different sections of the country were polarized on issues of interests that affected them. It was therefore clear that Nigerian electorate went to the Presidential Poll with 'sore-minds'.

The 2015 Presidential Election was held on March 28, 2015. It was originally scheduled to hold on February 14, 2015 but had to be postponed by six weeks due to logistics reason. The postponement was announced on February 1, 2015 (two weeks to the poll) by 'Professor Attahiru Jega, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman, in a meeting with the representatives of registered Political Parties at the Commission's head office, Abuja. According to him, the postponement was occasioned by the fact that certain developments need to be addressed before 2015 polls. He therefore announced that the 2015 polls have been re-scheduled as follows: Presidential /National Assembly Elections- 28th March 2015; Gubernatorial /House of Assembly Elections- 11th April, 2015. Professor Jega further said that the decision on the shift in polls was arrived at after wide consultations with civil society groups, security agents and Political Parties. The postponement generated mixed reactions. While it was applauded by the then ruling party, PDP, a section of North and the then main opposition party in the country, APC, kicked against the shift in polls. The critics of the postponement said INEC only acted the script of

the PDP led Federal Government because it needed more time to prepare for the polls so as not to suffer defeat from the opposition Party-APC.

It is note worthy that it was the National Security Adviser to President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Colonel Dasuki (rtd.) who first canvassed for the postponement on January 21, 2015 on the grounds that many registered voters were yet to collect their 'Permanent Voters Card' (PVC) and the security challenges in the North Eastern Part of Nigeria. This was about the same time, Professor Attahiru Jega, INEC Chairman, admitted that about One Million PVCs were still being expected in the country. The developments made INEC to extend collection of PVCs on several occasions, first to February 8, 2015, later to 8th March, 2015 and eventually a week to the commencement of 2015 polls.

Colonel Dasuki (rtd.), the National Security Adviser to President Jonathan formalized his proposal on election postponement on February 4, 2015 by writing INEC through its Chairman, Professor Attahiru Jega. In the letter, he cited security situation in the country and the need to shift polls by six (6) weeks. He added that the security agencies could not guarantee the security of electoral stakeholders if elections were to be held on February 14, and 28, 2015 as previously scheduled by INEC.

The development made Council of State to meet on 5th February, 2015 to deliberate on elections and security situation in the country. INEC Chairman, Professor Jega and security chiefs in the country were invited to the meeting to appraise the extent of preparations made so far for the impending elections and the Security situations in some parts of the country.

Another major feature of the 2015 Presidential Poll was the non-violence (peace) accord signed by the major players in the election. The pact was signed on 14th January, 2015 by President Jonathan, the flag-bearer of PDP, General Buhari (rtd.), the Presidential candidate of APC and Presidential Candidates of other Political Parties. It was supervised by a former Secretary -General of the United Nations Organization. Kofi Anah and a one time, Secretary -General of the Commonwealth, Emeka Anyaoku. The undertaking covered before, during and after elections. Sensitization workshop on non-violence elections was also held. For instance, the United States Embassy in Nigeria organized Workshop on Non-violence, free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria for the electoral stakeholders on 15th January 2015. The development ran through State level as non-violence pacts were signed by major electoral players under the supervision of INEC State offices.

INEC also convened National Peace Commission on 7th March 2015. The Commission was composed of eminent Nigerians like General Abubakar

Abdulsalam (Chairman) Catholic Arch-Bishop of Abuja, Bishop John Onaiyekan, Alhaji Aliko Dangote former Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe. Professor Jega, INEC Chairman used the occasion to brief them on the use of 'Card Reader'. However, on 25th January, 2015, John Kerry, United States Secretary of State had earlier met President Jonathan, the flag bearer of PDP and Major General, Muhammed Buhari, the Presidential candidate of the APC on the need for peaceful Presidential Poll and urged violence-free polls. He (Kerry) informed them that promoters of violence will be denied American Visa and entry into United States.

A peace accord was also signed by various Political Parties in Abuja at the instance of the Inspector-General of Police on 11th February, 2015. It was signed by the representatives of PDP, APC and APGA. The thrust of the agreement was that no two parties will be allowed to campaign in the same area, the same day. What warranted the above efforts was the experience of the past when violence used to erupt after poll result announcement. However, despite these efforts, pockets of violence were recorded before and during elections. For instance, some APC youths (wielding brooms) stoned the convoy of President Jonathan in Bauchi State on 22nd January, 2015 while on their way to the Airport after electioneering campaign in the State capital. Six (6) Department of State Security (DSS) Officers sustained injuries. Similarly, on 29th January, 2015 broom-wielding youths of APC, attacked President Jonathan campaign train while on PDP rally in Jalingo. Furthermore, some miscreants mingled with PDP in Kaduna during President Jonathan's Presidential rally in the State Capital and disrupted the rally, on 31st January, 2015. The various attacks on President Jonathan's campaign trains in some parts of the North were however, not unconnected with the opposition of some Northern groups /leaders to his second term ambition.

On his part the Presidential Candidate of the APC, General Buhari also had a taste of hostility when his plane was denied landing permit in Markurdi, Benue State on 26th November, 2014 (*The Nation*, November 27, 2014:6). In fact, on 13th February 2015, Human Rights Commission reported that sixty-one (61) civil disturbances had taken place so far since the commencement of the current political dispensation with Lagos topping with twenty-two. Forty-eight (48) deaths were recorded as at that time with eleven in Lagos, seven (7) in Kaduna and six (6) in Rivers.

The foregoing represents the antecedents to the 2015 Presidential Poll. Apprehension was heightened in different parts of the country prior to the election due to the seriousness of the major opposition party (APC) to wrestle power from the PDP while the then ruling party, PDP, was desirous in retaining power.

The 2015 Presidential Contest

The 2015 Presidential Election was contested by fourteen political parties which fielded candidates for the poll. They were: Action Alliance (AA), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Alliance for Democracy (AD), African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Progressive Alliance (APA), All Progressive Congress (APC), Citizens Popular Party (CPP), HOPE, KOWA, National Conscience Party (NCP), People's Democratic Party (PDP), Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN), United Democratic Party (UDP) and United Peoples Party (UPP). However, the main contenders in the election were the candidates of the PDP, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and that of APC, General Muhammad Buhari (rtd.). Therefore, our analysis will be premised on the electoral exploits of the duo.

The Presidential Election of 2015 was managed by about seven hundred thousand 700,000 Electoral Officers made up of the regular staff of INEC and adhoc staff who were recruited purposely for the 2015 Polls. About 360,000 security operatives and some United States sniffer dogs provided the needed security during the Poll. The election was also supervised by both domestic (local) and international observers like European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) led by Santiago Fisas, Economic Community of West African States led by ECOWAS Commission President, Kadre Quedraogo and African Union team.

The introduction of 'Card Readers' was a major significance of the 2015 Presidential Election and other elections held during the electoral dispensation. The INEC justified its adoption on the grounds that it would check multiple voting and impersonation. The Commission borrowed the idea from Kenya where it was 'perfectly' used to conduct the country's 2013 general elections. Its introduction generated mixed reactions. Those who opposed its introduction had the feeling that even in Kenya where it was first used in Africa, it faced some teething problems like low/dead batteries, arbitrary rejection of genuine finger prints and outright technical failure. INEC however, allayed their fear with the procurement of 20,000 back-up card readers and 35,000 back-up batteries (*Saturday Punch*, February 28, 2015:12). The other group, mainly made up of the members of opposition parties in the country supported the introduction of Card Readers on the ground that it would check-mate rigging in the country's electoral process.

The fear of those who were opposed to its introduction appeared justified during the Presidential election of March 28, 2015 when it was widely reported that the Card Readers were slow, having low batteries and not working in some Polling Stations. The development made INEC to issue directive that where the Card Reader was confirmed not to be working well Electoral Officers should resort to manual voter register. The Commission also extended voting periods till the following day in Polling Stations that

had problem with Card Readers. This was not neat enough. At any rate, the introduction of Card Reader check-mated some known electoral malpractices like Multiple Voting and Impersonation.

Analysis of the Election Results

At a meeting with the representatives of registered Political Parties on 13th January, 2015, INEC gave the figure of total registered voters in the country as 68,833,476. It however, announced that it cancelled the registration of 4 million (prospective) Voters over Multiple Registration. At the end of the Presidential Poll, the total number of votes garnered by the fourteen (14) Presidential Candidates was 28,582,183 which represented 41.52% of the total number of registered voters in the country. Of the total votes cast, General Buhari (rtd.) the candidate of APC, polled a total of 15,424,921 which represented 53.97%. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the candidate of PDP who trailed behind him, garnered a total of 12,853,162 which represented 44.97% of the total votes cast (*The Punch*, April, 1, 2015:3).

The next round of analysis is in respect of the North-South dichotomy. General Buhari (rtd) who was the Presidential Candidate of the APC was (and still is) a Northerner. Out of the total votes he garnered (15,424,921) 12,228,421 which represented 79.28 came from the North. As regards President Jonathan, a Southerner, 9,001,047 of the total votes he Polled (12,853,162) which represented 70.03% came from the South. These analyses reveal that the bulk of the total votes garnered by each of the Presidential Candidates came from his geographical zone. This raises the question of the representativeness of their votes. In fact, the winner of the election (Buhari) only polled 3,196,500 votes from all the Southern States plus Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) which translated to 20.72%. Similarly, President Jonathan polled total votes of 3,852,136 in the North and the FCT which represented 29.97 per cent of the total votes he garnered nation-wide. The voting patterns of Nigerian electorates during the 2015 Presidential Poll largely revealed the influence of issues and sociological factors with party issue playing little or no role. If party issue was to play a dominant role then one would have seen a situation where by the PDP candidate, President Jonathan, winning in all the PDP controlled States especially in the North. Rather, he lost the election to the flag-bearer of APC, a Northerner even in States where PDP had sitting Governors- Niger, Jigawa, Kebbi, Gombe, Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna and Adamawa. Similarly, General Buhari (rtd.) lost the election to President Jonathan in South-South geo-political zone States where APC had sitting Governors - Edo, Imo and Rivers. Perhaps, the only zone where electorate voted on the basis of party affiliation was South West. Most of the states in the geo-political zone had APC sitting Governors and they delivered the states to General Buhari (rtd.) during the election -Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo. In

fact, the bulk of the votes he garnered from South/ FCT came from South-West. Of the total votes garnered from the South/ FCT (3,196,500) 2,433,193 which represented 71.76% came from the South-West.

Conclusion

This study has examined the synergy between political participation and voting behaviour. Its major findings are that:

- (i) Synergy exists between political participation and electoral behaviour;
- (ii) people participate in political activities in various ways and for different reasons;
- (iii) the events that preceded the 2015 Presidential Election prepared the ground for the voting patterns of Nigerian electorate during the 2015 presidential election; and
- (iv) the voting behaviour of Nigerian electorate during the 2015 presidential election was largely determined by issues revolving around the primordial cleavages of the Nigerian State which often threaten the integration of the country, rather than factors like party affiliation and social group.

Based on the findings of the research, the study recommends that;

- (a) In order to avoid the threat of disintegrative tendencies in Nigeria's future elections, Nigerian electorate need a prolonged sensitization and re-orientation period prior to the conduct of any general election. The appropriate time recommended is immediately a general election has been concluded thus providing for a time frame of four years since general elections are held every four -four years in the country. A more enduring solution is the strengthening of the teaching of 'Civic Education' at both primary and secondary school levels and introduction of a compulsory related course at tertiary institution level. This will be rewarding to the future generations in the country.
- (b) There should be the review of the country's constitution to accommodate rotations of key political offices in the country the way reflection of Federal Character Principle is enshrined as Section 14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. If done, this will douse the tension between the various sections of the country as witnessed during the period that preceded the 2015 Presidential Election. It will also promote politicking based on party-politics.

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