

## POLITICAL STAKES AND THE CHANGING PATTERNS OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE 2015 AND 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

### NİJERYA'DAKİ SİYASİ RİSKLER VE DEĞİŞEN SEÇİM KALIPLARI: 2015 VE 2019 CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI SEÇİMLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

Res. Asst. Cemal YORGANCIOĞLU  
Near East University  
Department of International Relations  
cemal.yorgancioglu@neu.edu.tr  
ORCID: 0000-0002-2885-7853

Ph.D Cand. Dingji Maza KANGDIM  
Near East University  
Department of International Relations  
mdingji@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1059-8707

Received 23 September 2019- Accepted 25 November 2019  
Gönderim 23 Eylül 2019- Kabul 25 Kasım 2019

**Abstract:** *This article offers a contextual discourse on the nature of political stakes and the changing dynamics of elections in Nigeria by comparing the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections as its main focus of analysis. Using qualitative technique which involves the use of secondary sources and personal interviews with certain key actors and experts in the political narrative of Nigeria, the article is able to predict that elections and voting patterns are driven by certain agendas and discourses that are not only used by the political actors but by the media and all its communication tools to further project, set and define the key topical issues in the electoral process. These discourses and agenda-setting ultimately influence the pattern and further raise the stakes in the elections given that voters are already stuck with these issues, which ultimately informed their choice of candidate. Thus, within the Nigerian context, these discourses are used to heavily influence voters' choices and to define the direction of the voting, as evidenced in both the 2015 and 2019 Presidential elections in the country.*

**Keywords:** *Nigerian politics, security, elections, religion, ethnic fractionalization, corruption*

**Öz:** *Bu makale, 2015 ve 2019 başkanlık seçimlerini, analizinin ana odağı ve Nijerya'daki seçimlerin değişen dinamiğinin doğasına ilişkin bağlamsal anlatı olarak karşılaştırmadaki politik rekabeti/çekişmeleri betimlenmektedir. Nijerya'nın politik anlatısında bazı önemli aktörler ve uzmanlarla ikincil kaynakların ve kişisel görüşmelerin kullanılmasını içeren nitel bir araştırma tekniği kullanılmaktadır. Makale, seçim ve oylama kalıplarının, yalnızca siyasi aktörler tarafından değil, medya ve tüm iletişim araçları tarafından, seçim sürecindeki kilit gündem konuları daha da projelendirmek, belirlemek ve tanımlamak için kullanılan bazı gündem ve söylemler tarafından yönlendirildiğini tahmin edebilmektedir. Bu söylemler ve gündem belirleme sonuçta modeli etkilemekte ve seçmenlerin, adaylara seçtiklerini bildiren bu konularla zaten sıkışmış olmaları nedeniyle seçimlerde payları daha da arttırmaktadır. Bu anlatılar ve söylemler, ülkedeki 2015 ve 2019 Başkanlık seçimlerinde kanıtlandığı gibi, seçmenlerin seçimlerini yoğun bir şekilde etkilemek ve oylamanın yönünü tanımlamak için kullanılmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Nijerya siyaseti, güvenlik, seçimler, sin, etnik fraksiyonelleştirme, yolsuzluk*

## INTRODUCTION

Elections are said to be a major contributing factor, component and an important tenet of democracy (Wojtasik, 2013). This is because democracy essentially entails a pattern of government in which leaders are chosen directly or indirectly by the people through the process of elections. Therefore, as proposed by (Ginsberg and Shefter, 1990; Elklit and Svensson, 1997; Manin et al., 1999; Lijphart, 2012), elections tend to create the platform through which the will of the majority in a democratic society is not only harnessed but is expressed and realized. Given the importance of this component of democracy, there are certain dominant narratives and irreducible minimum features that make elections crucial in every democratic process. These features, as indicated by (Lijphart, 2012; Wojtasik, 2013; Quaglia and Smyth, 2017; The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018), include the fairness, credibility, as well as how free the entire process is. However, despite the important role of elections in every democratic process, the idea itself is said to be shrouded with certain complexities and challenges, as witnessed in most third world or developing societies.

As indicated by scholars like (Scott, 1969; Lawson, 1999; Anugwom, 2005; Bratton and Lewis, 2007; Bienen, 2013; Joseph, 2014; Harff, 2018), most elections in Africa are characterized and marred by high levels of conflict, violence, insecurity, vote-buying, rigging, division and the fractionalization of members and voting patterns on the basis of religion, negative ethnicity. Additionally, other forms of configuration that tends to be totally inimical to the basic ideals and principles on which liberal and electoral democracies are founded. As further put forward by Joseph (2014), this negative form of politics is also reflected in other African states, thereby increasing the level of stakes that drive this democratic process. As a consequence of the high risks or stakes that determine the nature and character of Nigerian politics, many pundits have indicated that elections in Nigeria cannot be considered free, fair and credible given the fact that in every election cycle, the 'stakes' are very high leading to massive election illegalities and irregularities.

As suggested by (Marc and Mackian, 1995; Nolte, 2015; Campbell, 2015; Brandt, 2018), in every election cycle in Nigeria, the major political actors and players tend to promote certain narratives, which tend to serve as what the voters use to assess and gauge the respective parties and candidates. Consequently, political parties also tend to use certain discourses and factors to raise the stakes in appealing to their voters because the strengths and weaknesses of every candidate or political party are measured and determined based on the issues and agendas they tend to sell to voters and also to mobilize support. Therefore, these discourses shape the views, perceptions, and interests of voters towards a particular candidate. Thus, the higher the stakes of discourse and narratives in the election process, the higher the level of engagement, as well as the risks, credibility, verifiability, and fairness in the electoral process (Aliche, 2018).

It is therefore within this paradigm that this article will try to discuss the paradox of political stakes that determines the nature and patterns of elections in Nigeria. In doing so, the article will offer a comparative assessment of the stakes and discourses that constitute the 2015 Presidential Elections as well as the recently concluded 2019 Presidential elections held on the 23 February 2019. To do this systematically and

thematically, the article will use the following factors: Religion and ethnic fractionality that characterizes the Nigerian society, the level of security of the country, the state of the economy, the corruption index, the personalities of the contending Presidential candidates and the mantra of the two dominant political parties in the electoral process in order to determine the levels of political stakes in the two elections, especially their patterns of continuity and change.

Theoretically, this article will contextualize political stakes within the lens of the agenda setting theory. This theoretical approach is predicated on the stance that the media and all its communication tools have the potency and ability to shape public opinion, perceptions and determine the agenda or topical discourse within the political space as well as voters' choices (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Studies by McCombs and Shaw (1972), Dearing and Rogers (1988), Walgrave (2006), Balmas and Sheaffer (2010), revealed that the media and its tools tend to not only set the agenda for discussion during the political season, but they also have the capacity to determine the direction of the public and policy agenda. Political actors also use this discourse to not only protect their interests but also to determine the pattern in which voters exercise their democratic mandate during each election year (McCombs and Shaw, 1993). Even though the projections by these actors may not reflect the actual political reality, they can serve as a tool and avenue for awareness, prioritizing voters' choices and finally, bringing out some of the salient issues that are often taken for granted.

Within the academic discipline of comparative politics, democratization and electoral studies, party and electoral systems, interests and pressure groups exist and are important in explaining political phenomena. This article, however, maintained that despite the importance of these theoretical stance and the fact that the article is analysing the political stakes in the two presidential elections conducted in Nigeria, will not dwell more on the grand theories and debates on electoral systems, democracy, and democratization. Thereby, justifying the adoption of the agenda-setting theory as its framework of analysis and discourse. Adopting the agenda theory setting theory does not in any way negate the important contributions of these theories within the discourse. However, the theory, offer a clearer perspective and context through which the discourse used by political actors and the media to not only raise the stakes in the elections but also, influence the direction through which voters choose their leaders.

As indicated by McCombs and Funk (2011), Agbu (2016), Afolayan and Olanrewaju (2017), Dauda *et al.* (2017), Mbah *et al.* (2019), the massive revolution in information and telecommunication technologies, which has created multiple centres and outlets of communication between the traditional and new media (social media), increasingly shape public opinions and responses to political discourses. In Nigeria, for example, this new platform has opened up new avenues that not only set the agenda, but also set the policy, and public agenda on the political process. As a result of this, political actors and elites often use this discourses to further project their political interests as well as to raise the level of political stakes by constantly bringing up these issues in the court of public opinion as a tool to project their own pecuniary interests.

Relating this theory to the context of elections in Nigeria, Nwokeofor and Okunoye (2013) and Obot (2013) analysis focused on the important influence of the media in elections. Their analysis, first of all, scrutinized the ‘agenda-setting’ theory and its influence on elections by tracing the historical evolution of the theory linked to Walter Lippmann’s work on public opinion which measured the impact of the media in shaping public discourse. To them, that study formed the groundbreaking study which led to the development of the increasing studies on agenda setting as a theoretical discourse. In their interpretation of the theory to Nigeria’s Presidential election, they were able to interrogate how increasingly, the media shapes the perception and views of the electorates in every election cycle. Their study focused on the 2011 Presidential elections in Nigeria where the media was able to dwell on the personal traits of the two dominant candidates in the Presidential elections (Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari). During that time, the media both print, electronic and social, dwelt on the perception that Goodluck Jonathan, was an individual with a humble background, from a minority tribe (Ijaw) of South-South Nigeria that rose to the highest position of authority. On the other hand, Muhammadu Buhari was projected as a villain, an extremist who cannot govern the country. That continuous narrative by the media increasingly tilted the direction of the electorates towards Goodluck Jonathan, and that was reflected on the outcome of the elections.

Consequently, this pattern of the media influencing the outcome of elections in Nigeria through setting the agenda on issues and the stakes in the electioneering process were further seen in the literature put forward by Aleyomi and Ajakaiye (2014), Alawode and Adesanya (2016), Olowojolu (2016) and Apuke and Apollos (2017). During that period in the build-up to the 2015 elections, the media became a powerful tool of assessing the performance of Jonathan’s administration as well as projecting Muhammadu Buhari as the major contender to Jonathan in the forthcoming elections. These projections informed the position and choice of the electorates to these two candidates (Aleyomi and Ajakaiye, 2014). This agenda was further set out by headlines put up by major newspapers and tabloids on the main issues that will determine the elections of 2015 as well the candidates that will raise the stakes in the elections (Alawode and Adesanya, 2016; Olowojolu, 2016). Therefore, it is important to note that, undoubtedly, the media plays a vital role in not only raising the stakes in elections, it also contributes in shaping the public perception regarding the various processes of political campaigns as well as the tide and direction of the elections in Nigeria and other developing democracies (Apuke and Apollos, 2017).

This article by way of methods deploys a qualitative approach in its analysis. In so doing emphasis will be placed on critical analysis from various academic and non-academic documents such as books, journal articles, newspapers reports and articles. Furthermore, the study goes on to interact and engage with experts familiar with the issues regarding Nigeria’s elections, politics as well as the subject matter regarding political stakes in the form of “key informant interviews”. The need for deploying this strategy is to, first of all, strengthen, corroborate and refute the findings of the other sources. Secondly, adopting these key informants interviews also addresses the challenges of counterfactual analysis which also in away will lead to some level of objectivity in the findings of the study. Relating this approach within the context of agenda-setting theory which suggests that ‘newspapers more frequently dominate

agenda setting' (Balmas and Sheaffer, 2010: 211), this invariably affects the other media and communications channels or tools. With that informed position, the study focused more on the key issues used by the media in raising the political stakes in the elections. By so doing, challenges associated with the inter-subjectivity and individual biases of the key informants are controlled; thereby, limiting them to respond to questions and issues strictly related to the stakes in the elections. Lastly, this study tent to inform that, it analyzes the discourses rather than the attitudes of the people measured.

## **1. 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: STAKES AND DISCOURSES**

As indicated by scholars like (Rosenau *et al.*, 2015; Omaamaka and Groupson-Paul, 2015; N. Orji, 2017), as Nigeria is a cosmopolitan society in which various groups from different ethno-religious and political orientations co-exist, it is inevitable that there will be struggles and tensions if these diverse interests are not effectively micromanaged. This is because members of these groups tend to have their stakes (political, economic, religious, social, identity etc.) that they cherish, and will be willing to protect them because they serve as a basic irreducible minimum for their survival and existence as an entity or group. Therefore, these stakes are expressed in diverse aspects of their lives.

Consequently, as indicated by (Araba and Braimah, 2015; Marc and Mackian, 1995; Campbell, 2015), every election cycle has its own level of stakes because, to a certain extent, they determine the level of progression or retrogression of a society for the period until the next election cycle. Therefore, to these scholars, the 2015 General elections in Nigeria presented voters with the choice to determine how they wanted the country to be run in the next four years. Thus, these narratives and conditions further raised the stakes because voters were making an informed choice as to whether to accept or continue with the status quo or to change the discourse. Consequently, many experts such as (BBC News, 2015; Akinola, 2015; Marc and Mackian, 1995; Ewi, 2015) held the opinion that the 2015 General elections in Nigeria would be regarded as one of the most dangerous periods in the political history of the country. This is because the increasing agitations, heightened tensions, contentious and divisive politics, the increasing level of insecurity occasioned by the continued attacks by the Boko Haram Insurgents, the state of the economy, and the lack of decisive leadership amongst other contending discourses which further heightened the political temperature ultimately lead to the predictions that if the 2015 General elections were not handled effectively, Nigeria would disintegrate by the year 2015. As further observed by Ewi (2015), Lewis and Kew (2015), even though Nigeria was able to navigate the turbulence, one cannot ignore the fact that the stakes in the 2015 elections were high. Therefore, the following represent some of the key factors and indicators that led to the increased and heightened stakes the marked the 2015 Presidential elections in Nigeria.

### **1.1. Religion and Ethnic Fractionality (Highly Contentious)**

As put forward by (Osaghae, 2003; Attoh and Soyombo, 2011; Angerbrandt, 2015), religion and ethnicity are said to be major factors in Nigeria's political life. This is because in a country that is ethnically diverse with two contending religions

struggling to have access to power, it is inevitable that there will be struggles and tension if these diverse sentiments are not used and managed effectively, which could lead to conditions of intractability and heightened tensions. As noted by Ukiwo (2003), Osaghae and Suberu (2005), Abdullahi and Saka (2007), Stewart (2012), Angerbrandt (2016), Ejiogu (2016), and Suleiman and Maiangwa (2017), religion and ethnic politics have always been major talking-points and agendas in every political dispensation in Nigeria. With these sentiments, political elites tend to mobilize support and instrumentalize the ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments in order to manipulate the electorates regarding who they should cast their vote for.

Consequently, the voter is already programmed in a pattern such that his/her choice of candidate in the elections is already predetermined on the basis of the negative ‘dummy’ planted on him/her by the political actors. Ross (2015) indicated that in 2015, similar to previous elections, the religion and ethnic card came to the forefront of the agenda in the political discussion in the build-up to the Presidential elections. During that time, the two major contending candidates in the Presidential elections were the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC). Consequently, (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2015; Olayode, 2015; Oyero, 2017) were of the view that most analysts tend to characterize the 2015 Presidential elections as a ‘make or break moment’ in the political history of Nigeria. Based on the prediction that the country was at risk of falling apart in 2015 and the negative sentiments and caveats associated with ethnic, religious and divisive politics, these issues further raised the stakes in the voting pattern and created a serious division in the country because religion and ethnicity that are meant to be instruments for unity, in fact became tools for national division.

In a discussion the researchers conducted with a renowned political analyst in Nigeria, he alluded that one cannot divorce religion and ethnicity in the politics of the country because, in 2015, real political issues were mortgaged and most voters opted for propaganda, toxic politics and allowed their choice of candidates to be based on what their political and religious elites wanted them to believe. In a phone interview conducted with a Research Fellow and a lecturer with the Nigerian Defence Academy, Danjuma Jise (phone calling by authors, January 4, 2019), on the influence and instrumentalization of religion and ethnicity by the political elites, he mentioned that a strong relationship exist between the use of religion and ethnic divisions by these actors for their own selfish political gains that ultimately leads to a situation where the voters become ‘zombified’ in their choice of candidate.

## **1.2. Security**

As observed by (N. Orji, 2014, 2015; Lewis and Kew, 2015; Simon, 2014; Faleye, 2019), governments are judged by their inability and capacity to respond to the various threats and threat perceptions, whether it is at the domestic or international level because, securing the lives, properties and investments of citizens are determined by how the government is able to guarantee that its citizens and their livelihoods are protected from any form of threat. With security at the core of the national ethos and discourse of most states, one should not be surprised if ‘security’ is used to increase the level of stakes in the politics of the society given the fact that most regimes are judged on how they are able to manage the varying levels of threat

in their domain. In the build-up to the 2015 Presidential elections in Nigeria, security was at the top of the agenda in determining and increasing the level of stakes regarding who would govern the country for the next four years.

As intimated by (Aziken, 2013; Odunsi, 2015), the Nigerian government should not have taken lightly some of the utterances and statements that were predominantly made by the Northern-political elites like the late Adamu Ciroma the former minister of Finance and Alhaji Lawal Kaita, a prominent northern statesman who swore to make 'Nigeria ungovernable for Jonathan' (Nigerian Bulletin, 2015; Eagle Eye News Report, 2014). After these reckless statements, the already fragile state of the Nigerian security system deteriorated as a result of the increasing attacks from radical insurgent groups such as Boko Haram (Solomon, 2012). This group continued to carry out a series of attacks in the country, thereby worsening the state of insecurity and heightening the polity, particularly with the kidnapping of over 200 girls in Chibok, which attracted international headlines and further complicated the security dilemma for the existing regime. With the already heightened tension, many expected a swift response from the state; however, the government failed to adequately deal with these conditions of insecurity. A discourse most political actors used as a tool for mobilization and scoring political points (Owen and Usman, 2015; Ibekwe, 2018). As further noted by Ahmad (2015), Ibekwe (2015), Zane (2015), Ogbona (2017) and Okeke (2017), security was seen to be one of the main reasons behind the inability of the Goodluck Jonathan regime to win the 2015 General elections, largely due to their inability to ensure and guarantee the protection of the lives, properties and investments of their citizens.

### **1.3. Corruption and State of the Economy**

Corruption and all its components are said to be one of the major obstacles preventing the development and progress of any society (Urien, 2012). The success and failure of a government depends on how transparent and credible the regime is, especially when it involves the effective management of resources and not engaging in sharp practices and other acts that are inimical to the development and progress of such societies. As hinted by Ibekwe (2015), corruption was used as a major factor in the build-up to the 2015 elections, particularly the response of the regime in curbing this deadly menace. In his submission, he noted that the Goodluck Jonathan regime, out of the many myriad challenges it faced in delivering the deliverables to the people, it was riddled with numerous cases and incidences of corruption, which the regime failed to adequately address. As hinted by (Nation Newspaper, 2017; Odebode and Adebayo, 2018), during that time, there were high profile corruption cases in which key members of his cabinet were accused. Examples of these cases include charges against the former Aviation Minister, Stella Oduah, who could not account for the procurement of cars worth over 255 million naira (780,000 US dollars), while another incident involved over 20 billion naira that mysteriously disappeared from the accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Many expected the government to punitively deal with these cases, but on the contrary, these people who were accused of corruption continued to enjoy all the paraphernalia and the trappings of power. That became a serious discourse in the build-up to the General Elections in 2015, with many blaming the regime for not displaying the capacity and competency to adequately address the challenge.

In a discussion with a lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria, Comrade Santos Larab (phone calling by authors, January 19, 2019), it was noted that corruption was one of the major weakness of the Goodluck Jonathan regime, given the fact that Nigerians expected the regime to act and deal decisively with corrupt people, but the regime actually ensured that corruption became another organ and arm of the government. With this sentiment, politicians will always use that as a tool to further galvanize and mobilize support to suit the narrative and agenda. That further informed the voters choice on the need to judge the regime based on their track record in dealing with the issue and challenges associated with corruption. Thus, many were not surprised to see that corruption was one tool the opposition party used in order to further mobilize their members that the promise to deal with corruption and also the demeanour persona of General Muhammadu Buhari, known to many as a corrupt free person, was further used to project him as a leader that completely abhors corruption. That represented a major political stake in the build-up to the elections.

#### **1.4. Manifesto of Contending Candidates ('The Change Mantra' of Apc vs. 'The Transformation Agenda' of Pdp)**

The manifestos and ideologies of the major political parties tend to form an important component of the political discourse, especially as they involve the major talking points of the election. As hinted by a senior lecturer and a researcher for Center for Peace Studies at Moddibo Addama University, Chris Kwaja (phone calling by authors, January 13, 2019) most political parties are formed based on certain fundamental values and beliefs that shape their ideology. They use this ideology to persuade and sell their agenda to the voting populace.

Therefore, in the 2015 Presidential elections, the major ideas and mantras used by the two candidates also tended to determine the direction and patterns of voting influence. In 2015, the PDP under President Goodluck Jonathan campaigned with the philosophy of continuing the projects they had initiated for Nigerians. That philosophy of continuity by the PDP government was based on the ideology of the 'Transformation Agenda'. According to (Gyong, 2012; Adebowale, 2013; Chukwudi, 2014; Thom-Otuya, 2015), the transformation agenda is a political ideology whereby the regime under Goodluck Jonathan was anchored within the lens of building a Nigerian society that would lead to effective functional and revamping of all the ailing sectors of the society, thereby making significant impacts on the lives of its citizens.

Some of the major attributes of the transformation agenda include that the regime respects the rule of law, that the regime guarantees unrestricted freedoms to her citizens which is enshrined in the constitution, the regime aims to diversify the economy, especially by restructuring the manufacturing and agricultural sectors and finally, the regime ensures that all the components that seek and involve the guaranteeing of human security of all its citizens are key to the transformation agenda process.

Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2015), Saheed (2015), observed that while the PDP relied on the transformation agenda, the opposition party, the APC, adopted the 'Change Mantra' as its campaign manifesto presented to Nigerians. The change philosophy by the APC during that campaign period promised Nigerians that there



would be change and a complete overhaul of the existing status quo and the state of affairs in the country. According to (Akowe, 2017; Asabe, 2017; Okolo and Karimo, 2017), the APC used the change mantra to give Nigerians promises regarding the need to fight corruption, which is one of the fundamental problems that obstructs the development of the country, to bring back discipline amongst Nigerians (Danâ and Jibrin, 2017), and to guarantee the protection of lives and properties of citizens, particularly in the wake of the Boko Haram conflict, amongst other discourses.

With these two contending ideologies, the voters were given the option to either continue with the transformation agenda of the PDP or to go with the change mantra the APC promised voters if they were elected. Consequently, that narrative further raised the stakes in the high voltage political atmosphere in the wake of the elections.

### **1.5. Personalities of Candidates**

Even though electoral campaigns are supposed to be driven by issues and not on personalities (Kwaja, 2019), that narrative only exists in its true theoretical sense because virtually all actions are determined by the personalities of the major contending candidates. They are also used to determine the level of stakes involved in the political process (Ibid). As observed by Agence France-Presse [AFP] (2015), in 2015, one of the major talking points was the personality factor of the two candidates, which invariably had a way of shaping the thoughts, opinions and directions regarding voters' choices. Consequently, Akintide (2011) and Nwachukwu (2017) noted that the general observation of Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP is that he has an unassuming personality, is calm and sometimes appears to be clueless when handling some of the challenges that faced the country. This narrative was popularized by opposition candidates in the build-up to the 2015 elections with the challenges of insecurity, especially the threat posed by Boko Haram coupled with a series of agitations from militants in the Niger-Delta etc., the inability to manage the economy, and indecision when faced with corruption cases amongst other issues, which many felt that the Goodluck administration failed to adequately address.

However, many believed that candidate for the opposition party, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, would serve as a plausible panacea to solve some of the challenges facing the country. This is because many tend to see him as a man of integrity, opposed to corruption, firm, and who completely detests indiscipline and the wastage of resources (Ezukanma, 2016; Fick, 2016; Odunsi, 2018). With these narratives, popularized by various actors in driving the agenda, the stakes and temperatures were further raised in the murky terrain of the Nigerian political landscape.

## **2. 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA: STAKES AND DISCOURSES**

### **2.1. Religion and Ethnic Fractionality (Low Intense)**

The 2015 Presidential election was characterized by the paradox of religion and ethnic factor between the north and south. This was a paradox that completely heated the polity because real topical issues were mortgaged and sacrificed for religious and

ethnic sentiments. That fundamentally raised the stakes in the political discourse, and voting patterns in the elections. Will this same sentiment and narrative play out in the forthcoming elections? As indicated by a political correspondent with Viewpoint Nigeria, Dapar Satmak (in a phone conversation with the authors, January 17, 2019) and Kwaja (2019), unlike in the build-up to the 2015 elections, where religion was used as a tool to mobilize votes, in the 2019 elections, the voting pattern may not be affected by the religion and ethnicity cards. This is because the two contending Presidential Candidates are both from the same Northern region of Nigeria; they are both Muslims and also belong to the Fulani ethnic group.

With this foreground information, religion and ethnicity may not be used effectively as a tool to mobilize and instrumentalize the process. However, in a counter-narrative by Idris *et al.* (2019) and Jise (2019), it was noted that historically, religion and ethnicity have a significant influence in shaping the perceptions of voters towards a particular candidate. Even though General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP belong to the same Fulani extraction, are Muslims and are from the north, it would be completely disingenuous for one to purport that the ethnic and religious card would not be used in order to galvanize and mobilize voters.

This position was in view of the public endorsement of the civil society groups such as these two community-based associations have vital importance, especially in shaping public opinion and driving the agenda. Secondly, members who belong to this group have been sternly warned not to vote or support Atiku Abubakar. With these associations and their large followership across the country, although less contentious, religion and ethnicity are ultimately being used in order to mobilize, instrumentalize and determine voters' choices, which has also raised the bar and stakes in the forthcoming Presidential elections of 2019 (Jise, 2019).

## **2.2. Security (Multidimensionality)**

Despite its contested definitional conundrum, security is an important factor in every election cycle in most societies (Baldwin, 1997). This is because the success and failure of a government largely depends on the capacity and capability of the government to contain threats and threat perceptions, be it internally or externally, as well as its ability to protect the lives and properties of its citizens (Dapar, 2019). In the build-up to the 2015 Presidential elections in Nigeria, security was used as a talking point to determine the pattern of voting as well as raise the stakes in the political process. As suggested by (Ibekwe, 2015; Siollun, 2015; Zane, 2015), one of the many reasons why former President Goodluck Jonathan lost his 2015 re-election bid was the failure and inability of the regime to provide decisive leadership and ensure that security, which is a quintessential variable, was managed adequately, despite the vast resources allocated to the security and defence sector with minimal or cosmetic improvement. That dummy and anecdote was used by the opposition party, which contributed to the victory for President Buhari. In 2015, Buhari promised to tackle the threat posed by the Boko Haram insurgents, solve the many internal security challenges facing the state as well as ensure that the properties, lives, and investments of Nigerians were adequately protected (Africa Independent Television, 2015). The major fundamental question today revolves around whether the current government has been able to tackle this problem or not.

In a counter-response by Busari (2018) and a report by Punch Newspaper (2018b), although the Buhari administration had widely claimed that it had 'technically defeated' Boko Haram, many observers doubted this assertion, and it was accused of not adequately addressing the increasing security challenges facing the country. In fact, as put forward by Njoku (2019), many have argued that the current security challenges facing Nigeria are multidimensional based on the attacks from Boko Haram, the seemingly unending Farmers-Herders clash which continuously threatens numerous communities in north-central Nigeria, as well as the security challenge posed by the secessionist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra [IPOB]. Again, as indicated by reports by Amnesty International (2018), as well as Goga (2018), Punch (2018a) and Ailemen (2019), there has been a recent rise in armed bandits, conflicts and insecurity in areas previously considered as peaceful. These areas were reported to be states located in the north-western part of Nigeria, specifically Zamfara and Sokoto states, where armed bandits continue to carry out numerous attacks and inflict terror on villages and communities. This further complicates the already complex security challenge facing the country in the sense that as of December 2018, over 3,641 persons had lost their lives and thousands were internally displaced as a result of the continued terror and violence inflicted by these bandits. In their analysis, this conflict further forms part of the wider picture regarding the government's failure to adequately protect and guarantee the safety of its citizens from any form of threat and threat perception.

Consequently, as indicated by Onapajo (2017), Mbah (2018) and Arinze (2019), the government today seems overwhelmed by the continuous unsymmetrical and multiple security challenges it is facing. Mbachu (2019) asked an instructive question regarding how the two contending candidates will address the security question in the country. In his analysis, Atiku Abubakar maintained that the crisis of insecurity that exists in the country today is not problem that has emerged by accident, but is in fact an issue centred on a long history of bad governance and systemic failure by the government and its agencies to deliver the basic services people need to enable to reach their optimum potential. According to him, if the security question is addressed, this will create more employment opportunities for the growing youth population that are idle and redundant, especially in some of the sectors and areas neglected by previous administrations (agriculture).

On the other hand, President Buhari promised to consolidate on some of the policies, programs and initiatives designed by the government by making young people more self-reliant and enabling them to explore their potentials under the N-Power model. Therefore, in the build-up to the 2019 Presidential elections, security will also be a contentious issue in raising the political stakes, as well as informing voters' choice of candidate in terms of whether to continue with the status quo or to opt for an alternative. This is a narrative that has also raised the temperature in the polity as well as the stakes in the political process.

### **2.3. Corruption (Perverse) and State of The Economy**

Corruption as a factor is used in most societies to judge the capacity of states and governments to manage and deal with such cases and incidents. In fact, the success or failure of a government is judged by how transparent, disciplined and resourceful it is in managing resources meant for tax payers (Ogundiya, 2009). Therefore, most

politicians use the issue of corruption as a tool to determine how the electioneering process will be followed. The corruption perception issue is essentially used to address how the government is perceived to be either free from or engulfed in corruption.

Contextualizing this within African and Nigerian politics, corruption is predominantly used in every political dispensation as a tool for voter mobilization as well as for determining the success and failure of a government. In 2015, one of the major stakes that determined the outcome of the presidential elections was the state or government response in tackling the cases of corruption. As noted by Owen and Usman (2015), many have argued that the Goodluck Jonathan regime was riddled with high cases of blatant corruption, which many expected the government to address but it failed to do so. The perception that the regime was not capable of tackling the threat of corruption was used extensively by the opposition party as a political discourse thereby raising the stakes.

Another component that particularly raises the stakes is the state of the economy. In the build up to the 2015 presidential elections, the Goodluck Jonathan government was not only accused of degrading the economy, but it has also not adequately been able to account for the billions of dollars it made as proceeds from the sale of crude oil. That narrative was also tied to corruption. Is corruption still part of the discourse in the 2019 elections? As noted by Jise (2019), corruption is also a factor that be used to judge the Buhari's administration based on the promise it made to Nigerians in terms of its resolve to fight corruption and all its components. As observed by Campbell (2018), the apologists for the current regime believe that President Buhari is fighting corruption as a result of the jail terms given to two ex. Governors Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba state. According to them, these are high profile cases that the government has been able to complete swiftly.

Another school of thought alludes that the response to corruption by the current regime leaves much to be desired judging by some of the cases involving top members of the cabinet and the inability to adequately punish them (Akinkuotu *et al.*, 2018; Omojuyigbe, 2018; Busari, 2019). In fact, many Nigerians tend to seriously question the commitment of the regime to fighting corruption, especially when the President frustratingly hinted that 'fighting corruption in Nigeria is difficult' (Punch, 2019). For someone who was elected based on the change mantra and the resolve to fight corruption, this statement was greeted with shock by many Nigerians. Therefore, corruption will certainly be used in the 2019 presidential elections to judge the capacity and response of the current regime in managing this significant problem. Looking at the state of the economy, many tend to accuse the current regime of not adequately addressing most of the economic concerns and challenges. This is clearly seen in the inability of the government to stabilize the currency exchange rate, the massive job losses as a result of some of the harsh economic policies undertaken by the regime.

As observed by Ogidan (2019) this position indicates that the failure and inability of the APC-led government of President Muhammadu Buhari saw an increase in unemployment and poverty in the country. This is reflected in the recent studies and reports by the National Bureau of Statistics, which show that the current percentage of unemployment in Nigeria as of December 2018 stands at 23.1%, almost doubling

the 14% figure before the rise to power of the APC government in 2015. Also, looking at the poverty discourse, it was also reported that as of December 2018, there has been a sharp increase in the poverty index of Nigerians, with the number of people earning below one US dollar per day rising to 90 million. Finally, the fact that the country was in recession, the rising cost of living, the fall in the GDP (especially since 2015), and the government has not been able to adequately deal with these concerns (World Bank, 2019).

#### **2.4. Manifesto of Contending Candidates: The Next Level vs. Let's Get Nigeria Working Again**

Omotola (2009) hinted that the manifesto of political parties is also vital in assessing the blueprint as well as what each candidate intends to do once elected into office. From the manifestoes, the voter is informed on which side of the political divide will clearly serve his/her wishes and aspirations when eventually elected. That has been a major factor determining the pendulum and stakes involved in the political process. In 2015, the contending narrative was the 'Change mantra' proposed by the APC, while the ruling PDP government believed in continuing with the 'Transformation agenda'. In the build-up to the 2019 elections, the APC rebranded its manifesto into the 'Next Level' (Vanguard, 2018b) narrative, whereas the PDP adopted the 'Let's Get Nigeria Working again'.

These two contending narratives have become the talking point in the forthcoming elections given that voters are given the alternative to either continue with the current regime that aspires to take Nigeria to the next level of development, with better service delivery, guaranteed security and the creation of employment opportunities or, to opt for the 'Let's get Nigeria working again'. An anecdote the PDP believes the current government failed to deliver to Nigerians what they had promised 2015 judging by the level of hardship, insecurity, poverty, and unemployment amongst other major challenges currently impacting the country (Vanguard, 2018a). Consequently, the two contending campaign promise by the candidates will ultimately determine the direction and stakes in the election process, especially in terms of how voters will respond as well as raising the stakes in the electioneering process.

#### **2.5. Personalities of Candidates**

In the 2015 General Elections, President Buhari emerged with the credentials and personality of someone that was firm, decisive, discipline and abhorred corruption. Based on his personality, many Nigerians believed he would proffer decisive leadership, deal with corruption as well as the challenges of insecurity in the country (Ogunmade, 2018). However, after 2 years of his regime, these perceptions and nuances have been seriously dampened judging by the current state of affairs. With that disposition, the voters believe that the challenges facing the country seem to be too overwhelming for the current APC government to handle (The Camera, 2018; Fabiyi, 2018).

On the other hand, the personality of Atiku Abubakar of the PDP as an astute businessman and a good manager led many to argue that his persona could be the plausible factor that would enable him to deal with some of the challenges that the APC government failed to tackle, especially the state of the economy and security (U. Orji, 2017). Regarding the aspect of corruption, it has been alleged that Atiku's

integrity record is under threat based on his source of wealth and the many allegations of financial impropriety directed towards him when he was the country's vice president from 1999 – 2007 (Aytogo, 2018; Onyibe, 2018). With these contending and contrasting personalities, each of the political actors tend to extensively use that in order to further raise the political stakes and to pursue the narrative to members of the public regarding their voting preference in the forthcoming elections.

## CONCLUSION

Every election cycle tends to be driven by its discourse, which invariably has far-reaching implications in determining the pattern and direction of voting as well as further raises the stakes between the various political actors competing for power. It was within this framework that this article examined the paradox of political stakes and the pattern of voting in Nigeria with a particular emphasis on the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. These two elections saw major topical discussions and agendas focusing on certain issues such as the instrumentalization of the religion and ethnic fractionalization of the country by the elites to mobilize voters, to measuring the state of security, economy, the manifesto of the major competing candidates and finally the personality of the candidates as standards to measure the level of stakes which ultimately, has influenced the direction voters elect their candidates.

From the analysis and discourse, this article discovered that in the two elections in Nigeria, these issues that were seen to have raised the level of stakes in the polity were used by the various actors across the various political divide in order to mobilize support and determine the direction and stance the voters would take when choosing their candidates. From the analysis and findings, there is no significant difference between the discourse used in the 2015 and the 2019 presidential elections. In fact, many thought that religion would not have a significant impact in determining the pattern and direction of voting in the 2019 elections given that both President Muhammadu Buhari of the APC and Atiku Abubakar of the PDP are from the same religion, region, and ethnic origins. Conversely, religion was further used by the elites to manipulate voters into believing that their interests would receive greater protection under President Buhari's presidency, a narrative which was reflected in the outcome of the results where Buhari was said to have won the elections with about 15.2 million votes, representing 56% of the total votes cast, while his closest rival Atiku Abubakar received about 11.3 million votes, representing 44% of the total votes cast. Thus, in the two elections, all the actors across the political divides were seen to use that discourse as a tool for voter mobilization, a paradigm which clearly was seen in both the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria. The outcome of these elections reflects a paradigm of continuity or maintaining the status quo rather than any form of change.

## REFERENCES

- Abdullahi, A. A., and Saka, L. (2007), “Ethno-Religious and Political Conflicts: Threat to Nigeria Nascent Democracy”, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 9(3): 21-36.
- Adebowale, S. (2013), “Transformation Agenda: FG Achieved Eight of 14 Objectives”, *The Eagle News*, 30 May 2013, <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/transformation-agenda-fg-achieved-eight-of-14-objectives-minister/>, Accessed on 16.01.2019.
- Afolayan, S., and Olanrewaju, A. T. (2017), “The 2015 Elections and Campaign of Calumny: The Media Play with Abusive Language in Electioneering” *Annals of Language and Literature*, 1(2): 35-43.
- Africa Independent Television (2015), “I Will Tackle Insecurity, Poverty – Buhari”, 29 May 2015, [http://www.aitonline.tv/post-i\\_will\\_tackle\\_insecurity\\_\\_\\_poverty\\_\\_\\_buhari](http://www.aitonline.tv/post-i_will_tackle_insecurity___poverty___buhari), Accessed on 28.12.2018.
- Agbu, O. (2016), “Election Rigging and the Use of Technology: The Smart Card Reader as the Joker in Nigeria’s 2015 Presidential Election”, *Journal of African Elections*, 15(2): 90-111.
- Agence France-Presse (2015), “Goodluck Jonathan: Nigeria’s Fortunate Leader”, *Daily Nation*, 22 March 2015, <https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/Goodluck-Jonathan-Nigeria-fortunate-leader/1190-2662154-tglu7ez/index.html>, Accessed on 17.01.2019.
- Agency Report (2019), “2019 Poll: Miyetti Allah Endorses Buhari”, *The Nation*, 18 January 2019, <http://thenationonlineng.net/2019-poll-miyetti-allah-endorses-buhari/>, Accessed on 24.01.2019.
- Ahmad, M. (2015), “Jonathan Politicizing Boko Haram, Chibok Girls Abduction – Senator”, *Premium Times*, 6 March, 2016, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/178062-jonathan-politicizing-boko-haram-chibok-girls-abduction-senator.html>, Accessed on 18 December 2018.
- Ailemen, T. (2019), “Insecurity in North West: Yari mulls Nigeria, Niger Rep. joint Military Operation”, *Business Day*, 19 March 2019, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/insecurity-in-north-west-yari-mulls-nigeria-niger-rep-joint-military-operation/>, Accessed on 02.04.2019.
- Akinkuotu, E., Gbenro A., and Jesusegun A. (2018), “Eight Politicians with N232bn Corruption Cases Working for Buhari’s Re-Election”, *Punch*, 1 September 2018, <https://punchng.com/eight-politicians-with-n232bn-corruption-cases-working-for-buharis-re-election/>, Accessed on 12.12.2018.
- Akinola, O. (2015), “Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic Fundamentalism, Politics, and Poverty”, *African Security*, 8(1). 1-29.
- Akintide, W. (2011), “Goodluck Jonathan: Too Much of a Weak President to Fundamentally Change the PDP and Status Quo in Nigeria”, *Sahara Reporters*, 30 May 2011, <http://saharareporters.com/2011/05/30/goodluck-jonathan-too-much->

weak-president-fundamentally-change-pdp-and-status-quo-nigeria, Accessed on 10.12.2018.

Akowe, A. F. (2017), "Change mantra and leadership model: schoolings from Emmy Idegú's Another Odolu kingdom", *Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*, 11(1): 33-65.

Alawode, S. O., and Adesanya, O. O. (2016). "Content analysis of 2015 election political advertisements in selected national dailies of Nigeria", *European Scientific Journal*, 12(5): 234-259.

Aleyomi, M. B., and Ajakaiye, O. O. (2014). "The impact of social media on citizens' mobilization and participation in Nigeria's 2011 general elections", *Centrepont Journal*, 17(2): 31-52.

Amnesty International (2018), "Nigeria: Government Failures Fuel Escalating Conflict Between Farmers and Herders as Death Toll Nears 4,000", 17 December 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/nigeria-government-failures-fuel-escalating-conflict-between-farmers-and-herders-as-death-toll-nears-4000/>, Accessed on 25.02.2019.

Angerbrandt, H. (2015), "Placing Conflict: Religion and Politics in Kaduna State, Nigeria", (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University).

Angerbrandt, H. (2016), "Struggles Over Identity and Territory: Regional Identities in Ethnoreligious Conflict in Northern Nigeria", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 22(2): 172-192.

Aniche, E. T. (2018), "The 'David and Goliath' and 2015 Election Outcomes in Nigeria: From the Opposition to the Ruling Party", *Insight on Africa*, 10(1): 21-36.

Anugwom, E. E. (2005), "Oil minorities and the politics of resource control in Nigeria", *Africa Development*, 30(4): 87-120.

Apuke, O. D., and Apollos, I. N. (2017). "Public perception of the role of Facebook usage in political campaigns in Nigeria", *Informing Science: International Journal of Community Development and Management Studies*, 1: 85-102.

Araba, A. A., and Braimah, J. O. (2015), "Comparative Study of 2011 And 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria", *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research*, 15(7): 48-54.

Arinze, G. (2019), "How Nigeria's Deepening Insecurity Could Mar Buhari's Re-election Bid", *International Policy Digest*, 16 January 2019, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2019/01/16/how-nigeria-s-deepening-insecurity-could-mar-buhari-s-re-election-bid/>, Accessed on 25.01.2019.

Attoh, F., and Soyombo, O. (2011), "The Politics of Ethnic Balancing in Nigeria", *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(2): 40-44.

Ayitogo, N. (2018), "2019: Buhari: Atiku Attack Each Other Over Corruption Allegations", *Premium Times*, 30 December 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/303466-2019-buhari-atiku-attack-each-other-over-corruption-allegations.html>, Accessed on 8.01.2019.



- Aziken, E. (2013), "State of the Nation: How They Made Nigeria Ungovernable", *Vanguard*, 15 May 2013, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/state-of-the-nation-have-they-made-nigeria-ungovernable/>, Accessed on 18.01.2019.
- Baldwin, D. A. (1997), "The concept of security", *Review of International Studies*, 23(1): 5-26.
- Balmas, M., and Sheafer, T. (2010), "Candidate Image in Election Campaigns: Attribute Agenda Setting, Affective Priming, and Voting Intentions", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 22(2): 204-229.
- BBC News (2015), "Nigeria Postpones Presidential Vote over Security", 8 February 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31221545>, Accessed on 13.12.2018.
- Bienen, H. (2013), "Political conflict and economic change in Nigeria". London: Routledge.
- Brandt, C. (2018), "Nigeria Heads for Elections in February, but Governance is the Real Challenge", *Freedom House*, 13 November 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/nigeria-heads-elections-february-governance-real-challenge>, Accessed on 17.01.2019.
- Bratton, M., and Lewis, P. (2007), "The Durability of Political Goods? Evidence From Nigeria's New Democracy", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45(1): 1-33.
- Busari, K. (2018), "Nigerian Govt. Lying About Boko Haram Defeat, Terrorists Controlling Territories – APC Reps", *Premium Times*, 8 December 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/299848-nigerian-govt-lying-about-boko-haram-defeat-terrorists-controlling-territories-apc-reps.html> Accessed on 21.12.2018.
- Busari, K. (2019), "Buhari Has No Integrity, His Government is Corrupt – Saraki", *Premium Times*, 9 January 2019, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/305028-buhari-has-no-integrity-his-government-is-corrupt-saraki.html>, Accessed on 14.01.2019.
- Campbell, J. (2015), "Nigeria's Elections in 2011 and 2015", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 21 January 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigerias-elections-2011-and-2015>, Accessed on 07.02.2019.
- Campbell, J. (2018), "Nigeria Sees More High Level Corruption Convictions under Buhari", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 31 May 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigeria-sees-more-high-level-corruption-convictions-under-buhari>, Accessed on 19.12.2018.
- Chiamogu, A. P., and Chiamogu, U. P. (2015, November). "Disturbance theory and opposition politics in Nigeria: An appraisal of All Progressives Congress (APC) performance in the 2015 general elections", 3rd Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association South East Chapter, November 8-11, in International Organization Center of Academic, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amobi\\_Chiamogu/publication/317618229\\_Disturbance\\_Theory\\_and\\_Opposition\\_Politics\\_in\\_Nigeria\\_An\\_Appraisal\\_of\\_All\\_Progressives\\_Congress\\_APC\\_Performance\\_in\\_the\\_2015\\_General\\_Elections/links/5943d20](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amobi_Chiamogu/publication/317618229_Disturbance_Theory_and_Opposition_Politics_in_Nigeria_An_Appraisal_of_All_Progressives_Congress_APC_Performance_in_the_2015_General_Elections/links/5943d20)

daca2722db49d063a/Disturbance-Theory-and-Opposition-Politics-in-Nigeria-An-Appraisal-of-All-Progressives-Congress-APC-Performance-in-the-2015-General-Elections.pdf

Chukwudi, O. R. (2014), "Democracy and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria: Reimagining the Nexus", *European Scientific Journal*, 10(1): 229-248.

Danâ, A., and Jibrin, A. (2017), "The New Political Climate in Nigeria: Change or Status Quo?", *Academy of Social Science Journal*, 2(10).

Dauda, B., Owojuyigbe, M. A., and Mekoa, I. (2017), "'Ire Gbogbo' Political Rhetoric in Nigeria's 2015 General Elections: An Orunmilaist Sociological Perspective", *Ibadan Journal of Sociology*, 6(1): 41-66.

Eagle Eye News Report (2014), "Kaita: North'll Make Nigeria Ungovernable for Jonathan 'That unfolding threat'", 5 May 2014, <https://eagleeyereportconnect.blogspot.com/2014/05/kaita-north-ll-make-nigeria.html>, Accessed on 19.01.2019.

Ejiogu, E. C. (2016), "The roots of political instability in Nigeria: political evolution and development in the Niger basin", New York: Routledge.

Elklit, J., and Svensson, P. (1997), "The Rise of Election Monitoring: What Makes Elections Free And Fair?", *Journal of Democracy*, 8(3): 32-46.

Ewi, M. (2015), "Was the Nigerian 2015 Presidential Election A Victory for Boko Haram or For Democracy?" *African Security Review*, 24(2): 207-231.

Ezukanma, T. (2016), "Interrogating Buhari's Leadership Style", *The Sun*, 1 December 2016, <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/interrogating-buharis-leadership-style/>, Accessed on 19.12.2018.

Fabiyi, O. (2018), "ICYMI: Buhari Hasn't Run Any Successful Business – Atiku", *Punch*, 18 October 2018, <https://punchng.com/buhari-hasnt-run-any-successful-business-atiku/>, Accessed on 19.01.2019.

Faleye, O. A. (2019), "Border securitisation and politics of state policy in Nigeria, 2014–2017" *Insight on Africa*, 11(1): 78-93.

Fick, M. (2016), "Buhari Turns to War Against Indiscipline as Economy Slides", *Financial Times*, 21 August 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/117a43b0-65e7-11e6-8310-ecf0bddad227>, Accessed on 17 February 2019,

Ginsberg, B., and Shefter, M. (1990), *Politics by other means: The declining importance of elections in America*. New York: Basic Books.

Goga, N. G. (2018), "Nigeria: Thousands Living in Fear as Zamfara Armed Bandits Ramp up Attacks", *Amnesty International*, 31 July 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/07/nigeria-thousands-living-in-fear-as-zamfara-armed-bandits-ramp-up-attacks/> Accessed on 20.02.2019.

Gyong, J. E. (2012), "A Social Analysis of the Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan" *European Scientific Journal*, 8(16): 95-113.

Harff, B. (2018), *Ethnic Conflict In World Politics: Dilemmas*. London: Routledge.

- Ibekwe, N. (2015), "10 Ways Jonathan Failed Nigerians", Premium Times, 15 May 2015, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/184088-10-ways-jonathan-failed-nigerians.html>, Accessed on 12.12.2018.
- Ibekwe, N. (2018), "Real Reasons I Lost Presidential Election – Goodluck Jonathan", Premium Times, 20 November 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/296673-real-reasons-i-lost-2015-presidential-election-goodluck-jonathan.html>, Accessed on 07.12.2018.
- Ibrahim, S. G., Liman, A. N., and Mato, K. (2015), "The 2015 General Elections: A Review of Major Determinants of Paradigm Shift in Voting Behaviour and Political Participation in Nigeria", *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2(9): 8-16.
- Idris, H., Olaniyi, M., Jimoh, A., Terzungwe, S., Ozibo, O., Ibrahim Y. A., and Oke, J. (2019), "How 2019 Elections Are Becoming 'Religious'", Daily Trust, 7 February 2019, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/how-2019-elections-are-becoming-religious.html>, Accessed on 18.02.2019.
- Joseph, R. A. (2014), "Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic", New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawson, L. (1999), "External Democracy Promotion in Africa: Another False Start?", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 37(1): 1-30.
- Lewis, P., and Kew, D. (2015), "Nigeria's hopeful election", *Journal of Democracy*, 26(3): 94-109.
- Lijphart, A. (2012), *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*. Yale University Press.
- Manin, B., Przeworski, A, and Stokes, S. C. (1999), "Elections and Representation", A. Przeworski, S. C. Stokes and B. Manin (eds.), *Democracy, accountability, and representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 29-54.
- Marc, A., and Mackian, S. (1995), "Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity: From Places to Non-places". New York: Verso.
- Mbachu, D. (2019), "Why So Much is at Stake in Nigeria's Elections: QuickTake", The Washington Post. 16 February, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-so-much-is-at-stake-in-nigerias-elections-quicktake/2019/02/16/b0e29ea6-31d8-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/why-so-much-is-at-stake-in-nigerias-elections-quicktake/2019/02/16/b0e29ea6-31d8-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4_story.html), Accessed on 27.02.2019.
- Mbah, F. (2018), "Nigeria's Buhari Rattled by Boko Haram Attacks as Polls Loom", Aljazeera, 1 December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/nigeria-buhari-rattled-boko-haram-attacks-polls-181130134916199.html>, Accessed on 19.02.2019.
- Mbah, P. O., Nwangwu, C., and Ugwu, S. C. (2019), "Contentious Elections, Political Exclusion, and Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria", *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5(1): 1-21.
- McCombs, M. E., and Shaw, D. L. (1972), "The agenda-setting function of mass media", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2): 176-187.

McCombs, M. E., and Shaw, D. L. (1993), "The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas", *Journal of Communication*, 43(2): 58-67.

McCombs, M., and Funk, M. (2011), "Shaping the Agenda of Local Daily Newspapers: A Methodology Merging the Agenda Setting and Community Structure Perspectives.", *Mass Communication and Society*, 14(6): 905-919.

Mrogers, E., and Wdearing, J. (1988), "Agenda-Setting Research: Where Has it Been, Where is it Going?", *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 11(1): 555-594.

Nation Newspaper. (2017), "Nigeria Lost \$32bn to Corruption Under Former President Jonathan – DFID", Sahara Reporters, 12 December 2017, <http://saharareporters.com/2017/12/12/nigeria-lost-32bn-corruption-under-former-president-jonathan-%E2%80%93-dfid>, Accessed on 20.02.2019.

Nigerian Bulletin. (2015), "Lawal Kaita was right: They made Nigeria ungovernable after 2011", 26 March 2015, <https://www.nigerianbulletin.com/threads/lawal-kaita-was-right-they-made-nigeria-ungovernable-after-2011.109388/>, Accessed on 07.12.2018.

Njoku, C. (2019), "Here are 5 security challenges Nigeria's leader must tackle", World Economic Forum, 28 February 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/5-security-challenges-facing-nigerias-leadership/>, Accessed on 03.03.2019.

Nolte, I. (2015), "Explainer: What's at Stake in The Nigerian Election?", The Conversation, 27 March 2015, <http://theconversation.com/explainer-whats-at-stake-in-the-nigerian-election-37259>, Accessed on 23.12.2018.

Nwachukwu, J. O. (2017), "Jonathan Was a Weak President, Patience Would Have Been A Better President, Nnamdi Kanu", Daily Post, 26 June 2017, <http://dailypost.ng/2017/06/26/jonathan-weak-president-patience-better-president-nnamdi-kanu/>, Accessed on 2.12.2018.

Obot, C. (2013). "Mass Media Electioneering Campaign and Uyo (Nigeria) Voters' Decision during 2011 General Elections", *Journal of Politics and Law*, 6(1): 173-185.

Odebode, N., and Adetayo, O. (2018), "ICYMI: Presidency Lists Corruption Cases Under Jonathan", Punch, 8 May 2018, <https://punchng.com/presidency-lists-corruption-cases-under-jonathan/>, Accessed on 28.11.2018.

Odunsi, W. (2015), "Boko Haram Killings Increased after Buhari's Threat to Make Nigeria Ungovernable – Fasehun", Daily Post, 3 May 2015, <http://dailypost.ng/2015/01/03/boko-haram-killings-increased-buharis-threat-make-nigeria-ungovernable-fasehun/>, Accessed on 28.11.2018.

Odunsi, W. (2018), "I'm More Energised to Fight Corruption – Buhari", Daily Post, 12 October 2018, <http://dailypost.ng/2018/10/12/im-energized-fight-corruption-buhari/>, Accessed on 17.12.2018.

Ogbonna, A. (2017), "Why Jonathan, PDP Lost 2015 Presidential Election – Makarfi", Vanguard, 16 October 2017, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/>

- 2017/10/jonathan-pdp-lost-2015-presidential-election-makarfi/, Accessed on 6.12.2018.
- Ogidan, S. (2019), “Buhari’s Feats Are Job Losses, Poverty Of 90m Nigerians – Atiku”, Daily Independent, 2 January 2019, <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/africa/top-stories/buhari%E2%80%99s-feats-are-job-losses-poverty-of-90m-nigerians-%E2%80%94-atiku/ar-BBRHwVI>, Accessed on 06.02.2019.
- Ogundiya, I. S. (2009), “Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations”, *The Anthropologist*, 11(4): 281-292.
- Ogunmade, O. (2018), “Buhari: I Have No Regret Being A Man of Integrity”, This Day, 26 June 2018, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/06/26/buhari-i-have-no-regret-being-a-man-of-integrity/>, Accessed on 18.12.2018.
- Okeke, R. C. (2017), “The Jonathan Administration in Nigeria: A Postmortem Study and Lessons for Dictators in Africa”, *World Scientific News*, 70(2), 285-303.
- Okolo, P. O., and Karimo, T. M. (2017), “Change Mantra in Nigeria: The Promises and Expectations”, *EBSU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(1): 146-155.
- Olayode, K. O. (2015), “Ethno-regional cleavages and voting behaviour in the 2015 general elections: Issues and challenges for democratisation and nation building”, The National Conference of the Electoral Institute (TEI), Abuja, Nigeria, [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a16/a1f6940d6b4eec055bbc8c3eee4f77fa4a3a.pdf?\\_ga=2.156221819.1962324440.1554195409-846897460.1554195409](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4a16/a1f6940d6b4eec055bbc8c3eee4f77fa4a3a.pdf?_ga=2.156221819.1962324440.1554195409-846897460.1554195409), Accessed on 16.12.2018.
- Olowojolu, O. (2016). “Role of Media in 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria”, *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, 7(7.1): 1-12.
- Omaamaka, O. F., and Groupson-Paul, O. (2015), “Nigeria’s Hegemony in West Africa: Counting the Cost”, *Journal of International Studies*, 11: 65-89.
- Omojuyigbe, O. (2018), “Buhari’s Government is Corrupt, says Ezekwesili”, Punch, 30 October 2018, <https://punchng.com/buharis-government-is-corrupt-says-ezekwesili/>, Accessed on 19.11.2018.
- Omotola, J. S. (2009), “Nigerian Parties and Political Ideology”, *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1(3): 612-634.
- Onapajo, H. (2017). “Has Nigeria Defeated Boko Haram? An Appraisal of the Counter-Terrorism Approach under the Buhari Administration”, *Strategic Analysis*, 41(1): 61-73.
- Onyibe, M. (2018), “Connecting the Dots in the Atiku Corruption Hoax”, This Day, 21 December 2018, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/12/21/connecting-the-dots-in-the-atiku-corruption-hoax/>, Accessed on 16.01.2019.
- Orji, N. (2014), “Nigeria’s 2015 election in perspective”, *Africa Spectrum*, 49(3): 121-133.
- Orji, N. (2015), “The 2015 Nigerian general elections”, *Africa Spectrum*, 50(2): 73-85.
- Orji, N. (2017), “Preventive action and conflict mitigation in Nigeria’s 2015 elections”, *Democratization*, 24(4): 707-723.

- Orji, U. (2017), "Atiku, the Man for This Season", *The Sun*, 7 July 2017, <https://www.sunnewsonline.com/atiku-the-man-for-this-season/>, Accessed on 07.12.2018.
- Osaghae, E. (2003), "Explaining the changing patterns of ethnic politics in Nigeria", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 9(3): 54-73.
- Osaghae, E. E., and Suberu, R. T. (2005), "A history of identities, violence and stability in Nigeria", *CRISE Working Paper No. 6*. Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, University of Oxford.
- Owen, O., and Usman, Z. (2015), "Briefing: Why Goodluck Jonathan lost the Nigerian presidential election of 2015", *African Affairs*, 114(456): 455-471.
- Oyero, O., Oyeyemi, K. D., Usaini, S., and Omole, F. (2017), "Identity Politics and Nigerian 2015 Presidential Elections: A Discourse Analysis of Feedback Comments on Selected Online Reports of Political Issues", *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities*, Ferit Uslu (ed.), Istanbul: International Organization Center of Academic, Dubai, UAE, 1368-1374. <http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/9347/1/322.pdf>, Accessed on 15.01.2019.
- Punch (2018a), "Curbing Insecurity in the North", 20 July 2018, <https://punchng.com/curbing-insecurity-in-the-north/>, Accessed on 17.03.2019.
- Punch (2018b), "Insecurity Worse under Buhari than Jonathan- Sheikh Gumi", 7 July 2018, <https://punchng.com/insecurity-worse-under-buhari-than-jonathan-sheikh-gumi/>, Accessed on 17.12.2018.
- Punch (2019), "Fighting Corruption in Nigeria is Difficult, Buhari Alleges", 5 February 2019, <https://punchng.com/fighting-corruption-in-nigeria-is-difficult-buhari-alleges/>, Accessed on 17.02.2018.
- Quaglia, E. A., and Smyth, B. (2017), "A Short Introduction to Secrecy and Verifiability for Elections", arXiv preprint arXiv:1702.03168.
- Rosenau, W., Mushen, E., and McQuaid, J. (2015), "Security During Nigeria's 2015 National Elections: What Should We Expect From the Police?" (OMB No. 0704-0188). CNA Analysis and Solutions Arlington, VA., <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a616056.pdf>, Accessed on 15.01.2018
- Ross, W. (2015), "Nigeria Elections: Mixing Religion and Politics", *BBC News*, 29 January 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31026554>, Accessed on 19.02.2019.
- Saheed, O. D. (2015), "Newspaper framing of the APC change campaigns in the 2015 presidential election: A study of the Punch and The Guardian newspapers", (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, Adekunle Ajasin University).
- Scott, J. C. (1969), "Corruption, machine politics, and political change", *American Political Science Review*, 63(4): 1142-1158.
- Simon, O. B. (2014), "2015 and the Survival of the Nigerian State", *African Security Review*, 23(2): 161-171.

- Siollun, M. (2015), "How Goodluck Jonathan Lost the Nigerian Election", *The Guardian*, 1 April 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/01/nigeria-election-goodluck-jonathan-lost>, Accessed on 19.11.2018.
- Solomon, H. (2012), "Counter-terrorism in Nigeria: Responding to Boko Haram", *The RUSI Journal*, 157(4): 6-11.
- Stewart, F. (2012), "Religion Versus Ethnicity as a Source of Mobilization: Are There Differences?", Y. Guichaoua (ed.), *Understanding Collective Political Violence*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 196-221.
- Suleiman, M. D., and Maiangwa, B. (2017), "Nigeria and the 'Making' of Combative Identities", *African Identities*, 15(3): 260-277.
- The Camera (2018), "Omoyele Sowore: President Buhari is Not a Man of Integrity", 3 May 2018, <https://thecameranews.com/omoyele-sowore-president-buhari-is-not-a-man-of-integrity/>, Accessed on 1.12.2018.
- The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018), "Ensuring the integrity of elections", The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (eds.), *Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy*, Washington, DC: The National Academic Press, 85-87.
- Thom-Otuya, B. E. (2015), "President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda and Nigeria's Foreign Policy", *Social Science Review*, 1(1): 29-35.
- UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. (n.d.). Section 4: Key informant interviews. Retrieved from [https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw\\_cba23.pdf](https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba23.pdf)
- Ukiwo, U. (2003), "Politics, Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(1): 115-138.
- Urien, J. (2012), "The Impact of Corruption on the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria", *Crown Research in Education*, 2(3): 143-152.
- Vanguard (2018a), "APC failed to deliver, says Atiku", 20 November 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/apc-failed-to-deliver-says-atiku/>, Accessed on 06.01.2019.
- Vanguard (2018b), "Apcs Roadmap Ahead of 2019 Elections, the 'Next Level' by Buhari", 18 November 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/apcs-roadmap-ahead-of-the-2019-elections-the-next-level-by-buhari/>, Accessed on 29.12.2018.
- Walgrave, S., and Van Aelst, P. (2006), "The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory", *Journal of Communication*, 56(1): 88-109.
- Wojtasik, W. (2013), "Functions of Elections in Democratic Systems", *Political Preferences*, 4: 25-38.
- World Bank (2019), Nigeria, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/nigeria>, Accessed on 15.02.2019.
- Zane, D. (2015), "Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan: Five Reasons Why He Lost", BBC News, 15 March 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32136295>, Accessed on 13.12.2018.

*Cemal Yorgancioğlu is a PhD candidate and a research assistant at the Near East University. Yorgancioğlu completed his undergraduate studies at the Eastern Mediterranean University in 1997 from the field of International Relations and a Master of Arts degree in 2016 at the Near East University. Yorgancioğlu is expected to finish his studies at the Doctorate level in Political Science and International Relations in 2020.*

*Cemal Yorgancioğlu, Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi'nde doktora adayı ve araştırma görevlisidir. Yorgancioğlu, lisans eğitimini 1997 yılında Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nde Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Yüksek Lisans derecesini 2016 yılında Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi'nde tamamlamıştır. Yorgancioğlu'nun 2020 yılında Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler bölümündeki doktora düzeyinde çalışmalarını bitirmesi bekleniyor.*

*Dingji Maza Kangdim is a PhD candidate at the Near East University. Kangdim completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Jos in 2010 from the field of Political Science and a Master of Arts degree in 2014 at the Eastern Mediterranean University. Kandim is expected to finish his studies at the Doctorate level in Political Science and International Relations in 2020.*

*Dingji Maza Kandim, Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi'nde doktora adayıdır. Kandim lisans eğitimini 2010 yılında Jos Üniversitesi'nde Siyaset Bilimi ve yüksek lisans derecesini 2014 yılında Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nde tamamladı. Kandim'in 2020 yılında Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler bölümündeki doktora düzeyinde çalışmalarını bitirmesi bekleniyor.*