



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: F  
POLITICAL SCIENCE

Volume 17 Issue 4 Version 1.0 Year 2017

Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)

Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

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**GJHSS-F Classification:** FOR Code: 360199p



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# Ethnicity, Religion and Voter's Behaviour: The Experience of the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The need for political stability and virile democratic culture in Nigeria is a great concern to all Nigerians and the international community. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1999, several elections have been conducted in the country, but the 2015 election is very significant to this study.

The 2015 presidential election in Nigeria had come and gone but the indelible footprint it left in our memories will linger for some time to come. Apart from the fact that the election resulted in the defeat of the incumbent president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and the ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), it also exposed the unflinching role of ethnicity and religion in the voting behaviour of different segments of the our society (Mudasiru, 2015).

One may argue that ethnicity and religion have always been a factor in Nigeria's politics; the 2015 presidential election was different in some forms. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had dominated the political scene of Nigeria since 1999 and had never lost certain states to the opposition but instead gained some. But in the 2015 presidential election, the PDP lost some of its strongholds such as Plateau, Niger, Benue, Kwara and Adamawa States to mention but a few to the main opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

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The outcome of the election also saw the first successful merger of opposition parties in Nigeria and the first time an incumbent president has lost election in Nigeria (Wikipedia, 21/9/2017).

Therefore, it is pertinent to understand what caused the infiltration in the rank and file of the ruling party in Nigeria. What is the implication of this for the party and democracy in Nigeria? What does this portend for the future of elections in Nigeria? Should this be encouraged or discouraged? These and many other questions are what this paper intends to interrogate.

### a) Conceptual Clarification

The key concepts in this paper are ethnicity, religion and voters behaviour. In order to refresh the thoughts of readers, we shall explain these concepts.

#### b) Ethnicity

Olkudiba Nnoli is perhaps the best known authority on ethnicity in Africa. He opined that 'ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interaction among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. The relevant communal factors may be language, culture or both (Nnoli, 1980:5).' Mudasiru (2015) has also argued that ethnicity constitutes the foundations of the African society, for it shapes communities, cultures, economic and the political structure of the peoples. More importantly, it shapes the perceptions of the African, defines his universe and provides him with meaning, understanding and the power to interpret the world around him. It is therefore an integral part of every African, despite the deepening influences of westernization and increasing cultural adulteration, since colonial times. Mudasiru highlights the importance of ethnicity to African in the following ways :-

Firstly, it provides security both to the group as a whole, as well as to the individuals constituting the group. The sense of belonging to an ethnic group means the members are safe together as one people, and ready to defend themselves against any external attacks on their existence and sovereignty. This notion of security also provides the groups with a sense of direction in their lives.

Secondly, ethnicity provides each group with a common ancestry and history, which is an important aspect of the African peoples.

Thirdly, ethnicity also identifies each group by providing its members with a common language.

Finally, ethnicity serves as an organizing force, which assists in bringing the people together to fight or seek a communalism, family, and togetherness, which also deepens the sense of belonging (Mudasiru, 2015).

It is important to stress that ethnicity affects the voting pattern of a group. Ethnicity is an important factor of mobilization during election. The building of strong affiliation to a group helps in this direction. Therefore, it is important to understand the approaches to voting pattern of people and situate the role ethnicity could play in this direction.

### c) Religion

A major interest in Nigerian polity is the relationship between religion and politics, in other words, between religion and voting pattern. The Nigerian society is religiously pluralized and this significantly influences political behaviour and decisions of the nation (Oguntala-Lagunda, 2008).

The task of giving a definition to religion has been Herculean. However, for operational reasons, it is imperative that we attempt a definition here. A renowned sociologist, Emile Durkheim as cited in (Aderibigbe and Aiyeboiyin, 1997:7) defined religion as 'a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into moral community called a church all those who adhere to them.' The above definition is very restrictive as it sees religion in terms of Christianity. What about the African traditional religion, Islam and others. Any acceptable definition of religion should accommodate all.

Igwe (2005:379) defines religion as 'belief in the supernatural and practices sustaining that belief, the ultimate superstition and thus, a level of consciousness mostly centering on God and Satan, gods, spirit or deities.'

Like ethnicity, religion constitutes the foundation of the African society. It shapes the perception of its followers, defines their universe and provides them with meaning, understanding and the power to interpret the world around them and the spiritual world. It provides its members security and a sense of belonging and encourages them to defend themselves against external attack on their physical and spiritual existence.

In Nigeria, there are three dominant religions, these are: African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Christianity. All these religious ideology allow interaction between religion and politics. Therefore religious beliefs also influence voters' behaviour.

These three predominant religions operate across the country, but while Islam is predominant in the northern part of the country, Christianity holds sway in

the southern part and a few numbers of people across the country practice the African Traditional Religion.

### d) Voting Behaviour

Mudasiru (2015) observed that one most striking issue about the voting behaviour literature is that it groups neatly according to three paradigms: the sociological approach, party identification models and rational choice theory. Although there have been some attempts to integrate party identification within a rational choice framework. Most researches have tried to explain voting behaviour using only one of the approaches and have decidedly ignored the others. We suggest that all of the approaches have merit and limitations, and that they should be seen as complementary rather than opposing. We argue that each approach is applicable under different conditions of political context. The best way to understand general patterns of voting is to integrate these approaches, and apply them in comparative analysis, paying careful attention to varying political contexts.

The sociological approach to voting behaviour emphasizes the impact of social structure suggesting that social groups' memberships influence voting choices (Lazarusfeld et al; 1944; Alford, 1967; Rose and Urwin 1969; 1970 Lijphart 1979, 1980). Voters are considered to be instrumental, for instance, they vote for parties or individuals that best reflect the interests of their groups.

Another influential work fitting under the sociological paradigm is that of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), who argue that not only do group identities influence voting behaviour, but that cleavage structures determine the number of political parties in a given polity. In other words, political parties evolve in response to the interests of social cleavages. The sociological approach, then, holds that group identities affect attitudes and interest. These attitudes in turn affect how people vote.

Unlike the sociological model, the party identification model assumes voters to be expensive rather than instrumental, and attitude and issue preferences are considered to be endogenous to vote. The approach holds that voters have long-standing psychological ties to specific political parties, and seldom waver from voting for them. These party attachments are largely due to early socialization reflection, mostly family influences. Simply put, people are influenced by partisanship of their parents. The party identification model can be seen as similar to the sociological approach, people "come to see themselves as members of social group for instance, Democrats and Republicans in much the same way that certain people incorporate religion, regional, or ethnic groups into their self-conceptions" (Gerber and Green, 1998: 794). On the other hand, unlike the sociological model, party identification model further holds that causations

runs in both direction between attitudes and vote. Although instrumental like the sociological model, the rational choice approach is much more individualistic, suggesting that voting decisions are based on cost-benefit analyses where voters match their individual issue preferences with party platforms.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In our abstract, we noted that we are adopting the Rational Choice Theory (RCT) also known as Choice Theory or Rational Action Theory as our conceptual framework. This theory to us, is the most potent paradigm for the direction of this research.

The sociologist, George Homas in 1961 laid the basic framework for exchange theory, which he beached in assumptions drawn from behavioral psychology. This could be attributed to the foundation of the RCT. However, between 1960 and 1970, other theorists like Blau, Coleman, and Cook extended and enlarged his thoughts and helped to develop a more formal model of rational choice. Over the years, rational choice theorists have become increasingly mathematical, reviewing their thought to Marxian ideas. Becker (1976) opines that "the RTC was early popularized by a 1992 Nobel Memorial Prize Laureate in Economics Science, Gary Becker, who was one of the first to apply rational actor models more widely".

RCT is a theory for understanding social and economic as well as individual behaviour. It is the main paradigm professed by the microeconomics school of thought and is significantly adopted by analyst in the field of political science and other disciplines like sociology, anthropology and philosophy.

Wikipedia (retrieved 8/24/17) states:

The concept of rationality used in rational choice theory is different from the colloquial and most philosophical use of the word. Colloquially, "rational" behaviour typically means "sensible", "predictable", or "in a thoughtful, clear-headed manner." Rational choice theory uses a narrower definition of rationality. At its most basic level, behavior is rational if it is goal-oriented, reflective (evaluative), and consistent (across time and different choice situations).

Wkipidia as (retrieved 9/24/17) goes further to argue that 'rationality is widely used as an assumption of the behavior of individuals in microeconomic models and analyses and appears in almost all economics textbook treatments of human decision-making. It is also used in political science, sociology and philosophy. Understanding voters' behavior according to the theory of Rational Choice means learning about the motivating factors why the individuals choose to vote based on ethnic sentimentalism and religious biases.'

The RTC champions the view that because individuals and people have preferences among variable choice alternatives that allow them to adopt

which option is best preferable to them, they therefore behave as they do. That is, people make rational choices based on their goals, and those choices direct their behavior. The rational agents is assumed to take account of available information, probabilities of events, and potential costs and benefits in determining preferences, and to act consistently in choosing the self-determined best choice of action.

Economics factor is a major determinant that shape human behavior. This underscores why people are often motivated by materialism which is exemplified in unbridled desire for money and profit making and it defines why they calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do. This thinking model is called rational choice theory.

The rational actor is one who chooses to vote base on his inclination to religion and or ethnic background of the candidates. This theory asserts that each individual begins life with a clean slate and makes his or her own choices as to how to behave. The predestined actor is an individual who is unable to control his or her urges and may actually be encouraged by his or her environment to vote based on both religious and ethnic inclinations. Such people may be obsessed by internal or external influences (or both) to react in ways that is different from their original values.

RCT best explains the age long voting behavioural patterns in Nigeria. Just like during the independence era, ethno-religious affiliations continue to reflect in voting behaviour of Nigerians because most of the electorate see the acquisition of state power not only as a means to an end, but an end itself. The dominance of power in their ethnic nationality and even religious cycle is seen as a route to wealth, therefore must be achieved. This played out prominently in the 2015 Presidential election as reflected in the election results. While President Buhari, a Moslem from the North won in almost all the Northern States, the then incumbent President his closest rival won majorly in South – South and South – East States which are his ethnic stock and dominated by Christians. The voting pattern in the South West and North Central parts of the country was drummed around ethnic sentiments and religious cleavages.

It is significant to note therefore that the patterns of selecting political actors in the political system in Nigeria in form of political recruitment, the nature of political socialization, as well as the free flow of communication that exist between political office holders and other state actors in the political system are currently determined by interest, motivated by materialism. Politics which albinio is expected to be service driven is determined by economic interest which eventually shapes voting behavior as reflected in 2015 Presidential elections in Nigeria.

a) *An Overview of Voting Pattern in Nigeria, Since Independence*

Nigeria as a nation is an aggregation of several nationalities. In real terms, it is a pluralistic and multi-faceted society both in terms of region, culture and composition. It has about 450 different ethnic groupings. The 2006 officially certified census by the National Population Commission (NPC) put the population of Nigeria as 140 million with a growth rate of 6.3% per annum (Mudasiru, 2011).

Despite the fact that Nigeria is composed of over 450 ethnic groupings, there are three dominant ethnic groups, these are the Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba with the Hausa Fulani dominating the Northern part of the country; the Ibo in the Eastern part and the Yoruba in the Western part of the country. The 1996 state creation and reorganization of the state structure in Nigeria saw these ethnic groupings being reorganized into six geo-political zones with the Hausa-Fulani comprising majorly the North-East, North-West and North-Central; the Ibo in the South-East; the Yoruba in the South-West; while the Niger Delta people comprise the South-South (Musasiru, 2015).

Members of the different ethnic groups have continued to vie for political offices in order to enrich both individual and group interest. Political party formation is not left out in this ethnic chauvinism and configuration, hence party campaign also follow ethnic sentiments. This was the trend in the first and second republics and has continued till date. From the First Republic down to the Fourth, ethnicity, religion and party popularity have been the main drivers of voting pattern in Nigeria. However, other minor factors which slightly determine voters' behaviour are individual competence and reputation.

In the First Republic, three political parties dominated the political scene, namely the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG). These parties reflected the three dominant ethnic groups in the Country – the Ibo, the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba respectively. In the same manner, in 1959 and 1964 federal elections the voting pattern followed the ethnic line. The Hausa/Fulani voted for the NPC overwhelmingly, while a comfortable majority of the people of the Eastern region voted for the NCNC and majority of the people in the Western region voted for the AG. The voting pattern clearly followed ethnic lines which did not encourage national integration and subsequently led to the collapse of the first republic (Ikelegbe, 1995:200 – 2003).

Voting pattern in the Second republic (1979–1983) was not different from the first republic. In the 1979 general elections, the Hausa/Fulani voted massively for the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which had its base in the North; while the Ibo ethnic group voted massively for the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP)

with its base in the East; and the Yorubas voted massively for the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) which was ubiquitous in Yoruba land.

Since the advent of the fourth republic in 1999, there have been four presidential elections with the 2015 election as the fifth. Though the multi-party system was adopted, three major political parties contested to election. These were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigerian Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). Apart from the AD that had its base in the South - West, the PDP and the APP were actually national parties. In the 1999 presidential election, the APP and the AD formed alliance but at the end, the candidate of the PDP, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo won the election. Interestingly the presidential candidates of the parties that contested the election were from the South West. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the flag bearer of the PDP, while Chief Olu Falae was the flag bearer of the APP/AD alliance. The result of the election revealed that all segments of the country voted in accordance with the interest of their ethnic group. It was the voting pattern or behaviour of the South - West that could be classified as absolutely ethnic. This is because they voted massively for the AD. One fundamental reason that influenced their voting behaviour was the feeling that the other ethnic groups wanted to impose Chief Obasanjo on them, having annulled the June, 12 election widely believed to have been won by their illustrious son, late Chief M.K.O. Abiola.

b) *Ethnicity, Religion and Voters' Behaviour in the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria*

The Nigerian general election of 2015 was the 5<sup>th</sup> quadrennial election to be held since the end of military rule in 1999. Voters elected the president and members to the House of Representatives and the Senate. The incumbent president, Good luck Jonathan sought his second and final term (Wikipedia, retrieved 9/27/2017).

The elections were first scheduled to hold on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2015, however, the Electoral Commission, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) postponed it by six weeks to 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 mainly due to the poor distribution of permanent voters cards and to curb ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in North-Eastern states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 the presidential election held, fourteen candidates and political parties contested the election. However, the three frontline parties were the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which was also the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) the main opposition, and African People's Alliance (APA). At the end of the election, the candidate of the APC, Muhammadu Buhari was declared the winner of the election with 15,424,921 votes which represented 53.95% of the votes cast, while President Goodluck

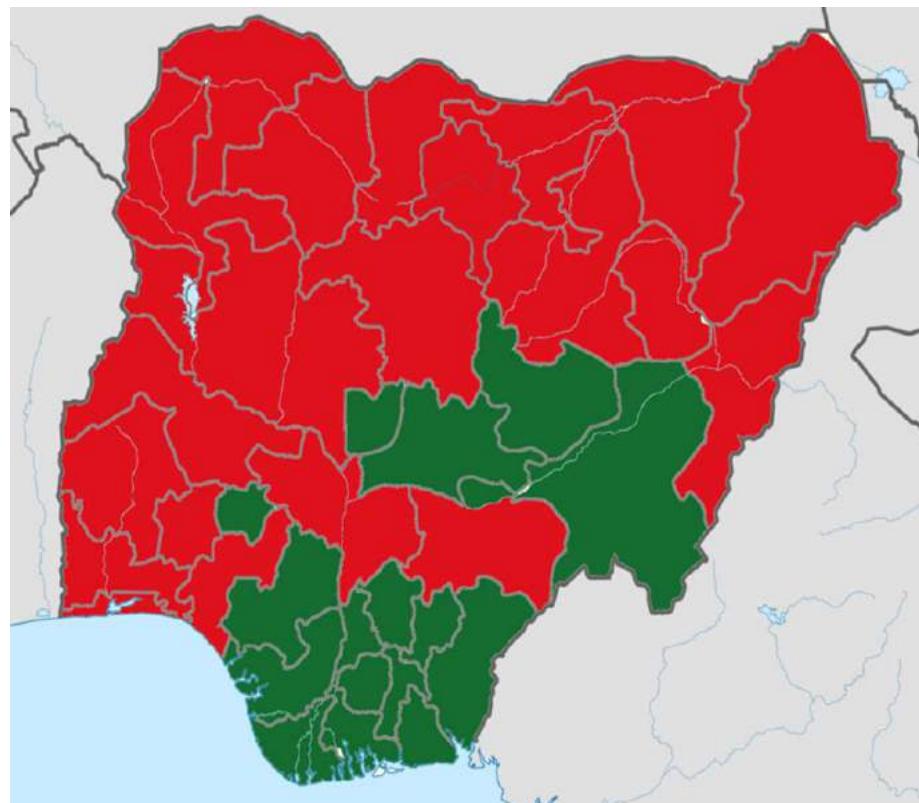
Ebele Jonathan, the candidate of PDP and the incumbent president had 12,853,162 votes, representing 44.96% of the votes cast while Adebayo Ayeni, the candidate of APA had only 53,537 votes (Wikipedia, as retrieved 29/9/2017).

A synopsis of the election result as copied from the website of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is as presented on the table below:

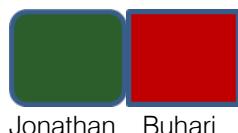
*Table 1:* Showing the Summary Voters Turn – Out in the Presidential Election

1	Total No of Registered Voters	67,442,995
2	Total No of Accredited Voters	33,746,490
3	Total No of Valid Votes	28,587,564
4	Total No of Rejected Votes	844,519
	Total Votes Cast	29,432,083

Source: INEC Website



*Figure retrieved from Google image 12/9/17*



*Fig. 1:* Map of Nigeria Showing the States Won by the Two Contending Presidential Candidates in the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

Figure I above shows that the APC candidate, President Mohammadu Buhari won in twenty States while the PDP candidate, then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan won in Sixteen States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. An analysis of the map

Muhammsdu Buhari of APC won in 20 States and Abuja, while Good Luck Jonathan of PDP won in sixteen States. The States won by each of the two major candidates and parties are as reflected in the map of Nigeria, highlighted as figure 1 below:

shows that most of the States won by the APC are in North – West, North – East, major parts of North-Central (Middle Belt) and South - West Regions, while the PDP won in all the South – South and South - East States. All but one South – West States fell to the APC

because the Region had a Vice Presidential Candidate which is a bargaining tool for their future.

Table 2 highlights the detailed result of the 28th March, 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria which is attached as an annexure 1. While table 3 presents the approximate percentage of voter's turns – out in the 36 States and the FCT, Abuja which is attached as annexure II. From the annexures 1 and II, it was obvious that the contest was between the PDP and the APC. The other parties made no significant impact in the election. The election marks the first time an incumbent president lost re-election in Nigeria (Wikipedia, as retrieved 29/9/2017). Furthermore, the result showed that many factors influenced voters' behaviour. Also, annexure 2 shows the approximate percentage of Voters turn – out. From that table, it is flawless to state that we had more Voters turn out from the South – South, the Region from where the then President Goodluck Jonathan hails from. Rivers State recorded up to 71% of voters, the highest in the Federation, followed by Delta 66% and Akwaibom, Bayelsa and 64% respectively. Jigawa equals Akwaibom and Bayelsa States. Further to the fore going is the issue of religion; the PDP's Goodluck Jonathan won in all the core Christian States, even in North - East Taraba as well as North – Central Plateau and Nassarawa, while there were stiff competition in Lagos, Benue, Kogi and all the other South West States. This revealed the commitment of the South – South as well as South - East people to supporting one of their own, just was the massive support for MuhammaduBuhari in North – West and North - East. The above confirms the assertion that the main reasons that shapedvoters' behaviours in that election were ethnicity and religion which is better analyzed by the rational choice theory.

Suffice it to say that since the advent of democracy in 1999, the PDP dominated the political landscape of the nation and has continued to have the trapping of a national party. The PDP has formidable members from the 36 states of the federation and the 776 Local Governments Areas in Nigeria. After the 1999 general election, no party was able to successfully challenge the hegemony of PDP. That is to say that the party had tentacles all over the country. However, as a result of the desire for change in Nigeria, in 2013, the All Progressives Congress (APC) was formed through an alliance of four opposition parties, namely; the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). This new party was accepted by many Nigerians and has a national outlook. With the registration of the party, a strong and formidable opposition emerged in Nigeria's political landscape. Later, a factional group from the PDP known as the 'New Peoples Democratic Party (New PDP)' joined the

party. This further consolidated the strength of the party, as this group had prominent and influential Governors, Members of the National Assembly and top politician with large followership. The party indeed became a good competitor to the PDP. The springiness of the party, with national appeal, led to its victory in the election in the 2015 general elections. The result of the election showed that what actually influenced voters behaviour was ethnicity and religion, especially at the Presidential level. At this junction, let us review independently how both ethnicity and religion influenced Voters behaviour in the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria.

### c) *Ethnicity and Voters behavior in the 2015 Presidential Electionin Nigeria*

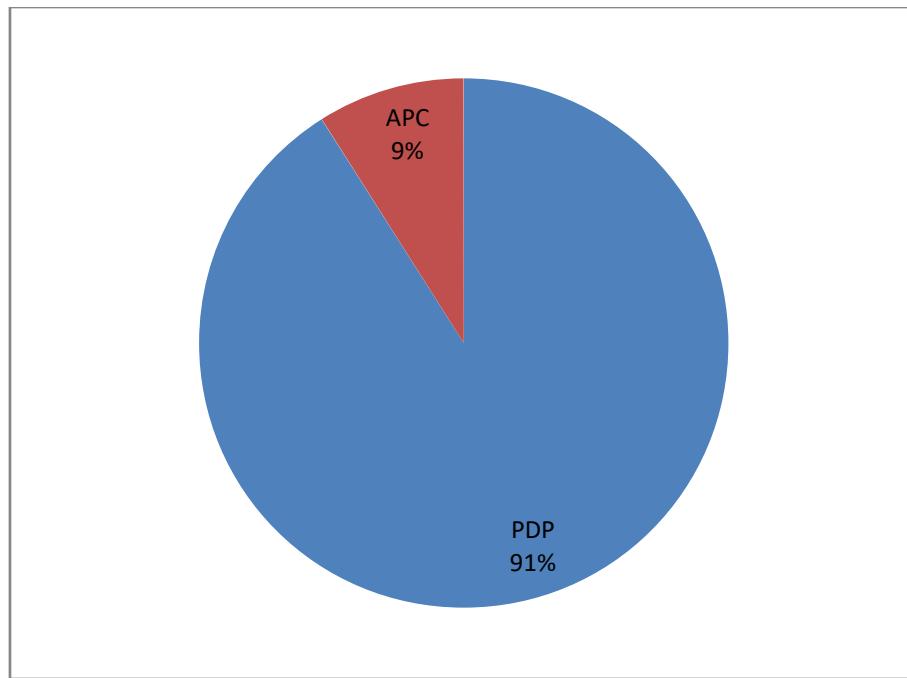
Ethnic sentimentalism dominates socio-economic activities in Nigeria. This tendency dates back to the colonial era. For power sharing, this phenomenon has been a defining factor of political activism and economic adventurism as well as social emancipation of the people. Political powers are acquired through massive supports from the ethnic or religious groups of the candidates.

Ethnicity played a critical role in determining the victor in the 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria. The result of the presidential election reveals that the PDP candidate President Goodluck Jonathan who hails from Bayelsa State in the southern part of Nigeria, and indeed, the South-South Geo-political zone won in all the South-South and South-East States. The results of the election in each of the zones are as presented in the tables below:

*Table 3:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in South - South Region

Sn	Name of State	Apc - Buhari	Pdp-Jonathan
1	Akwa Ibom	58,411	953,304
2	Bayelsa	5,194	361,209
3	Cross Rivers	28,368	414,863
4	Delta	48,910	1,211,408
5	Edo	208,469	286,869
6	Rivers	69,238	1,487,075
	<b>Total</b>	<b>423,784</b>	<b>4,714,728</b>

It is important to note that the total valid vote cast in the Region for the two frontline candidates was 5,138,512, out of 28,587,564 for the Federation. This represents about 18 % of the total no of valid votes. PDP's Goodluck Jonathan from the Region scored 4,714,728 representing 91% while APC's Muhammadu Buhari scored 423,784, representing 9 % of the votes. From this result, it is obvious that Jonathan won overwhelmingly in his Region because of the ethnic inclination of the voters. This table is further presented in the pie chart below:



*Fig. 2:* Pie Chart Showing % of Votes in the 2015 Presidential Election in South – South Region for the Two Frontline Candidates

*Pie – Chart constructed by the authors.*

Similarly, there was no sharp departure in the South – East from the South – South Region. The South – East people also overwhelmingly voted for the PDP's Goodluck Jonathan as is reflected in the table below:

*Table 5:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in South - East Region

Sn	Name of State	Apc – Buhari	Pdp – Jonathan
1	Abia	13,394	368,303
2	Anambra	17,926	660,762
3	Ebonyi	19,518	326,653
4	Enugu	14,157	553,003
5	Imo	133,253	559,185
	<b>Total</b>	<b>198,248</b>	<b>2,467,906</b>

From the table above, the APC scored 198,248 representing 7%, while the PDP scored 2,467,906 representing 93% of the total votes cast for the two candidates. The total valid vote scored by the two front line candidates at the election was 2, 666,154 representing about 93%. The victory of the PDP here was earned because they believe that Jonathan is also from South – East. His name (Ebele Azikiwe) has history with the Region. More so, South – South States were under the Eastern Region before the creation of twelve states in Nigeria by the administration of General Yakubu Gowon. One could conclude that the voting behavior in this Region was the same with the South – South State. This underscores the power of ethnicity in the shaping of the voters behaviour in the Presidential election.

The situation was different in the South - West, there was indeed a paradigm shift from the achieved results in the South – South and South – East Regions. APC captured all the States in that Region with the exception of Ekiti State where the Governor is a Christian and a vocal member of the PDP. The table below explains further:

*Table 6:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in South - West Region

Sn	Name of State	Apc - Buhari	Pdp – Jonathan
1	Ekiti	120,331	176,466
2	Lagos	792,460	632,327
3	Ogun	308,290	207,950
4	Ondo	299,889	251,368
5	Osun	383,603	249,929
6	Oyo	528,620	303,376
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,433,193</b>	<b>1,821,416</b>

Voting in this region was competitive. The total vote for the two main Candidates was 4,254,609, representing about 15% of the total valid votes. The APC won in the Region with 2,433,193 which represents 57% against the PDP's 1,821,416, representing 43 % of the valid votes. It is important to state that there was no marginal victory. There was a twin play of ethnicity and religion in the voters' behaviour here. While the PDP had no serious candidate in the Presidential ticket from this Region, the APC had its Presidential candidate from this Region. This underscores the slight victory of the party in this Region as reflected in our table above.

The result in the North Central was also very competitive and more reflective of the voters' wish. While there were elements of ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry was more noticeable. The table below explains better:

*Table 7:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in North – Central Region

Sn	Name of State	Apc - Buhari	Pdp – Jonathan
1	Benue	373,961	303,737
2	Fct	146,399	154,195
3	Kogi	264,851	149,987
4	Kwara	302,146	132,602
5	Nasarawa	236,838	273,460
6	Niger	657,678	149,222
7	Plateau	429,140	549,615
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,411,013</b>	<b>1,712,818</b>

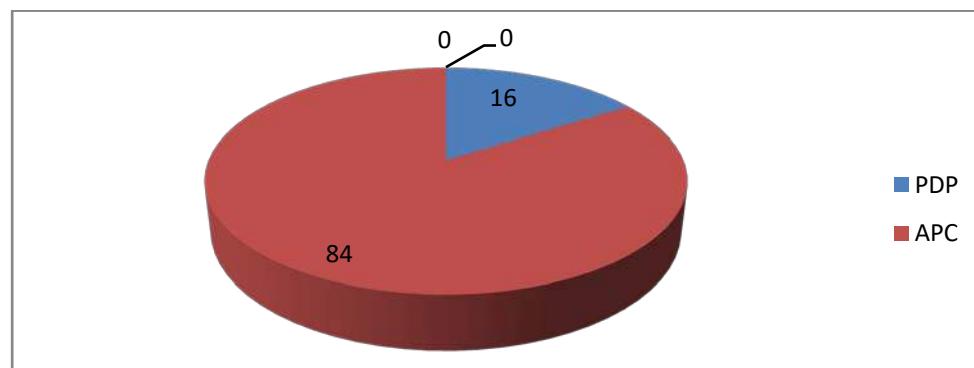
The total vote for the key candidates, Buhari and Jonathan was 4,123,831, which is 14.4% of the total valid votes cast. APC's Buhari scored 2,411,013, about 58%, while the PDP's Jonathan scored 1,712,818, about 42% of the total vote cast. Jonathan lost here because he is a Southerner and the Northerners wanted a return of power to the North. There was a similarity in voters' behaviour in this Region like the South – West.

Voters behaviour in the North – East Region was unique. The table below illustrates further.

*Table 8:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in North - East Region

Sn	Name of State	Apc - Buhari	Pdp – Jonathan
1	Adamawa	374,701	251,664
2	Bauchi	931,598	86,085
3	Borno	473,543	25,640
4	Gombe	361,243	96,664
5	Taraba	261,326	310,800
6	Yobe	446,265	25,526
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,848,676</b>	<b>796,379</b>

The two front line candidates and parties scored 3,645,055 votes. The result from the Region indicates that the APC won in five states, pooling 2,848,676 votes



*Fig. 3:* Pie Chart Showing % of Votes in the 2015 Presidential Election in South – South Region for the Two Frontline Candidates

*Pie – chart constructed by the authors*

which represent 78% of the total valid votes, while the PDP won one State from this Region – Taraba, pooling 796,379, about 22%. There was show of ethnic bias in the choice and acceptance of the candidates.

The situation in the North - West was similar to what played –out in the South – South, because the APC candidate is from that Region. Also important to note is the fact that the PDP Vice Presidential candidate is also from this Region. The table below illustrates further.

*Table 9:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in North - West Region

Sn	State	Apc - Buhari	Pdp – Jonathan
1	Jigawa	885,988	142,904
2	Kaduna	1,127,760	484,085
3	Kano	1,903,999	215,779
4	Katsina	1,345,441	98,937
5	Kebbi	567,883	100,972
6	Sokoto	691,926	152,199
7	Zamfara	612,202	144,833
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,135,199</b>	<b>1,339,709</b>

The total valid vote cast in this Region was 8,474,908 which represent about 30% of the final result. The APC scored 7,135,199, about 84%, while the PDP scored 1,339,709, which is 16% of the valid votes. Just like the South – South, the victory for the APC candidate, Buhari was prodigious. There was a high sentimental attachment to the APC candidate who hails from the Region. In this Region, none of the States was won by the PDP, even Kaduna where NamadiSambo, the PDPs' Vice Presidential candidate hails from. The result in Kaduna State explains the skewed interest of the people to clinch the No 1 and not No 2 position in Nigeria and their rejection of Sambo in preference for Buhari. The reason for this is not far- fetched, the people wanted power back and believed that the most potent person to achieve this was a candidate from their ethnic stock. The result from this table is further reflected in the pie – chart below:

It is significant to note that the APC won in four Regions, while the PDP's victory was in two Regions. The reason for the victory of the APC is not far from ethnicity, which is visibly observed in the voters' behaviour in all the Regions. Like pre – independence, the First, Second and Third Republics of Nigeria, ethnicity has remained a dominant feature of our socio-economic evolution and has been a prominent feature in our democratic journey.

*d) Religion and Voters behavior in the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria*

So many scholars have argued that religion is a key feature in the democratization process in Nigeria; this has become a key feature in shaping voters behaviour. There is an incontrovertible connection between religion and politics because religion has long been adapted as part of the daily life of Nigerians, and affects varied aspects of people's life including socio - economic affairs. While religion has remained a strong influencing factor on the country's political process, it seemingly is not the same in most developed

democracies like the United State and most Western States. Religion has been a defining factor in the choice of candidates to occupy key political offices in Nigeria, and this has underpinned the voting pattern and behaviour of the electorates.

It should be recalled that Goodluck Jonathan is a Christian, while MohammaduBuhari is a Moslem, so Christianity and Islamism influenced the electioneering process and the voters' behaviour in itself. This is as reflected in the election results from each of the geopolitical zones. Goodluck Jonathan pooled 91% and 93% respectively in the core Christian dominated South – East and South – South, while President Buhari won convincingly in both the North - West and North –East, pooling a majoritarian vote of 84% and 78% respectively which critically is a Moslem domain. There was stiff competition in South – West and North – Central over the two contending parties because of sturdy influence of religion. The percentage votes for each of these two candidates based on religious bias is as presented below:

*Table 10:* Summary Analysis of the Result of the 2015 Presidential Election for the Two Key Contestants in the Six Regions

Party	Region	Valid Vote Cast	Percentage	Winner
APC	South – South	423,784	9%	
PDP	South – South	4,714,728	91%	PDP
APC	South – East	198,248	7%	
PDP	South – East	2,467,906	93%	PDP
APC	South – West	2,433,193	57%	APC
PDP	South – West	1,821,416	43%	
APC	North – West	7,135,199	84%	APC
PDP	North – West	1,339,709	16%	
APC	North – East	2,848,676	78%	APC
PDP	North – East	796,379	22%	
APC	North – Cent.	2,411,013	58%	APC
PDP	North – Cent.	1,712,818	42%	

A review of the table above shows voters' apathy and tenacious sentimentalism to religion. While the PDP's Jonathan won convincingly in the South – South and South - East dominated Christian block, it was difficult for him to exercise superiority in the North – West and North – East Regions peopled majorly by the Moslems, thus, these two Regions fell to the APC's Mohammadu Buhari. There was stiff battle in both South – West and North – Central Regions, the reason for this is not far-fetched, the Regions do not have marginal domination by any of the Religious blocks.

One may also ask why and how the PDP candidate won in the Northern states of Plateau, Nassarawa and Taraba as well as the Federal Capital Territory FCT, Abuja. These states are dominated by Christians, though they have a nearly equal Moslem population that challenges their hegemony. It is important to state that right from the creation of Taraba and Plateau states, a non Christian had never been elected as the Governor. It is quite clear that voters'

behaviour was influenced by a combination of the party profile and the ethnic and religion background of the contestants. So, the PDP candidate, President Jonathan won those states in the north out of religious sympathy. Majority of the voters in those jurisdictions feel that they would be better protected by a Christian president than a Muslim. The battle in Kogi and Benue shows no significant victory by the APC because of the Christians population in those states.

On the other hand, the APC candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari who also is a Moslem from Katsina state in the North-West Geo-political zone won a comfortable majority in fifteen northern states except the three mentioned earlier. It is also clear from the result that apart from Ekiti State, General Buhari won all the five Yoruba states of the South-West Geo-political zone of Nigeria. One may ask why and how he won them. The answer lies in the fact that the Yorubas who inhabit the South-west geo-political zone are politically sophisticated. They are different from other geo-political

zones in Nigeria. In the 1999 presidential election which was contested by two of their sons, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the PDP candidate and Chief Olu Falae, the APP candidate, all the Yoruba states voted for Chief Olu Falae, the All Peoples Party's (PDP) candidate who also is a Yoruba man? They felt that the interest of the Yorubas would be best protected under Chief Olu Falae. At the end of the day, Chief Obasanjo won was duly returned elected. However, what really happened in the case of the 2015 presidential election was that majority of the Yorubas were in ANC which was one of the parties that formed APC. Again the running mate of the APC presidential flag bearer, Professor Yemi Osinbajo is a Yoruba man, a Christian and a man that is highly respected and admired for his humility and scholarship coupled with the fact that he was nominated for that position by Chief Bola Tinubu, the strongman of Yoruba politics in this dispensation.

It is also pertinent to state here that in the politics of the South-West Nigeria, religion does not take the drivers' seat. What drives the Yoruba politics is ethnic interest. The Yoruba felt they were better protected in APC because they have No. 2 key position, hence they mobilized and voted more for the APC and Buhari.

It may also be queried why the PDP did not make a significant impact in the Northern part of Nigeria even when the running mate to president Jonathan, Alhaji Namadi Sambo is from the Kaduna State, North-West Geo-political zone. The simple reason is that, the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality felt that power had shifted from the north to the south for so too long and wanted their own to be president at all cost to protect their ethnic interest. This action was based on cost-benefit analysis which is a product of the rational choice theory.

Apart from ethnic and religious reasons, other factors could be adduced as to why majority of Nigerian voters rejected the PDP. The reasons are the high level of corruption, insecurity and the desire for change in the Nigerian polity. With respect to corruption Alapiki (2015:37) observed as follows:

There are numerous accounts and examples of high profile corruption in Nigeria...suffice it to mention the celebrated cases...the pension scam where civil servants are robbed of billions of Nairaby government officials, the fuel subsidy scam in which NNPC, fuel marketers and importers colluded to defraud this country, and many more cases that investigation and prosecutions have been stalled, like the Aviation scam.

Corruption does not end with the stealing of public resources; it undermines justice, economic development and destroys public trust in government and political leaders. It also negates the principle of Public Financial Management. The PDP and President

Goodluck Jonathan's administration did not have the will power to fight this pandemic, rather, they stocked billions of funds in Naira, USD and other foreign currencies in personal or hired houses, empty septic and water tanks to name but a few. Besides corruption, the weaning popularity of parties and candidates, the precarious economic and security situation in the country coupled with the desire for change also influenced voters' behaviour. This to the electorates was an anathema and they saw the Presidential election as a venue to remove the PDP and indeed Jonathan from power and reposition the country for greatness.

### III. CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to examine how ethnicity and religion influenced Voters behavior in the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria which was won by Mohammadu Buhari. We adopted the qualitative research method as our methodology. We also adopted the sociological approach to voting behavior and the rational choice theory as our theoretical framework. We concluded that from the result of the election, it is obvious that the two major factors that influenced the pattern of voting were ethnicity and religion. We also asserted that beyond that, other factors such as corruption popularity of parties and candidates, the precarious economic and security situation in the country coupled with the desire for change also influenced voters' behaviour.

Finally, we recommend that voting behaviour should be based on party ideology and competence and reputation of the candidates and not ethnicity and religion. If Nigeria must move forward, the electorates must reject ethnicity and religion as the bases of political choice. This is because, it enthrones mediocrity and encourages ethnocentrism and corruption in all sphere of our national life. As a country, if we do not get our politics right, we will not get our economy right. The much needed imperative of national integration can only be achieved if we toe the part of national interest even in our voting behavior.

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*Annexure 1:* Result of the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria

S/N	State	Buhari	Jonathan	Ayeni
1	Abia	13,394	368,303	2,766
2	Adamawa	374,701	251,664	1,549
3	AkwaBom	58,411	953,304	384
4	Anambra	17,926	660,762	2,303
5	Bauchi	931,598	86,085	964
6	Bayelsa	5,194	361,209	70
7	Benue	373,961	303,737	945
8	Borno	473,543	25,640	878
9	Cross River	28,368	414,863	532
10	Delta	48,910	1,211,405	478
11	Ebonyi	19,518	323,653	2,452
12	Edo	208,469	286,869	709
13	Ekiti	120,331	176,466	482
14	Enugu	14,157	553,003	715
15	Gombe	361,245	96,873	773
16	Imo	133,253	559,185	2,236
17	Jigawa	885,988	142,904	2,527
18	Kaduna	1,127,760	484,085	1,611
19	Kano	1,903,999	215,779	2,770
20	Katsina	1,345,441	98,937	1,671
21	Kebbi	567,883	100,972	2,685
22	Kogi	264,851	149,987	1,001
23	Kwara	302,146	132,602	1,165
24	Lagos	792,460	632,327	2,177
25	Nassarawa	236,838	273,460	310
26	Niger	657,678	149,222	2,006
27	Ogun	308,290	207,950	1,930
28	Ondo	299,889	251,368	1,139
29	Osun	383,603	249,929	1,306
30	Oyo	528,620	303,376	4,468
31	Plateau	429,140	549,615	618

32	Rivers	69,238	1,487,075	513
33	Sokoto	691,926	152,199	3,482
34	Taraba	261,326	310,800	1,306
35	Yobe	446,265	25,526	632
36	Zamfara	612,202	144,833	1,310
37	FCT	146,399	157,195	674
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,424,921</b>	<b>12,853,162</b>	<b>53,537</b>

Buhari - 53, 96%

Jonathan - 44.96%

Margin - 2,571,759

Source: Nigerian general election 2015 – Wikipedia, 21/9/2017 (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/>).**Table 2:** Showing approximated voter turnout by % in the 36 states and the FCT

SN	State	Party	%
1	Lagos	APC	29
2	Gombe	APC	46
3	Borno	APC	30
4	Adamawa	APC	47
5	Ogun	APC	35
6	Niger	APC	47
7	Oyo	APC	46
8	Kogi	APC	35
9	Yobe	APC	48
10	Bauchi	APC	53
11	Kebbi	APC	54
12	Benue	APC	40
13	Ondo	APC	41
14	Katsina	APC	56
15	Kwara	APC	41
16	Zamfara	APC	50
17	Kaduna	APC	52
18	Sokoto	APC	59
19	Kano	APC	44
20	Jigawa	APC	64
21	Abuja FCT	PDP	39
22	Taraba	PDP	46
23	Abia	PDP	33
24	Osun	PDP	50
25	Anambra	PDP	39
26	Edo	PDP	36
27	Ebonyi	PDP	40
28	Plateau	PDP	54
29	Cross River	PDP	44
30	Enugu	PDP	45
31	Bayelsa	PDP	64
32	Ekiti	PDP	45
33	Akwa Ibom	PDP	64
34	Delta	PDP	66
35	Imo	PDP	46
36	Nasarawa	PDP	46
37	Rivers	PDP	71