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The 2015 Presidential Election and the Concession of Defeat by Goodluck Jonathan: A Recipe for the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria

Dr. Akaayar Felix Ahokegh¹

¹Department of History & International studies, Kogi State University, Anyigba.

*Corresponding Author:

Dr. Akaayar Felix Ahokegh

Email: ahokeghfelix1961@gmail.com

Abstract: Nigeria's federal system concentrates enormous political and economic powers in the centre. Thus, politics for the control of this very powerful centre have always been tense and often result to crises. This paper examines the political variables that accounted for power-shift, from the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples' Democratic Party to Mohammadu Buhari of the All Progressive Congress. The paper holds that Jonathan's acceptance of defeat opens a new chapter in the political history of Nigeria, which invariably would translate to the consolidation of democracy in the country. As a mark of conclusion, the paper suggests the following palliatives: politicians should sustain the Goodluck Jonathan spirit of sportsmanship, demonetization of the polity and a redefinition of the nation's federal system, to devolve more powers to the component parts.

Keywords: Nigeria, federal system, economic powers

INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance is about election [1], which everywhere in the world produces competition for political offices. In most places, precisely in Africa, the tone of rivalry amongst competitors sometimes makes one to wonder if the aim of the competition is not of self-serving interest. Since independence of Nigeria in 1960 and most profoundly after the discovery of oil, the desire to control the centre, which obviously leads to the control the nation's resources, has been a thorny issue.

It was this very craze to sit on the oil wealth of the nation that made the military to abandon their professional responsibility of protecting the territorial integrity of Nigeria for governance. To control the oil wealth, in 1972 Gen. Yakubu Gowon entrusted the management of the nation's oil resources to the Nigeria National Oil Corporation (NNOC) and declared that all oil properties not already owned at the time, by foreign entities, legally and automatically became the properties of the government. To further ensure the absolute control of the oil resource by the federal government, the Nigerian constitution provides that all minerals, oil and gas, regardless of their area of location, are the exclusive properties of the federal government, who reserves the right to negotiate the terms of oil production with the private firms[2].

So, oil wealth has become an albatross that literally strangles the nation. It has been a potential source of conflict between the Niger Delta communities in attempt to outplay one another for control of the oil

fortunes and between the Niger Delta communities and successive governments for compensation due to the degradation of their environment caused by oil spillage [3]. The worst form of the evils of the oil regime is the abatement of ethnic antagonism; in form of allegations of marginalization. Very often, this cry points at the ethnic group whose person is the president of the country. The fact that the man who becomes president of Nigeria has all the powers that can hardly be imagined, the battle for the position has been a fierce one, involving the application of the worst instruments of campaign, as witnessed in the history of election in the country.

Of course, there has never been any time in the history of Nigeria's election that the actors forgot the enormous powers in the centre, as vested in the president. In the 1979 presidential election for example, the political parties were ethnic-based. The three leading political parties were the northern-based National Party of Nigeria (NPC), with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as its presidential candidate; the eastern-based Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) fronted Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as its presidential candidate and the westernbased Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), which presented Chief Obafemi Awolowo as its presidential candidate. Though, the political parties represented the three major ethnic groups of Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba respectively, their membership cut across the entire country and candidates traversed the country, somehow freely. Though, campaigns for the 1979 presidential election portrayed clearly the divisions in the society, yet they were not as horrific as witnessed in the 2015 presidential election, which hinged heavily on hate, slander, bigotry and intimidation. It is still memorable that Chief Awolowo during one of his presidential campaigns tours of the country literally begged the crowed to give him the opportunity to rule Nigeria, even if for a day. There is no doubt that he obviously eyed the nation's wealth and power, which the centre holds. However, arising from the policy of his 1960 political party, the Action Group (AG) in the western region; free education, one inclines to believe he had hoped to stay loner as Nigeria's president; more than just one day, to extend his free education policy throughout the country.

Good as his intention appeared to be, the 1979 presidential results, which showed that Chief Awolowo lost became a matter of controversy. According to him, the election did not produce an outright winner at the first count. This was because Alhaji Shehu Shagari did not satisfy the two conditions stipulated by the electoral law simultaneously. This was that though, he scored the highest total votes but did not secure the required onethird (25%) of the total votes cast in two-thirds (13 States) of the 19 States of the federation. He consequently sought interpretation of some issues in court. However, on 26th September, 1979 the Supreme court presided by Justice Fatai Williams decided in favour of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, thereby reaffirming the of Federal electoral Commission declaration (FEDECO) [4].

Table-1: Result of the 1979 Presidential Election

PARTY	VOTES SCORED	% SCORED
NPN	5668857	33.77
UPN	4916651	29.18
NPP	2822523	16.75
PRP	1732113	10.28
GNPP	1686489	10.02

Source: Federal Electoral Commission, 1979

Alhaji Shagari's NPN formed a coalition government with Azikiwe's NPP, thus isolating Chief Awolowo's UPN, the same manner that his Action Group was isolated in the 1960s.

The 1999 and 2004 presidential elections, which saw Chief Olusegun Obasanjo ruling the country for eight years were equally fierce. Just out of prison, many Nigerians did not see him as a suitable presidential candidate, having not freed himself from the trauma of his incarceration. However, for reasons quite unknown to many Nigerians, ex-military officers and top politicians from northern Nigeria preferred him. This explains the allegation that northern ex-military officers aided in manipulating the election for someone that they trusted; a former compatriot in the military, who could cover up their administrative mistakes and crimes. At the expiry of his second term, President Obasanjo began to feel the pains of exiting the corridors

of political power and forgoing the control of the nation's oil wealth, which the constitution heaped in the centre. Yet, the constitution of Nigeria does not permit a third term. Visibly disturbed, and as a show of helplessness and bitterness, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo attempted to tinker with the constitution; to amend the relevant provision for a third term ticket. Though, his effort ended in futility, it never presented a picture of the total rejection of his idea. While the generality of the Nigerian electorate rejected the idea, his cohorts and cronies supported it. The attempt at tempering with the constitution to secure a third term bait by Chief Obasanjo is understood against the backdrop of the crisis of leadership in Africa, as a whole and Nigeria, in particular.

It is pertinent to note that the nation's electoral umpire has always functioned as appendage to the government in power. It has always shown great incapacity to act independently, maybe because the government appoints its members and provides it with the finances to carry out logistics required for election. Frankly and courageously, President Umaru Musa Yar Adua admitted that the 2007 presidential election that produced him had short-comings. It is felt that the term short-coming was a mild way of expressing the situation. Indeed, what Nigerians saw during the 2007 presidential election were rigging, destruction of property, killing of human beings, etc. President Yar Adua admonished politicians as he further reiterated that:

The history of election in Nigeria had been that of controversies...the responsibilities for all the failures lay mostly with the political actors. No matter the legislations, no matter the efforts we put at electoral reforms, unless we the political leaders change our attitude towards election, we will continue to have problems [5]

The 2015 Presidential Election: Campaigns, Voting and Collation of Results

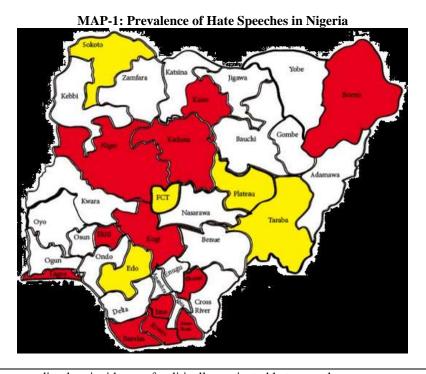
The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had sets clearly the contour of the 2015 general elections, including the conduct of campaigns and voting. In the way that past elections in Nigeria have been a matter of do or die, the manner in which the 2015 elections, especially the presidential election was conducted, appeared to be war. Supporters of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) candidate and incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan helplessly prayed for the death of Muhammadu Buhari, the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential flag-bearer and leading challenger to Goodluck Jonathan. This mind-set generated hate campaigns against Buhari as in the preceding information:

 The Ekiti State governor, Peter Ayodele Fayose warned that Nigerians should not vote Buhari because he was too old and sick. He

- insinuated that if elected, Buhari would likely die in office like the late Yar Adua.
- The wife of the incumbent president and presidential candidate, Mrs. Dame Patience Jonathan, in a women rally in Kogi State told women not to vote Buhari because he was unfit to rule the country. She described Buhari as too old and brain dead. Also in Calabar, the Cross River State capital, Mrs. Dame Patience Jonathan urged the people to stone anyone who comes to promise them change; the slogan of the APC.
- A popular Niger delta militant leader, nicknamed as Tompolo declared that he would put Nigeria on fire if Buhari wins the Presidential election
- President Goodluck Jonathan himself declared publicly in one of his campaigns that the person he would ever hand-over to must be someone who is younger than himself,

- implying that Buhari who was older that him was not to be president
- Doyin Okupe, one of President Jonathan's spokesmen publicly announced that Nigerian should begin to call him a bastard if Buhari wins the Presidential election [6].

It is no news that hate campaign has been the culture of politics in Nigeria since independence. However, the extent that it was utilized in the 2015 presidential election surpasses every other time. The pathetic situation is that which the media was seen in partnership with the ruling party, to broadcast hate messages. Perhaps, it is in light of the foregoing that Akpo Ejere expressing worry opined that, never in the history of electioneering in Nigeria have campaigns been as vile as in the 2015 presidential election. He points at the entry of the social media as marking a dangerous twist in the saga.



Legend

States recording low incidence of politically motivated hate speech

States recording significant levels of politically motivated hate speech

States recording high levels of politically motivated hate speech

Source: Nigeria Civil Society: Election Update, 2015

The outcome of the presidential election that saw Muhammadu Buhari emerging victorious explains the extent that Nigerians have become politically enlightened; having grown above the age of blackmail and triviality. Instead, what they want to hear from aspirants is campaign based on issues, which in developed countries like Britain, France and the United States is the most civilized method of seeking votes from the electorate. Issue-based campaign provides opportunity for the masses to know the extent to which

the candidates identify their problems and how they intend to solve them, and not bigotry and insults.

Admitting that hate campaign was the main strategy of the PDP during the 2015 presidential election, the party's national secretary, Olisa Metuh attributed the failure of incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan to hate campaigns against Mohammadu Buhari. According to him the hate messages denied the electorate the opportunity to be abreast with the good

intentions of the PDP candidate, thereby making Mohammadu Buhari popular. In his words:

The PDP campaign was characterized by hate massages against Mohammadu Buhari with little emphasis on the achievement of President Jonathan. Some of the most horrific attacks against Mohammadu Buhari came from the President's wife, Dame Patience, the governor of Ekiti State, Ayodele Fayose, and the spokesperson for President Jonathan's campaign team, Femi Fani Kayode [7].

Though, Olisa Metuh blames Jonathan's defeat on hate campaigns against Buhari, it is obvious that his (Jonathan) failure was due to a plethora of factors. Some factors revolve around President Goodluck Jonathan's personal qualities, others are caused by the attitude of his fellow party members, and yet some factors have been on ground even before Jonathan became President. These factors could be summed as:

President Jonathan suffered the clutch of self-guilt, which affected his boldness to go into the race in 2015. He had expressed satisfaction to rule Nigeria for six years, out of sheer luck, occasioned by the death of his boss and predecessor, Umaru Musa Yar Adua. Indeed, the overwhelming support he enjoyed during the PDP presidential primary, over Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, especially from northern delegates and his subsequent election in 2011 were based on the understanding that he would give way after six years of governance. It was his change of heart that Chief Olusegun Obasanjo considered a deceit and reminded him of his promise:

You (President Goodluck Jonathan) did not hesitate to confirm to me that you are a strong believer in a one-term of six years for the president and by the time you have used the unexpired time of your predecessor and the four years of your first term, you would have used up to six years and would not need any more term or time...hence my inclusion of it in my address at the finale of your campaign in 2011 [9].

• The nature of politics in Nigeria requires that Jonathan should have some basic requisite intelligence to solve some lingering political equations concerning his presidential ambition in 2015. These include, the one bordering on the fact that the south had just finished an eight-year rule via Chief Obasanjo. Therefore, being a southerner, his insistence on ruling for more than six years would mean overconcentrating power in the south, in a stretch of time, which could lead to crisis. Again, Jonathan's six-year rule was actually the eight-

year rule of a northerner, Umaru Muas Yar Adua, a very sick man, whose kith and kin considered an imposition by Chief Obasanjo, in a ploy to return power to the south. Indeed, by the death of Umaru Musa Yar Adua, Jonathan, the vice-President, constitutionally took over as President of Nigeria. To insist on ruling longer than six years, Jonathan was simply reminding the north of the event culminating to Umaru Yar Adua's presidency and his death. But it was those who had lasting benefits in Jonathan's government that strongly encouraged him to seek re-election in 2015. Therefore, it required the utmost sense of Jonathan to realize that those pushing him behind constitute a minute portion of the entire Nigerian electorate and do not mean well for

- Lack of internal democracy occasioned by the hijack of decision making, including party primaries by the PDP State governors was cause of Jonathan's failure. Everywhere in the country, the story remained the same for quite a long time; that the State governors simply appointed their friends as candidates for positions requiring internal party elections. In whatever form that the resistance from members took; whether a resolve not to vote the governor's candidate, money and tugs were used to rig election, thereby making the resistance non-effective in changing the situation. So, the disillusioned Nigerians only awaited the appropriate time to express their rejection of PDP. As PDP presidential candidate, Jonathan was seen as PDP personified.
- The problem of corruption had been on ground in Nigeria for several decades, before the inception of the Goodluck Jonathan presidency. However, it was this very problem of corruption that caused his downfall. Jonathan appeared to lack the political will to fight corruption and so; it became rampant during his time. He seemed content with the paraphernalia and glamour associated with the office of the president, and never cared to shoulder the responsibility of fighting corruption in Nigeria. Maybe, he was such a simple and gentle man that many of his associates and appointees knew and took for granted.
- Idiosyncrasy and leadership antecedents of the APC presidential candidate, Mohammadu Buhari; as a frank Nigerian, a no nonsense person and a corrupt free individual helped to dismantle Jonathan. Thus, his campaign message to eradicate corruption in Nigeria could not be regarded as mere lip service or political propaganda. Of course, as a military

Head of state, he had started cleansing the society of evils, when Gen. Babangida, a direct opposite of his person toppled him, in a military coup in 1984.

The 2015 presidential election marks the first time in Nigeria's political history that power shifts from the ruling PDP to the main opposition APC. However, political observers opine that the long leadership of the PDP was not due to the masses' lack of political enlightenment; rather it was due to rigging and other forms of manipulations, which made the masses' votes not to count. This problem was to a very large extent averted by the introduction of the Card Readers that reduced immensely the possibilities of rigging.

Voting for the 2015 presidential election commenced on 28th March, 2015. While the general feeling among Nigerians was that the Professor Attahiru Jiga led INEC was poised to doing a good job, some sections of the Nigerian society, that is, the south-east and south-south faulted Jiga's work, as attempting to install a northerner as president. Of course, few cases were reported that some Card Readers malfunctioned, but generally everything went unlike the usual tradition, which had been characteristic of snatching ballot boxes. Though, the Card Reader formula saved a lot of problems, it did not completely eradicate manipulations, due to its malfunction and complete abandonment in some areas. Therefore, reports of rigging in some States circulated freely. However, the mostly discussed were the happenings in Rivers State. It was difficult to disbelieve the rumour that elections were not held in Rivers State, or put mildly, were not free and fair.

For one reason, this is the home of the first lady, Dame Patience Jonathan and also an enclave of President Jonathan. It was imagined that the influence and vigour of the Rivers State governor, Rotimi Amaechi, who had dumped the PDP for APC could have made the duo of Dame Patience and Goodluck Jonathan not to compromise any effort at securing victory. Again, the manner in which the first lady unleashed hate speeches against Buhari coupled with Jonathan's swear not to hand over power to anyone older than himself convinced people that the rumour must have been indeed factual. To crown it all, the failure of the Rivers State returning officer, Professor Ekpo, vice-chancellor of University of Calabar, to present the Rivers State presidential election results before INEC at the International Conference Centre, Abuja confirmed everything that happened in Rivers State. Professor Ekpo complained that he was unable to sight the figures due to element of darkness in the hall. Yet, when light was drawn closer to him, he remained hysterical and unable to present the figures. This situation made Professor Attahiru Jiga to question if he really was the person that collated and computed the results [10].

More than Professor Ekpo's inability to present the Rivers State presidential results was another episode at the collation centre. It was the 'war' of Mr. Peter Godsday Orubebe against INEC, intended to scuttle the process. To many Nigerians, Mr. Orubebe's action unraveled and confirmed how dread the battle to control the centre, in the name of politics could turn into. It is necessary to point out here that people have long preempted what the Buhari government would look like, even before the elections; as one that would have zero tolerance for corruption, and so corrupt people had to fight, even though, desperately to protect their future. Today, while accounting for the success of INEC in the 2015 presidential elections, the calm, confidence and ingenuity of the INEC boss, Professor Attahiru Jiga must be upheld. If he had expressed little disgust, the collation could have been aborted, and that was the intention of Mr. Orubebe, when he seized the microphone, accused Jiga of bias and ordered the INEC officers to vacate the premise for their office.

Table-2: Results of the 2015 Presidential Election by Party

PARTES	VOTES SCORED	% OF VOTES
		SCRED
AA	22, 125	0.08
ACPN	40, 211	0.14
AD	30,673	0.11
ADC	29,666	0.10
APA	53,537	0.19
APC	15, 424, 921	53.96
CPP	36, 300	0.13
HOPE	7, 435	0.03
KOWA	13, 076	0.05
NCP	24, 445	0.09
PDP	12, 853, 162	44.96
PPN	24, 475	0.09
UDP	9, 208	0.03
UPP	18, 220	0.06

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

Table-3: 2015 Presidential Elections: APC and PDP States Scores

S/N	STATES	APC	PDP
1	Ekiti	120331	176466
2	Ogun	308290	207950
3	Enugu	14157	553003
4	Kogi	264851	149987
5	Osun	383603	249929
6	Ondo	299889	251368
7	FCT	146399	154195
8	Oyo	528620	303376
9	Nasarawa	236838	273460
10	Kano	1903999	215779
11	Jigawa	885988	142904
12	Katsina	1345441	98937
13	Kwara	302146	132602
14	Kaduna	1127760	484085
15	Anambra	17926	660762
16	Imo	133253	559185
17	Delta	48910	1211405
18	Plateau	429170	549615
19	Yobe	446265	25526
20	Gombe	361245	96873
21	Taraba	261326	310800
22	Niger	657678	149222
23	Zamfara	612202	144833
24	Lagos	792460	632327
25	Cross River	28368	414863
26	Bayelsa	5194	361209
27	Akwa-Ibom	58411	953304
28	Edo	208469	286869
29	Bauchi	931598	86085
30	Benue	373961	303737
31	Ebonyi	1958	323653
32	Kebbi	567883	100972
33	Sokoto	671926	152199
34	Rivers	69238	1487075
35	Borno	473543	25640
36	Abia	13394	368303
37	Adamawa	374701	251664

Total 15, 424, 921 12, 853, 162 Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

While Table 2 shows the 14 political parties that contested the presidential election and the total votes scored by each party, Table 3 shows the performance of the two major rival parties, PDP and APC in each state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The PDP won landslide victories in the south-east and south-south geo-political zones. This applied to the APC that clinched majority votes in the north-east, north-west, north-central and south-west geo-political zones. The final result shows the APC winning the election with total votes of 15, 424, 921 above 12, 852, 162 votes scored by the PDP.

Goodluck Jonathan Accepts Defeat: Implications for Democracy in Nigeria

Once the result announced showed that Mohammadu Buhari won the presidential election, Jonathan quickly conceded defeat and congratulated the President-elect. The hopes of the continued existence of Nigeria peacefully were rekindled. But Jonathan's action traumatized many of his supporters; those who could not easily believe they are out of power. Such people wished that Jonathan rejected the result of the presidential election, to throw Nigeria into crisis. They had envisaged a situation where crisis would erupt in the country and consequently the entire election declared cancelled, paving the way for another election or even a military take-over.

So, the absence of post-election crisis in Nigeria is the creation of Goodluck Jonathan. Majority

of Nigerians are happy with him at least for the peace they enjoy in the present. To former senate president, David Mark:

> The decision of President Goodluck Jonathan to concede defeat in the 2015 presidential election saved Nigeria from crisis and catastrophe...also added value consolidation of democracy in the country. The current development in the country had raised the benchmark for peaceful democratic transition and consequently sets a new democratic template in Africa hitherto notorious for its infamous sit-tight leaders. The outcome of the elections have greatly disappointed doomsday prophets predicted disaster and even a possible break up of our country...the introduction of the Card Readers added value to the electoral process...Nigerians should accept and indeed imbibe the new voting technology [12].

Not only Nigerians commended the gesture of Goodluck Jonathan. Former US President, Jimmy Carter simply described him as a symbol of democracy on the African Continent, having set an example for other African leaders to follow. President Mohammadu Buhari is not doubtful that Nigeria would have been in crisis if Jonathan never conceded defeat. He adjudged Jonathan's action as having turned around Nigeria's nervous political process, and concluded that the action has lasting impact and influence on politics in Africa.

Yet, other commentators appear not to see anything spectacular about Jonathan's action. To such people, even if he had rejected the election, Buhari's victory could have remained unchanged and his (Jonathan) personality smeared. Furthermore, they argue that nowhere in Africa have election results been cancelled just because a presidential candidate refused to concede defeat. This school of thought is popularized by Femi Adesina, who regards Jonathan's action as 'a clever self-serving decision', which otherwise could have landed him in jail. Adesina concludes that Jonathan could have been tried by the World Court in Hague and jailed for inciting post-election violence and killing of innocent Nigerians [13].

It is clear that Femi Adesina did not dispute that there would have been crisis if Jonathan rejected the results, which is the central issue that he has downplayed. Thus, he has engaged in explaining what could have happened to Jonathan if he never conceded defeat, which of course is another issue entirely. By and large, Jonathan's singular action of conceding defeat has put him as a man of peace and it explains the several international peace awards that he has had within this very short time.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

This paper examines the conduct of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It reveals that elections in Nigeria have a tradition of crisis, most profoundly, presidential elections. The reason for this unending vile situation is what pundits attribute to the defective structure of Nigeria's federalism. Each person or group is eyeing the oil wealth controlled by the central government, which any individual that becomes president could appropriate to himself and his cronies and cohorts. Even the issue of ethnicity, which makes groups complain of marginalization, is tied to this economic issue; the appropriation of national resources by the centre. It is the belief that by the smooth transition of power in the 2015 election, the door has been opened for peace, socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. Consequently the following suggestions are advanced to help improve the situation:

- Politicians must continually chant and uphold the Goodluck Jonathan formula of political sportsmanship. It is only the realization of the fact that politics is a game that passes over victory from one person to another periodically, that they can eschew the required bitterness for peace to prevail
- There is serious need to make politics, which conceptually is taking the burden to provide solution to the problem of society, less attractive. This can be done by demonetizing the polity, to shelve off the people who do not have the slightest passion to take the burden of solving the masses' problems. They go into politics, get elected and make much money, which makes them lords over their constituents.
- The paper also suggests the restructuring of the Nigerian federalism; precisely more powers should be devolved to the constituent parts. Such powers include control of economic resources, reversal of revenue allocation formula to give the centre less. This undoubtedly, will reduce the much clamour for control of the centre and make politics relatively peaceful

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