

**Media Narratives on Power Relations in Nigeria: A  
Critical Discourse Analysis of Three National  
Newspaper Columnists**

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## ABSTRACT

This research examined how Nigerian newspaper columnists narrate the power relations within the country and how they reiterate and rearticulate historical and political events in their analysis of the balance of power with regard to the upcoming presidential election in March 2015.

By analyzing the writings of three columnists from three different newspapers, the study examined how ownership and the geographic environment in which a newspaper is published influence the narratives employed by columnists in their bid to set agenda and mold public opinion.

While doing so, triangulation of Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and Norman Fairclough's textual, contextual and social analyses in the treatment of the subject were used. Hence, the texts of the columns were analyzed within the socio-political contexts to understand their implications for the social behavior of the readers as potential voters. Three newspapers were used to cater for the north/south political dichotomy and to give a representation to each region. The study, however, views the dichotomy differently, projecting it as a division between those who support the status quo and those who oppose it. The three newspapers used in the study were *Vanguard* (representing the pro status quo), *Daily Trust* (representing the anti-status quo), and *Nigerian Tribune* (providing a middle ground between the two camp).

Conclusions of the study suggest that the political and economic elites use their ownership and control of the newspapers to influence the narratives of their

columnists. The columnists in turn use volatile concepts like religion, and ethnicity in their narratives to divide the public and move them towards taking political decisions that favor the political elites.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Political Communication, *Boko Haram*, Ethno-religious crisis, Democracy, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Nijerya gazetelerindeki köşe yazarlarının ülkedeki güç ve iktidar ilişkilerini nasıl ele aldıkları üzerinde durmaktadır. Ülkede mart 2015 yılında yapılacak olan cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimleri öncesinde köşe yazarları tarihsel ve politik olayları ele alarak toplumdaki güç dengesini irdelemektedirler.

Nijerya’da bulunan üç farklı gazetenin üç farklı köşe yazarının haberlerinin incelendiği bu çalışmada bir gazetenin “sahiplik” ve “coğrafi konumunun” köşe yazarlarının haber seçimi, gündem belirleme ve kamuoyu oluşturmadaki etkileri üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Eleştirel söylem analizinin kullanıldığı bu çalışmada Teun Van Dijk’in sosyo-bilişsel yöntemi ve Fairclough’un metin, bağlam ve sosyal çözümlemesi kullanılmıştır. Gazetelerdeki köşe yazıları okuyucu ve seçmenlerin sosyal ve toplumsal davranışlarına olan etkilerini anlamak üzere sosyo-politik açıdan incelenmiştir. Nijerya’daki Kuzey ve Güney arasındaki ayrımı belirlemek ve her bölgenin nasıl temsil edildiğini göstermek için üç farklı gazetenin köşe yazarının haberlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada varolan iki karşıt grup ve bu gruplar arasındaki farklılık statükonun yanında olanlar ve statükonun karşısında olanlar olarak irdelenmiştir. “Vanguard” gazetesi statükonun yanında yer alırken “Daily Trust” gazetesi statükonun karşısındadır. “Nigerian Tribune” gazetesi ise statükoya daha yakın olmasına rağmen daha çok iki farklı grup arasında bir yerde durmayı tercih etmektedir.

Sonu olarak, politik ve ekonomik gc elinde bulunduran iktidar sekinleri kşe yazarlarının anlatımlarını etkilemektedirler. Bunun sonucunda kşe yazarları kendi kşelerinde din ve etnik farklılıklar gibi hassas konuları ele alarak halkı blmeyi hedeflemekte ve onları iktidar sekinlerinin istekleri doėrultusunda politik kararlar almaya teşvik etmektedirler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eleştirel söylem analizi, siyasal iletişim, Boko Haram, etnik ve dinsel krizler, demokrasi, Nijerya'daki 2015 cumhurbaşkanlığı seimleri

## **DEDICATION**

*To my late dad; for teaching me patience humility and hard work*

*To mum; for urging me to dream and providing the funds to actualize my dreams*

*As well as*

*Hassan Alhaji Hassan and Ansa Ndem; for believing in me and kick-starting my teaching career*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANPP	All Nigerian People's Party
APGA	All Progressives Grand Alliance
APP	All People's Party
APC	All Progressives Congress
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GNPP	Great Nigeria People's Party
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
NAP	National Advanced Party
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	Nigerian People's Party
NEF	Northern Elders Forum
NITEL	Nigerian Telecommunications
NIPOST	Nigerian Postal Service
NPN	National Party of Nigeria

NRC	National Republican Convention
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SR	Social Representation
TAN	Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background to this study by tracing the events that led to the emergence of Nigeria as a nation state. It also gives a summative description of the pattern of relationships and interaction among the ethnic and religious groups that make up Nigeria. It describes the two levels of socio-political contention between the people. The first level of contention is between the northern and southern regions of the country while the second level of contention is among various groups within each region. The chapter also discusses the role politicization of the ethno-religious and cultural differences for the benefit of the elite. It is argued that the protection of elite interest is done through the control of media content for the mobilization of the masses for the achievement of the political goals of the elites. The chapter also states the problem of the study as well as the purpose. It also discusses the relevance of the study, the methodologies used and the inherent limitations of the study.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Nigeria has lasted for one hundred years since her creation by the British colonial administration in 1914. However, there have been deep-seated suspicion among the many ethnic and religious groups brought together to form the political entity. The suspicion has led to multiple divisions among the constituent groups. While there is mutual distrust and obvious contention between the “North” and the “South” on one hand, there are divisions and suspicions among the various groups that make up the “North” and “South”. For instance, although the people inhabiting the “Middle-Belt”

state of Plateau are from Northern Nigeria, they see themselves as distinct from the Hausas because they have different languages, histories and cultural values/practices which are strange to the other tribes. Also the people of this state (Plateau) who are predominantly Christians perennially find themselves at odds with the predominantly Muslim Hausa/Fulani people of the “North”. On the micro level, the Berom, Ngas, and Langtang tribes of Plateau State also find themselves in keen contention for the positions of power within the state (Ibekwe, 2012). This often leads to political disagreements and violence for which each group accuses the other of being the mastermind.

In the southern part of Nigeria the Major tribes (Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Bini, etc.) are in perpetual contention for the political positions allocated to the region. Interestingly, the minority tribes also cry about systematic alienation by the bigger tribes. Even where the inhabitants are homogenous in language and religion (like the Igbos), political gladiators create divisions along clan and cast lines in order to achieve political aims. The ruling class has somehow succeeded in keeping these divisions in place to a level of near-institutionalization. As such, alliances among the lower class, middle class and elites in form of friendship and marital ties are very low, thus preventing members of one group (or social class) from getting adequate knowledge about other groups (or social classes). The implication of this scenario is that each group sees the other group as representing what it does not represent. For instance, a Yoruba man would take pride in the Yoruba renowned value of respect for those who are older while erroneously believing that Ibos and Hausas do not respect their elders. This reductionist approach further prevents them from learning about other cultures and ethnic groups. Consequently, they fail to understand their role in the

power dynamics of the country and they are unable to collectively upstage the balance of power or hold the elites accountable for their decisions and actions.

From the background provided above, it is arguable that the geographical space called Nigeria has been relatively unstable since Great Britain granted independence to the country. However, it must be said that “the forces responsible for the prevailing fissiparous tendencies in Nigeria, and indeed in most African states, were activated long before independence” (Alapiki , 2005, p. 50).

The struggle among the ethnic groups could be attributed to nationalist feelings. Nationalism however is a divisive phenomenon because it creates new frontiers for conflicts among the constituents of a nation-state. As Brown (2000) puts it, new forms of nationalism have emerged to challenge the “nationalist legitimacy of many existing state(s) ... [through] nationalist claims of ethnic and regional minorities, thus generating new contentions” (Brown, 2000, p. 1).

The role of the media in the creation and maintenance of the divisions and suspicions among the ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria cannot be overstated. The mass media have been strong instruments for the mobilization of the masses for the actualization of elite desires since its inception. The effects of the mass media in the society could be negative or positive when put to use for political purposes. While the positive effects are commonly felt in democratic settings, the negative effects are commonly felt in autocratic setting; but the good and bad effects of the media are not mutually exclusive to democracy and autocracy. However, the media is often negatively used in the political process in most African countries. For instance, the ramifications of the Rwandan civil conflict/genocide led to accusations of incitement

of hatred by the Rwandan media. The media encouraged the genocide by “using an ethnic framework to report what was essentially a political struggle.” (Kellow & Steeves, 1998, p. 107). They reportedly spread rumor and created panic among the people by “using a kill- or-be-killed frame, and of relaying directives about the necessity of killing the Tutsi people as well as instructions on how to do it.” (Kellow & Steeves, 1998, p. 107). This ultimately led to the killing of about one million Rwandans by the end of the conflict, most of whom were ethnic Tutsis. Rwanda is yet to recover from the carnage twenty years after. Such is the negative impact which a dysfunctional use of the mass media can have on a society.

The mass media is the link between the ruling class and the public. It is “one of the most important instruments through which those in power seek to influence the political thinking of their subjects” (Ojo, 2003, p. 829). With its intrinsic ability to simultaneously reach a mass and highly dispersed audience, the media has developed into a setter of agenda and molder of public opinion. While radio and television are unarguably very effective in reaching the masses in developing countries and developed countries, the importance of the elites in shaping the reactions of the masses to the messages they receive from the mass media cannot be overestimated. Many residents of developing countries supplement media messages with interpersonal communication. They ask more enlightened people to interpret media messages and government policies for them. Therefore, their reaction to a news item or government policy is influenced by the original message as well as the interpretation given by the better-informed opinion leaders. Interestingly the elites rely on informed analysis of events in newspapers as opposed to the masses that massively rely on radio and television for information. In my opinion politics is “serious” or “hard” business, and newspapers are “serious” or “hard” media, radio

and television on the other hand, provide greater entertainment value and they are used by the elites to keep the masses occupied with entertainment and disinterested in politics. This position is without prejudice to the facts that there are many newspapers that are “soft-sells” published primarily for their entertainment values; and there are also a high number of serious political programmes on radio and television.

While it is easy for people to read news stories as presented in newspapers, the media literacy for the correlation of what is read in news stories is neither universal nor common. Many media users take their media literacy skills for granted and fail to develop them. Stanley Baran noted that, media literacy skills “like all skills, it can be improved. And if we consider how important the mass media are in creating and maintain the culture that that helps define us and our lives, it is a skill that must be improved” (Baran, 2005, p. 34). Consequently, many media users require other people to help them make clearer meanings out of media messages. This underscores the importance of the columnist in the information chain. Subsequently, newspaper columnists are arguably quite influential in the formation and shaping of public opinion. They are specialists who usually write on their areas of expertise. They monitor events in the society -both reported and unreported- and present their interpretation of the issues in their columns. The columns are informed summaries and interpretations of events as seen by the columnists. The elite class -especially those involved in decision making and implementing policies- influence the writings of columnists on one hand, and they rely on the pool of processed information provided by columnists in taking policy decisions on the other hand. There are many columnists in Nigeria whose columns are dedicated to politics. These columnists shape their readers’ perception and understanding of news items and political events.

The opinions of these columnists are often in tandem with the ideological and political leaning of the editors and publishers of the newspapers which they use as platforms to reach the public.

There are many newspapers in Nigeria. Each of these newspapers is a platform for the promotion of the ideas and values of its publisher as well as the protection of his/her economic, social, and/or political interests. Many of them often hit the newsstands abruptly only to disappear from the newsstands with equal or greater abruptness, thus making it almost impossible to capture the number of newspapers in Nigeria. However, a handful of national newspapers have weathered the storm of high newspaper turnover in Nigeria to become widely accepted and respected. These newspapers include, *The Punch*, *Tribune*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *Thisday*, *Daily Sun*, *Leadership*, *Guardian* and *The Nation*. Each of these newspapers covertly or overtly promotes the political and economic interests of its publisher or the ethnic, regional and/religious group of its publisher. While newspaper publishers struggle to influence the minds of Nigerian readers, the government is focused on influencing Nigerians through the broadcast media. In fact, the government is the biggest player in Nigerian broadcast industry (Musa & Mohammed, 2004, p. 244).

## **1.2 The Problem of Study**

As the 2015 general elections approach in Nigeria, the polity is visibly charged up with divisive narratives along ethnic, regional and religious lines by columnists. While it may be argued that columnists only provide a reflection of the society at large in their columns, their influential opinions further provide fuel to the perennial conflagrations permeating the Nigerian polity. The apparent diversity in the composition of the Nigerian society which ought to be a unique selling point is

proving to be a burden because each tribal and religious group wants to enjoy the commonwealth of the country while preventing other component groups from doing the same. There are speculations and well-founded fears that this could lead to another civil war in Nigeria (Udo, 2013). The upcoming presidential election comes with serious implications signs for the future of the nation as evident in the terrorist attacks in some sections of the country, inflammatory rhetoric by the terrorist group which has threatened to disrupt the elections, and the consequent blame game between the government and opposition; each side is accusing the other of being the mastermind of the terrorist activities. Whenever a problem arises in the country, citizens are often quick to blame one another rather than face the problem. For instance, Christians blame Muslims for the *Boko Haram* insurgency. They say that Muslims are trying to Islamize Nigeria through *Boko Haram*. Muslims on the other hand claim that *Boko Haram* has killed more Muslims than Christians, therefore, they say that *Boko Haram* is a tool of political terrorism used by the Christians to reduce the Muslim population so that the president (who is a Christian) can be re-elected in 2015. When a government official is accused of embezzlement, most of those who share the same ethnicity or religion with the accused government official would defend the corrupt acts while most of those from other ethnic or religious groups would castigate the government official without seeking full information on the issue. These scenarios ultimately lead to conflicts which often turn violent. The conflicts are often maximized for political gains by political groups through the mass media, and columnists often serve as media agents propagating the views of each ethnic and religious group.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

As stated earlier, Nigeria is a country enriched with diversity. The diverse groups are in perpetual contention for the benefits of the union. The scale and frequency of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria makes one to “wonder if the Nigerian experiment is on the brink” (Nwuke, 2001, p. 188). The media, especially newspapers are generally used as tools in the mobilization of group members and those without group affiliations towards the achievement of specific group objectives. For instance, in the struggle for presidential power, the elites of the major tribes (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) strongly use the media to seek the emergence of somebody from their own tribes as president. In the process, they use ethnic framing to make the publics of each major tribal group support the candidates from their tribal groups. Similarly, they attempt to win the support of smaller ethnic groups (e.g. Idoma, Bini, Berom, etc.) offering them attractive political deals in the process. The mass mobilization of the masses for the actualization of group objective creates further suspicions among the people and widens the gap of love, tolerance, and cooperation among them. However, the focus of this study is narrowed to the influence of newspaper columnists in the divisions created in the process of achieving group objectives which is the acquisition of political power. This work seeks to examine the extent to which newspaper columnists contribute to the widening of the chasm which already exists among the various ethno-regional and religious groups in Nigeria. This is done through analyses of the discourses in selected columns from three newspapers with one representing the government, one representing the “North” and another representing the “South”. Their narratives on ethnic and religious matters, the presidential election in 2015, corruption in government, and the *Boko Haram* insurgency are the basis for selection. I also attempt to examine how the ethnic,

religious, regional and social background of each columnist affects how he/she presents his/her discourses on these issues.

#### **1.4 Relevance of the Study**

The unity of Nigeria is widely regarded as non-negotiable (Jimoh, 2015; Obineche et.al. 2015; and Erunke, 2014). Yet it is amply evident that all is not well with the nation, judging by the periodic flare-ups leading to the death of many across the country. There has been strong ethnic nationalism among the constituent groups of Nigeria. Ethnic nationalism in this regard refers to “a sense of community which focuses on belief in myths of common ancestry; and on the perception that these myths are validated by contemporary similarities of ... physiognomy, language or religion.” (Brown, 2000, p. 51). The contentions occasioned by the nationalist feelings of the constituent groups have led to calls for the balkanization of Nigeria into five countries. The position is very strong among the young adults especially those born after the Nigerian Civil war which ended in 1970.

Therefore, the relevance of this work lies in its representation of the feelings, aspirations, and desires of Nigerians which may not be readily available in the traditional media and public forums. There have been calls for the disintegration of the country along ethnic or religious lines (Ajayi, 2010) and these calls have been more rampant in Nigerian print and broadcast media as well as the social media. This work could go down as one of the earliest academic studies to openly discuss, sum, and analyze the discourses on Nigerian unity.

#### **1.5 Method of the Study**

This study employs a qualitative methodology. It attempts to achieve its objective through a Discourse Analysis of the narratives used by the selected columnists in the

selected Nigerian newspapers. The newspapers selected for the study are *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and *Vanguard* newspapers. All three newspapers are national newspapers with relatively high circulation across Nigeria and they have online editions as well. The geographical location of the newspapers and their political leanings as well as the ethnicity and religion of the publishers were considered in their selection. *Daily Trust* is published in Kaduna (a northern city) by a northern Muslim, while *Nigerian Tribune* is published by a prominent Christian family in the south-western city of Ibadan. *Vanguard* is published in Lagos (southern Nigeria) by another southern Christian from the President Jonathan's Niger-Delta region. Online editions of the newspapers were used for this study because it was convenient for the researcher to access online editions without paying a visit to Nigeria unlike the print copies of the newspapers.

Based on the framework of Agenda Setting theory which suggests that the mass media provide the public with events and topics to think about, this study employs the Critical Discourse Analysis method to examine how columnists in the three selected newspapers contribute to the ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria through their writings on the upcoming presidential election and the *Boko Haram* insurgency. The study examined how the ethnicity and religion of each of the selected columnists (as well as the biases of the publisher and editors) influence what is written about the presidential election and the *Boko Haram* insurgency. I feel that the narratives employed by these columnists could determine the reaction of the masses to national events. Critical Discourse Analysis was selected as a method for the study because of the nature of the topic and the issues treated in the research. The research deals with emotions and perceptions which cannot be easily quantified through the use of a quantitative method like survey.

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

This work is limited to the treatment of power-relations among the elites of the Nigerian ethnic groups, national security and Nigerian unity in three Nigerian national newspapers which are *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard* and “Nigerian Tribune”. The study is limited to the sample of these three newspapers because the methodology (Critical Discourse Analyses) used in the study is best suited for a limited number of sample. However, it is important to note that focusing on these three newspapers automatically excludes other national (and local) newspapers which could have otherwise helped in giving other perspectives and ultimately better understanding of the main issue and the sub-issues discussed in the work. Also the focus on the events of the “Fourth Republic” which started in 1999 and the Goodluck Jonathan presidency which commenced in 2010, could lead the reader to develop a simplistic summary of the issues discussed in the work.

The selection of columns written between June 2013 and November 2014 is another limitation to this study because the reader is deprived the opportunity to see all the columns written about presidential power shift and the *Boko Haram* insurgency since the onset of Goodluck Jonathan presidency in 2010.

Lack of reliable data is a problem in Nigeria. It is often said that Nigerians fail to learn from history because they do not keep record. This problem extends to newspaper circulation in Nigeria because there is no data on the circulation figures of the newspapers used for this study.

Getting background information on the columnists used for this study also proved difficult as their biographies are not in the public domain. Attempts to reach them were partially successful as only one of them responded to my messages.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides the reader with some important historical and political facts about Nigeria. The theoretical frameworks of the study are also discussed. It also looks at the major problems facing the country. Issues like governmental corruption, ethno-religious conflicts, terrorism, and class struggle are discussed. It also looks at the role of media in the creation or resolution of conflict. It discusses the North/South political dichotomy in Nigeria and the role of the media in widening the division. The negative implications of these problems on the image of Nigeria are also discussed in this chapter. There have been some attempts by the Nigerian government to resolve these lingering problems in order to create a favorable image in the minds of Nigerians and the international community over the past ten years. These efforts will also be evaluated in this chapter

#### **2.1 Nigeria: Country Profile**

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa. It is the most populous country in Africa with a population of about one hundred and seventy million (170,000,000). It is the leading country in the West-African sub-region, and recently overtook South Africa as the continent's largest economy (Friedman, 2014). Nigeria is rich in human and natural resources. The country is "richly endowed with a variety of natural resources ranging from precious metals various stones to industrial such as Barites, Gypsum, Kaolin and Marble. Most of these are yet to be exploited." (nigeria.gov.ng, 2014). The only natural resource that is fully exploited is crude oil, and it has been the

primary source of the country's national income. In fact, "oil and gas exports account for more than 95% of export earnings and over 80% of federal government revenue." (nigeria.gov.ng, 2014) The desire to control the Nigerian oil industry is the base of most of the disagreements and conflicts witnessed in the country. The massive focus on the benefits accruable from oil has led to a steady decline of other economic sectors like agriculture and manufacturing; and this has caused "massive migration to the cities and led to increasingly widespread poverty, especially in rural areas" (nigeria.gov.ng, 2014).

Nigeria is blessed with fertile soil which could make it self-sufficient in food production, but it is the largest importer of food products in Africa. Its diverse climate and vegetation makes it ideal for the cultivation of various agricultural products. While the southern part is suitable for the cultivation of food crops like yam, cassava, rice, banana, etc. and cash crops like cocoa, oil-palm, rubber etc.; in the northern part crops like rice, beans, millet, peanuts, cotton, maize among others are cultivated at both subsistent and commercial levels. The diversity in the agricultural potentials of the country is an indication that the northern and southern parts of Nigeria have the potential to complement each other.

There are several ethnic groups in Nigeria, but the most prominent are Hausa/Fulani, Berom, Tiv, Kanuri, Nupe, Igala, Idoma, Bachama and Sayawa (in the north); Others are Ibo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Efik, Ikwere, Urhobo and Bini (in the south). Each of these ethnic groups has its own unique set of cultural practices/traditions, language and values which distinguishes it from other ethnic groups.

Although there are over two hundred and fifty (250) indigenous languages in Nigeria, English is the official language and it serves as a relatively effective medium of communication among the various people. The relativity of the effectiveness of English as a common language in Nigeria can be attributed to the differences in the degree of development of western education across the country. While the tribes of the southern Nigeria, embraced western education (and by extension English language) early the northern tribes were skeptical about western education because Islam had taken firm roots in their lands before the coming of Europeans (Islam in Nigeria, 2014).

Arab merchants from the Middle-East and North Africa had established trade with the people of northern Nigeria for centuries before the coming of Europeans. They introduced Islam to the northern Nigerian tribes in the process of trade and Islam became the most popular religion in northern Nigeria as a result (Joseph, 2001). Similarly, European merchants traded with the peoples of southern Nigeria and they introduced Christianity to the southern tribes (Meek, 1943, p. 106); this also made Christianity the most popular religion in the southern states of Nigeria. However, this does not imply that northern Nigerians are exclusively Muslims or southern Nigerians are exclusively Christians. There are millions of Muslims in the south, just as there are millions of Christians in the north.

It is good to analyze the role of geography in the religious composition of Nigerians in a bid to understand the seeming chasm between Muslims and Christians. It is my feeling that majority of northern Nigerians could have been Christians if the European merchants had gotten to the region before the Arab merchants did. Similarly, most southern Nigerians would have been Muslims today if the Arab

merchants had gotten to them long before the European merchants did. Northern Nigeria is a land-locked region and so cannot be accessed by sea. The arid land makes it easily accessible by horses and camels which were the major means of transportation in ancient Arab world. The proximity to the southern region of Arabian kingdoms facilitated easy trade and cultural exchanges between the ancient kingdoms of northern Nigeria and the Arabian merchants and scholars. With time, the Islamic political system called caliphate was established across northern Nigeria. The emergence of Islam as a major religion and its spread across the Arab world had occurred many centuries before it was brought to northern Nigeria, therefore the merchants/scholars must have been very skilled in religious marketing. The tremendous acceptance of the religion by the people is a testament to this.

The early introduction and domination of Christianity in the southern parts of Nigeria can also be attributed to geography. The area is widely accessible by sea and voyages were common among European explorers and merchants. The commercial interests of the early European trading companies in southern Nigeria was replaced by the political interests of the British government which led to the signing of treaties that placed the coastal towns (e.g. Lagos and Calabar) under the “protection” of the British monarch. The British government sent missionaries and teachers to the region to teach the local people English language and Christianity so that they would be easier to colonize. This sums up the religious composition of present-day Nigeria.

### **2.1.1 Ethnic/ Regional Composition of Nigeria**

Nigeria is a federation of thirty-six (36) states. It is generally divided into two broad regions (north and south). These two broad regions are further divided into six geopolitical zones. The zones are:

- **North-West:** This zone is predominantly the home of the original Hausa people. It is also home to the Fulanis. The zone includes the following states: Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, and Jigawa. The zone has produced a number of civilian and military presidents. The presidents are: Murtala Mohammed (1975-1976), Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), Muhammadu Buhari (1984-1985), Sani Abacha (1993-1998) and Umaru Yar'adua (2007-2010). Islam is the dominant religion in the zone.
- **North-Central:** This zone is also referred to as the Middle-Belt region. The biggest tribes in this zone are Igalas, Berom, Tivs, Angas, Idomas, Ebiras, Nupes, Gbagis, Okun, etc. The zone comprises of the following states: Plateau, Nassarawa, Benue, Kogi, Niger, and Kwara. Four former Heads of State emerged from the zone. These former Heads of State are: Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), and Abdulsalami Abubakar (1998-1999). The zone has an almost equal population of Muslims and Christians.
- **North-East:** This is the hot-bed of the terrorist group called Boko Haram. It comprises of Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno states. While Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba states have been relatively peaceful in recent times, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states have experienced huge terror attacks by the insurgents. There are many tribes in this zone, but the most noticeable are Hausas, Fulanis, Kanuris, Shuwa Arabs, Seyawas, Bachamas etc. The zone has huge Christian and Muslim populations. Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa hailed from this zone. He governed the country from independence in 1960 until he was killed in the first Nigerian military coup in 1966.

- **South-West:** This geo-political zone has six states which include: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti. The people of the South-West of Nigeria are predominantly Yoruba, but their dialects may not be mutually intelligible; for instance, an indigene of Lagos may find it impossible to understand the Ekiti dialect even though it is a variation of the Yoruba language. The Eguns are another ethnic group in the zone though they have more of their kin across the border in the Republic of Benin. The zone has produced two Heads of States in the history of Nigeria; they are Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979 and 1999-2007) and Ernest Shonekan (August 1993- November 1993). Although there are more Christians than Muslims in the zone, there has never been any religiously framed conflict in the zone because the people are unarguably the most religiously tolerant in the country. It is common to find adherents of Christianity and Islam within the same nuclear family.
- **South-East:** The people of the South East are arguably the most homogenous among the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. They are Ibos with various mutually intelligible dialects. There are five states in the zone; they are Abia, Enugu, Imo, Anambra, and Ebonyi. Most of the people from the south-east geo-political zone are Christians. The zone produced the first military ruler Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi (January 1966- July 1966). Aguiyi-Ironsi emerged as Head of State after the first military coup. Although he played no part in the planning and execution of the coup, he became the new leader of the country because he was the most senior military officer at that time. He was killed six months later in a counter-coup led by northern army officers.
- **South-South:** This zone is often called the Niger-Delta region. It is the source of Nigeria's economic survival as the majority of the oil-fields in Nigeria are

located in the zone. The zone is home to many ethnic minority groups. The people of the South-South zone are spread among a number of languages like, Ijaw, Urhobo, Itshekiri, Bini, Ishan, Ikwere, Ibo, Efik, among others. The following are the states in the region: Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers. Christianity is the dominant religion in the zone. The current president Goodluck Jonathan (since 2010) is from this zone.



Figure 1: Geo-Political Map of Nigeria (google.com, 2014)

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This work finds its existence on the principles of two communication theories - Agenda Setting Theory and Discourse Theory- Their assumptions and application to this research are discussed below.

### **2.2.1 Agenda Setting Theory**

This theory was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972/73 (Lane, 2001). It explains the powerful nature of the media as well as the resultant influence of the media over the users. The summation of the theory is that the media possesses “the ability to tell us what issues are important” (University of Twente, 2014). The media-defined “important issues” are then discussed by the media users until such a time when the media comes up with new agenda. The use of Agenda Setting as a theoretical foundation in political communication can be traced to the concerned of Walter Lippman. As early as 1922, Walter Lippman, a newspaper columnist thought deeply about the effects projected by the media on the minds of the public (University of Twente, 2014) while “as far back as 1922, the newspaper columnist Walter Lippman was concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public McCombs and Shaw investigated presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972 and 1976” (University of Twente, 2014). This present effort hinges on these precedents by using the agenda setting theory as a theoretical base for the discourse of the effects of the newspaper columnists in Nigeria on the interaction among the different Nigerian ethnic and religious groups and its ultimate effect on the presidential elections scheduled for March 28, 2015.

The Agenda Setting theory takes into cognizance the power of individual differences unlike the Hypodermic Needle Theory which claims that people act as they are programmed to do by the media. The Agenda Setting Theory says that the media can give the public topics to think about, but it cannot tell the public what to think about the topics. However, I believe that the reaction of the public to the topic (agenda) given by the each medium would depend on the social experiences of the audience as well as the history and reputation of the media organization that is reporting the

information (setting the agenda). Therefore, one would expect the various narratives and discourses by the columnists to generate further discourses among the readers in the process of impacting on the polity. The resulting impact would therefore be a product of the receptions, perceptions and discourses at different levels rather than a product of the desire and effort of any individual columnist or group of columnists.

Media owners and professional journalist are closer to the elite class which Eric Louw calls the insiders. This closeness gives them the professional freedom and license to determine the topics of public discourse as well as the narratives on them thus making them “symbolic elites”. This elite position provides them with the skills required for the manufacturing of “public knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, norms, values morals and ideologies” (Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013, p. 442).

### **2.2.2 Discourse Theory**

Discourse Theory is a product of post-Marxist thought which was developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They attempted to use the theory as a single and simple explanation of the social world. (Rear, 2014, p. 3). Laclau and Mouffe critiqued the fundamental Marxist “division between material economic conditions and the ownership of the means of production within society and the meaning-producing cultural and political institutions of the state.” (Rear, 2014, p. 3). Fundamental Marxism holds the view that the “material and economic conditions” (called the “base”) determines the “meaning-producing” institutions (called the superstructure).

Fundamentally speaking, all actions and processes would move towards the preservation of economic conditions, this means that cultural, academic, and spiritual aspects of life would evolve as desired by the economic elites. If that is the case, then

the mass media - being a meaning-making institution- would be owned or controlled by the apex economic interest groups in the society. Consequently, the media workers (especially reporters and columnists) would channel their professional efforts towards their own economic benefits and perhaps the economic benefits of their paymasters. The summary of this is that the template of societal evolution and development solely rests with the prevailing economic order at any given time, and “people’s consciousness created by the economic structure of society” (Rear, 2014, p. 3).

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe subtly disagreed with the position of fundamental Marxism in their critical theory based on earlier works by authors like Antonio Gramsci (1971). This subtle disagreement is based on the realization of the ability of the working classes (media users) to “recognise their own oppressed position within society and begin to work against it politically” (Rear, 2014). As Gramsci argued, “All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971). With Gramsci’s argument, it is logical to agree with the position of Laclau and Mouffe that the superstructure can cause a fundamental change in the base of the society. In relation to this study, I posit that readers of newspaper columns in Nigeria possess the ability to perceive the biases of the columnists. If they go a step further to show that they understand the gimmicks of the columnists and their paymasters, they could ultimately create a new paradigm in the operation of newspapers in the country. Failure to perform this intellectual function would lead to increased manufacturing of “popular consent for the unequal distribution of power and wealth” by the dominant classes through the manipulation of the “discursive processes within the superstructure” (Rear, 2014, p. 3).

### **2.3 Introducing Nigerian Politics**

Politics is a fundamental feature of every society (Ademilokun & Taiwo, 2013, p. 436) and it has a peculiar operation in Nigeria. It is characterized by ethnic, regional and religious divisions. And the division has led to continuous tension among the various groups. The current political developments in Nigeria is better understood when one considers the events that led to the “fabrication” of Nigeria by Great Britain. In fact, Ray Jacob (2012) traces the history of ethnic conflicts “to the colonial transgressions that forced the ethnic groups of the northern and southern provinces to become an entity called Nigeria in 1914” (Jacob, 2012, p. 14).

Nigeria is the most populous country on the continent of Africa. It came into existence in 1914 when Great Britain amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates located across the River Niger (historyworld.net, 2014). The name “Nigeria” was coined from two words; “Niger” and “Area”. The politics and power relations in Nigeria have largely been based on the dichotomy between the two original regions merged in 1914 to create the Colony of Nigeria. It is important to note that the British colonial amalgamation of the kingdoms that constitute Nigeria was done for the benefit of the colonial government (Ugwu n.d cited in; Murumba, 2014).

The outline above provides a picture of the likely causes of tension within and amongst the ethnic groups. There are numerous stereotypes and negative beliefs prevalent within each ethnic group about the others. There are also generally held derogatory beliefs about speakers of other dialects even within the same ethnic group. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a low rate of inter-cultural or inter-ethnic

marriages as most people prefer to marry from within their ethnic group or clans. They mostly live and make friends with people of their ethnic or religious groups.

In the years following the amalgamation, the leaders of the many tribes that constituted the colony demanded independence for the country. Their demands were made both collectively and individually. While they agreed that Great Britain should grant independence to Nigeria, they however disagreed on who should be the leader of the nation at independence. So deep was this disagreement that the Northern Region opposed the call for independence by 1953 as moved by a southern legislator, Anthony Enahoro (Usang, Ikpeme, & Elemi, 2014, p. 45). The North threatened to secede if independence was granted by that year. The reason for the northern opposition was the disparity in development and exposure between the North and the South. While the south was relatively advanced in western education and infrastructure, the North has not achieved much in terms of western education. The North had feared that independence by 1953 would lead to southern domination of the country.

### **2.3.1 Democratic Governance in Nigeria since Independence**

The practice of democracy in Nigeria has been a sporadic experience with many disruptions by the military. While it is easy to blame the Nigerian military for the frequent interruption of the democratic experience, the conduct of Nigerian politicians since independence had been more divisive than unifying and the depth of corruption in public offices has been colossal.

When the colonial government divided Nigeria into three regions (i.e. Northern, Western and Eastern), they sowed the seed of ethnic discord among Nigerians. Consequently, Nigerians began to develop allegiance to their regions of origin

instead of the country. This variation in allegiance was transferred to the military and it was one of the factors that led to the first military coup in 1966. After the first military coup, subsequent attempts to return the country to democratic rule were truncated until 1999; this has led to the addition of some terminologies into the Nigerian political lexicon. These terminologies are First, Second, Third and Fourth republics and they are discussed below.

### **2.3.2 The First Republic**

The First Republic in Nigeria refers to the period between October 1, 1960 (when the country became politically independent of Britain) and January 15, 1966 (when the first military coup occurred). At independence, Nigeria was a constitutional monarchy with the Queen of England serving as the Head of State. The Queen was represented by a Governor-General. This arrangement changed when a new constitution was passed in 1963 (called Republican Constitution) and Nigeria cut-off political ties with the Queen. The country was renamed “Federal Republic of Nigeria” and the local Governor-General (Nnamdi Azikiwe) became the ceremonial president while the Prime Minister remained as the head of government.

At independence in 1960, a northerner, Sir Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa, emerged as the first Prime Minister of Nigeria. Interestingly, he was not the most educated or charismatic among all the contenders. He was not even the leader of his political party the Northern People’s Congress (NPC). This was perceived by the more educated southerners as a British ploy to remain in control of Nigeria despite her “political independence”. At independence in 1960, the queen of England remained the Nigerian Head of State, but in 1963, the parliament moved against this arrangement by denouncing the monarch and adopting a republican constitution. As a result of this, the Governor-General, Nnamdi Azikiwe, became the ceremonial

president. It is important to note that the Prime Minister and the President represented two of the three major tribes in the country (that is Hausa and Igbo). While the Prime Minister was from the northern Hausa-Fulani tribe, the president was from the Igbo tribe of the South-East. Following this outcome, the leader of the predominantly Yoruba-speaking South-West became the leader of the opposition. Since then, alliances and counter-alliances among the major tribes have been a crucial factor in the political dynamics of Nigeria during democratic and military rule.

Political intrigues occasioned by ethnic intolerance and governmental corruption led to the first military coup d'état in Nigeria on January 15, 1966 (Maiangwa, 2014, p. 60). Although the coup was termed a failure, its ramifications led to widespread violence and inestimable loss of lives and properties in the northern region. Most of the victims were southerners living in the North. While the Prime Minister and a number of prominent leaders of the North (Hausa) and the South-West (Yoruba) were killed, nobody from the South-East (Igbo) was killed. The leader of the coup cited inefficiency on the part of the officer tasked with the execution of the leading Igbo politicians as the reason why no leading Igbo politician was killed. Interestingly, 80% of the coup plotters were Igbo and the major beneficiary from the coup was also Igbo. The new Head of State did not punish the coup leaders, and this led to a counter-coup in July 1966 which was executed by northern (Hausa) officers. Expectedly, no northerner (Hausa) was killed in this counter-coup, but the Head of State (Igbo) and the Military Governor of the Western Region (Yoruba) were killed and a new military ruler of northern extraction was installed. The fall out of this counter-coup led to the Nigerian civil war which started on July 6, 1967 and ended on January 15, 1970 (Osakwe & Umoh, 2014, p. 67) with the federal troops

emerging victorious. After the civil war, two military coups were staged until the military decided to hand over political power to a democratically elected president in 1979.

### **2.3.3 The Second Republic**

The Nigerian Second republic started in 1979 when the Nigerian military relinquished power to a democratically elected government after thirteen years of dictatorship by four military governments. The military could not perform better than the civilians whom they had dislodged in 1966, and there was a great demand for a return to democratic rule. Consequently, they set up a transition programme to democratic rule. The American presidential system of government was favored instead of the British parliamentary system that was in practiced before until 1966. The adoption of the presidential system at that time reflects the growing global influence of America and the close friendship between the American president at the time Jimmy Carter and Nigeria's military ruler at the time, General Olusegun Obasanjo. The two former leaders have remained close since then. Shehu Shagari, a Hausa Muslim was elected as the president while Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo Christian was elected vice-president while the Yoruba tribe lost out in the power equation.

As soon as the transition programme was announced, the politicians reawakened ethnic and tribal sentiments among the electorates. The race for the presidency was reduced to a contest among the three major tribes (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) as each of them produced a prominent politician for the presidential contest. Shehu Shagari (Hausa), Alex Ekwueme (Igbo) and Obafemi Awolowo (Yoruba) were the major contenders. In the build up to the election, there was an alliance between the Shehu Shagari and Alex Ekwueme to run on a joint ticket with Shagari as president and Ekwueme as his vice. This move won them majority of the votes in the North and the

South-East while Awolowo the Yoruba candidate swept the polls in the Yoruba-speaking states. This shows a clear pattern of voting along ethnic lines and the alliance between the North (Hausa) and the South-East (Igbo) proved crucial. Between 1979 and 1983, political corruption and widespread abuse of power by politicians was rampant. The 1983 general elections were fraught with irregularities and violence broke out in the South-Western State of Ondo over electoral malpractice. This led to another military take-over on December 31, 1983 thus bringing an end to the Nigerian Second Republic.

#### **2.3.4 The Third Republic**

The Nigerian Third Republic was a stillbirth because the democratic experiment was not completed. When the military struck in 1983, they made several promises to return Nigeria to democratic rule but none of the promises was kept. By 1991, there was a pseudo-democratic experiment in which civilian governors were democratically elected to govern the federating states while the military remained in power at the federal level. That means Nigeria had a military president with democratically elected civilian governors. The goal was to test the political waters and stabilize the polity before finally handing over to a democratically elected civilian president by the year 1993. The presidential election was eventually held on June 12, 1993 and it pitched a southern (Yoruba) Muslim against a northern (Hausa) Muslim. It is widely regarded as the freest and fairest election in the political history of Nigeria even though it was annulled by the military government just when the electoral body was about to announce the results. It was believed to have been won by Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim. The Yoruba people saw the annulment as a conspiracy against the tribe.

The outcry and massive protests that followed the annulment forced the military government to “step-aside” and installed an Interim National Government headed by Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba technocrat from Abiola’s home-town; Abeokuta. This was a move to pacify the Yoruba people because the annulment of the election was generally perceived by the Yoruba people as a deliberate attempt to deprive them of the opportunity to rule Nigeria. The head of the Interim National Government was sacked by the Secretary of Defense, General Sani Abacha (Hausa) on November 17, 1993. General Abacha dissolved the Interim National Government, sacked all elected politicians and suspended the constitution thus taking the country back to full-fledged authoritarianism. This marked the end of the Nigerian Third Republic. General Abacha ruled the country till his death in June, 1998. After the death of Abacha, he was promptly succeeded by Abdul-Salam Abubakar, another general from the North who ruled for just one year and returned the country to democratic rule on May 29, 1999.

### **2.3.5 The Fourth Republic**

The current democratic phase in Nigeria which commenced in the year 1999 is called the Fourth Republic. Following the death of the former dictator General Sani Abacha on June 8, 1998, the new helmsman, General Abubakar set up and implemented a speedy democratic transition process. He unbanned political activities and released all political prisoners. Consequently, three political parties were formed; they are Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People’s Party (APP) and People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Ethnic coloration is perceivable in the formation and running of the political parties. The Alliance for Democracy (AD) was filled with politicians from the Yoruba ethnic group and it won all the states in the South-West geo-political zone which is predominantly a Yoruba zone. Interestingly, the Alliance for

Democracy (AD) did not win any seat outside the Yoruba-speaking states. The All People's Party (APP) was formed by groups and individuals from the North-West zone and it won three states in the zone (Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara) and one state in the North-Central zone (Kwara) as well as two states in the North-East zone (Gombe and Borno). The party (APP) failed in the other geo-political zones. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the only political party with a national posture as it won elections in all the geo-political zones with the exception of the South-West. It swept the polls in the South-east and South-South geo-political zones. The wider reach of the PDP (which is described as the largest political party in Africa) perhaps explains why the party has controlled the presidency since 1999.

The 1999 presidential election was clearly directed at appeasing the Yoruba tribe for the perceived injustices of the past. As a result, the candidates of the three political parties were from the Yoruba tribe. A former military ruler -General, Olusegun Obasanjo (a Christian) - who had returned the country to democratic rule in 1979 was elected as president with a northern-Muslim vice-president. He ruled for eight years and handed over to Umar Musa Yar'adua (a northern Muslim) who ruled and died in office in 2010. This paved the way for the vice-president (Goodluck Jonathan) to emerge as the president because the Nigerian constitution prescribes that in the death of a president (while still in office), the vice-president takes over the mantle of leadership. However, there were calls in some quarters for him to step-down after completing the tenure of his late boss in 2011. They argued that the "North" had a right to two presidential terms of four years each and that it was imperative for another northerner to complete the term of the North; they based this argument on an alleged zoning agreement earlier reached by the ruling party.

The new president Goodluck Jonathan, went ahead to win his party nomination and eventually the presidential election of 2011. As usual, there were allegations of electoral fraud and protests erupted in many northern states and many southerners were killed (by northerner) and their properties destroyed. In the build up to the elections, some northern leaders had vowed to make the country ungovernable if presidential power did not return to the North by 2011. Since then, terrorist attacks by the Islamist group *Jamaatul Al-Sunnah Lidawati wal Jihad* popularly called *Boko Haram*, have put Nigeria under great strain with many calling for the disintegration of the country.

Another round of general elections are scheduled for March 2015, and the incumbent president has been nominated by his political party set to run for another term in office despite the obvious links between his ambition and the security challenges faced by the country. Some sections of the country articulate that *Boko Haram* is a militant wing of the political opposition to the president; therefore they predict that the attacks by the terrorist group would only increase if the president wins another term in office. Similarly, there have been threats by other armed groups especially from the oil-rich Niger-Delta region have threatened to cripple the Nigerian economy by disrupting the flow of oil from the region if the president (who is from their ethnic group) fails to win the 2015 presidential election.

There is a high probability of violence after the presidential election of 2015; whichever direction the pendulum of victory swings and there are fears that the country may not survive beyond 2015 because there are real threats of violence by militant groups in both the northern and southern Nigeria. In fact, a prominent militant leader from the Niger-Delta region Asari Dokubo has clearly stated that

there would be violence if President Goodluck Jonathan does not get a second term. He said that “there would be blood in the streets if Mr. Jonathan is not reelected president in the 2015 election” (Udo, 2013) such unguarded comments could leave to ethnic crises and civil war which could herald the end of Nigeria’s corporate existence. While many politicians, media owners and analysts from the oil producing regions support the possible disintegration of Nigeria, many others especially from non-oil producing states strongly oppose the idea. But with the division of former Sudan into two countries, and the opportunity provided for peaceful Scottish secession from the United Kingdom through a referendum which was held on September 18 2014, it is not out of place to think of the possible disintegration of Nigeria.

In my opinion, it would be a miracle if Nigeria remains as a country after the 2015 presidential elections. A number of recent events have influenced my position on the possible disintegration; recently, the Speaker of the House of Representatives (whom is the fourth highest political office holder) switched allegiance to the opposition party. Following his decision, his security details were withdrawn. On November 19, 2014, an opposition figure (Rotimi Amaechi) stated that the opposition party (All Progressives Congress) would form a parallel government if the 2015 presidential election is rigged in favour of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP).

On November 20, an attempt was made to illegally impeach the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Aminu Waziri Tambuwal). While members of the ruling party were allowed to enter the parliament, members of the opposition were locked out of parliament. This move was to facilitate the impeachment of the Speaker. However the Speaker and other members of the opposition party scaled the gate of

the parliament and forced their way into the chambers. Interestingly, the Nigerian police declared the Speaker wanted for forcing his way into the National Assembly to preside over a legislative sitting. These are bad omens for Nigerian democracy and unity.

### **2.3.6 History of Presidential Elections in Nigeria**

Nigeria's history of presidential elections dates back to 1979 when the military government of General Olusegun Obasanjo returned the country to democratic rule after thirteen years of military rule. Nigeria operated a parliamentary system at independence in 1960 but adopted the presidential system in 1979. The election was conducted on August 11, 1979.

Following the conduct of the election, Alhaji Shehu Shagari of National Party of Nigeria (NPN) scored 5,668,857 votes while Chief, Obafemi Awolowo of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) polled 4,916,651 votes and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigerian People's Party (NPP) had 2,822,523. Also, Alhaji Aminu Kano of People's Redemption Party (PRP) scored 1,732,113 votes and Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim of Greater Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) got 1,686,489 (Nigeria 1979 Presidential Election, 2001). The result of the elections showed that the electorates voted along ethnic lines. Shehu Shagari's NPN won most of the states in the north; Awolowo's UPN won all the South-West states, and Nnamdi Azikiwe's NPP had a strong showing in the South-East. Waziri Ibrahim of the GNPP won his home state of Borno and the neighboring Gongola state while Aminu Kano also won in his state (Kano State) and the neighboring Kaduna State.

The voter turn-out for the presidential election was low. The total number of registered voters was 48,499,091, but only 17,098,267 voters turned out; this

represents 35% voter turn-out (Nigeria 1979 Presidential Election, 2001). The Unity Party of Nigeria, (UPN) alleged irregularities in the conduct of the elections and called for a re-run because the winner did not score the constitutionally required two-third majority of the votes as required by law. Despite this, the military handed over power to Shagari.

The 1983 presidential election featured almost the same aspirants except that People's Redemption Party (PRP) replaced Aminu Kano with Hassan Yusuf and a new party National Advanced Party (NAP) fielded Dr. Tunji Braithwaite. Shehu Shagari won by a wider margin than in 1979 amid widespread claims of irregularities. The total number of votes cast was 25,430,096 although the number of registered voters was 65,304,818. This gives a voter turn-out of 39% (Elections in Nigeria, 2011). The alleged rigging of the election was one of the reasons given by the military when it sacked the government of Shagari on December 31 1983.

The 1993 presidential election was contested by Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Bashir Tofa of the National Republican Convention (NRC). Approximately, there were about 39,000,000 registered voters; this was a sharp decrease from the number of registered voters in the 1983 election. Although the military government annulled the election just before the full result was released, insiders put attributed 8,341,309 votes to Moshood Abiola and 5,952,087 votes to Bashir Tofa (Elections in Nigeria, 2011).

The election that ushered in the current democratic dispensation was conducted on February 27, 1999. It was between Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party and Olu Falae a consensus candidate of Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All

People's Party (APP). The number of registered voters was 57,938,945 and the number of those who turned out to vote was 30,280,052. This represents a voter turnout of 52.3%. Olusegun Obasanjo had 18,738,154 votes while Olu Falae polled 11,110,287 (Elections in Nigeria, 2011).

Four years later, Nigerian electorates had a very long list of presidential aspirants to choose from. Twenty political parties fielded candidates for the contest, but only nine candidates polled more than 100,000 votes, and only three of them had more than one million votes. Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP had 24,456,140 votes, Muhammadu Buhari of All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) scored 12,710,022, and Chukwuemeka Ojukwu of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) polled 1,297,445 votes to come a distant third (Elections in Nigeria, 2011).

In the 2003 presidential election, "President Olusegun Obasanjo won with 62 per cent of the vote ... In the face of predictions of violence, Nigerians defied the odds and went to the polls peacefully in most parts of the country" (LeVan, Pitso, & Adebo, 2003, p. 30). The turn-out of voters in the 2003 presidential election was 69% (Elections in Nigeria, 2011).

The 2007 presidential election presented the electorates with a longer list of aspirants than the 2003 presidential election; there were twenty-five aspirants in all. The election is widely regarded as the worst in Nigeria's post-independence history. In some states, the number of votes recorded votes that were higher than the number of registered voters (Elections in Nigeria in 2007, 2007). Similar to the 2003 election, only six aspirants scored more than 100,000 votes and only three of them had more than one million (1,000,000) votes. Umar Musa Yar'adua of People's Democratic

Party scored 24,638,063, while Muhammadu Buhari of All Nigerian People's Party polled 6,605,299 votes and Atiku Abubakar of Action Congress got 2,637,848 votes. The number of registered voters was 61,567,036 and 57% of them turned out to vote (Elections in Nigeria, 2011).

Nigerians returned to the polls in 2011 and twenty political parties fielded presidential candidates. Just like in 2003 and 2007, only three candidates polled more than one million (1,000,000) votes and only one other candidate scored more than one hundred thousand (100,000) votes. There were 73,528,040 registered voters and 39,469,484 (53.7%) of them turned out to elect the president. Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP scored 22,495,187 votes to win the election. Muhammadu Buhari of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) came second with 12,214,853 votes and Nuhu Ribadu of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) came third with 2,079,151 votes (Elections in Nigeria, 2011). Violence broke out in some northern states over the results and many non-indigenes were killed while the homes of many northerners who supported Goodluck Jonathan were burnt (Nigeria election: Riots Over Goodluck Jonathan Win, 2011).

Although there are thirteen presidential aspirants for the 2015 presidential election (Olokor, 2015), it is likely to be a close battle between the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and General Muhammadu Buhari of All People's Congress.

## **2.4 Socio-political Problems in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a country with a myriad of disturbing issues. While some of these issues have been present in the country since the laying of the foundations of the country, many others came to consciousness much later in the course of the country's development; for instance, while ethnocentrism has been a problem in Nigeria since

the colonial era, governmental corruption evolved as a menace over a long period after independence. The issues include, ethnicity, religious intolerance; abuse of governmental office and misappropriation of national resources. Most of these issues are inter-related and can be subsumed under the main issue of “Power-shift”.

#### **2.4.1 Power Relations**

Power is very crucial in human relationships. It is “the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor’s will interests, and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 10). The social actors in this case are the ruling elites, the mass media, and the ruled/masses. Eric Louw classifies these actors as “insiders”, “semi-insiders”, and “outsiders” respectively (Louw, 2005, p. 17). It is important to note that the elites cut across the different regional, ethnic and religious groups. Therefore, the struggle for power is between the elites of each group while the media and the masses of each major group and sub-groups are used as pawns in the power game. Consequently, issues like religion, ethnicity, and corruption in government are synergized to capture and retain power.

Besides the lateral struggle for political influence among the political and economic elites in Nigeria, there is vertical and multi-dimensional aspect to power struggle in the polity. This exists among a number of social collective-actors (groups and institutions) which include; political organizations, political parties, public organizations, pressure groups, and terrorist organizations (McNair , 1995, pp. 5-10). These groups compete with one another for space in the mass media in their quests to get the attention and sympathy of the public. This creates a problem because the Nigerian political system favors strong individuals and weakens institutions of the state this leads to a situation in which the roles and interests of leaders of these

institutions are given prominence above the interests and roles of the institutions. Therefore, it is common to see leaders of government agencies, labor unions and pressure groups transiting to professional politicians; two prominent examples is a former president of Nigerian Labor Congress Adams Oshiomole who is now the governor of Edo state and former president of Nigerian Union of Journalists, Smart Adeyemi who is now a senator. The propensity to use the platform provided by public organizations, and pressure groups as springboards to full-time politics kills the vibrancy of the civil society.

#### **2.4.2 Religious and Ethnic Intolerance**

Religion is used as a bargaining chip in Nigerian politics by ensuring that when a presidential candidate emerges from one faith (e.g. Christianity) the running mate automatically is selected from another faith (e.g. Islam). Also when a presidential candidate emerges from one region (i.e. North), the running mate is naturally selected from the other region (i.e. South). This unwritten arrangement explains the mutual suspicions that permeate the interaction among people of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria as well as interactions among adherents of the two major religions. Disagreements in power sharing often lead to violence which is often given ethnic and religious colorations. Therefore, it is not surprising that “about forty percent (40%) of ethno-religion based conflicts are credited to the fourth Republic of Nigeria.” (Salawu, 2010, p. 345). The “Fourth Republic” refers to the current political dispensation which commenced on May, 29, 1999. The high rate of ethno-religious conflict at this period shows that the opportunities inherent in liberal democracy are abused by Nigerian elites in their quests to benefit from the system.

This is an indication that there are other covert reasons behind the façade of religion in the negotiation for political and economic benefits in Nigeria. In fact, the

manipulation of the masses for the actualization of elite political objectives is an ancient practice which is as old as human history (Jacob, 2012, p. 13). There's an urgent need for the masses "to realize the deceits of the ruling elites" (Effiong, 2014). They use ethnicity and religion to campaign for elective offices, but they don't care about the plight of those from their tribes and religions when they loot and share their loots among themselves. It is purely a matter of class. David Brown (2000) corroborates this argument by asserting that the conflicts "are not nationalist conflicts at all, they are disputes caused by economic disparities and elite power rivalries" (Brown, 2000, p. 1).

The advent of, and developments in the mass media has added another twist to the manipulation of the masses by the elites. This is obviously so because the mass media are owned and controlled by the elites (both political and economic elites).

Curiously, there are religious minorities in Nigeria who are never considered in the social, political and economic scheme because their numeric weaknesses. The number of adherents of traditional religions is quite significant, but the apparent division of their loyalties to different gods is perhaps a limitation to their collective bargain in the political and economic arena hence, the duopoly of power between Christians and Muslims.

Ethnocentrism and religious intolerance are major impediments to the "attainment of a sustainable democracy, nation building and national integration" in Nigeria (Abdulkadir, 2011, p. 2). When constituent groups in a country protect the interests of their respective groups while tramping on the interests of the other groups, they deny the country the opportunity to develop at its optimal capacity. Ethnocentrism

fuels mutual suspicion and it limits mutual understanding and cooperation among the constituent groups and it leads to the exertion of energy on conflict instead of developmental efforts.

Central to the ethno-religious arrangement and permutations on the power relations in Nigeria is the corrupt enrichment of the major players and their associates and sometimes, the unequal development of their cities, towns, or villages of origin. Most Nigerians are quick to criticize corruption when the person or people who allegedly engage in corruption are from the “other” religious, regional, or ethnic group. In contrast, they turn the proverbial blind eye when the perpetrator’s background, history, or faith resonates with their own. In such cases, it is assumed that the corrupt official is representing their religious, ethnic, or social group; hence, whatever he or she illegally acquires in the process is termed as the “perks of office”.

### **2.4.3 Corruption in Government**

Governmental corruption permeates the Nigerian society. It is often cited as the major factor stunting the growth and development of Nigeria. It exists in many forms, and it could mean different things to different people. However for the purpose of this work, corruption is “the betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain” (Dobel, 1978, p. 958). This presupposes that anybody or group who acts against the “spirit and letter” of his/her or their office(s) is (are) guilty of corruption.

In simpler terms, corruption can also be seen as “efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means for private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit” (Obayelu, 2007, p. 2). This is most apt in the Nigerian context as public office is seen as one of the fastest and easiest avenues to make money. While the laws provide for the equitable distribution of resources in order to provide the

basic needs of the masses, politicians often divert the funds for their own personal use thereby creating an atmosphere of “lack” in the midst of abundance. Consequently, the masses bear the brunt of the corruption and mismanagement of the elite class. The Niger-Delta region of Nigeria presents a good case of corruption. While the region take thirteen percent (13%) of the revenue derived from the oil gotten from the region, the infrastructural and human developments in the area do not commensurate to the financial resources allocated to the area. As a matter of fact, they sharply fall below the expectations of independent observers and the masses. In contrast, the elites of the region revel in the abundance of their ill-gotten wealth. It is unfortunate that the elites of the region have been clamoring for an increase in the percentage allocated to the region from the oil proceeds while they have not been able to account for the huge sums that have been paid to the region so far.

Ogundiya (2011) traces the obvious underdevelopment of the Niger-Delta region to corruption thus:

It is important to begin to see the Niger Delta from the prism of how political and bureaucratic corruption among the Nigerian political class has worked to undermine the development of the region... [through a comparative analysis of] resource/revenue allocation to states in the federation for a period of five years, from 2004 to 2008, and then argued that if this had been frugally managed, development in the Niger Delta region would have been a different story (Ogundiya, 2011, p. 59).

This is more worrisome because the current Nigerian president is from the region. My argument is that the elites care very little about the masses because producing the president has not led to significant improvements in the lives of the citizens of the area. This reality contradicts the local perception that when a region produces a leader, that leader would facilitate human and infrastructural development in his state

or region of origin. This is perhaps why the masses are manipulated during elections to vote along ethnic and religious lines.

The Nigerian public seems to suffer from acute short-term memory. They forget the sacrifices made in their interests as well as the pains inflicted on them too soon. For instance, individuals who have made great efforts to improve the quality of life of the populace at the risk of losing their own lives like the late human rights lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi are never voted for during elections because they won't induce voters with money. In contrast, politicians who had been part of notorious military regimes are freely given electoral mandates as long as they are willing to pay the electorates during the elections. The ruling class seems to have mastered the Nigerian political terrain as they massively loot the treasury with little or no services provided to the people. They then wait for another round of elections to buy the votes of the people.

The politicians and political office holders are not alone in the abuse of public office as they often collaborate with the technocrats and civil servants to commit huge atrocities against the people whom they are meant to serve. Governmental services are dispensed at snail-speed to Nigerians who cannot afford to bribe the civil servants who are supposed to attend to them, while those who pay bribes get the same services rendered to them very quickly. There are many reasons adducible to this situation; first, there is the low level of income in the Nigerian Civil Service as well as the high cost of living in most Nigerian cities. For illustration, a fresh graduate in the civil service who earns less than four hundred dollars (\$400 USD) monthly while s/he needs about seven hundred dollars (\$700 USD) to survive for the month is likely to seek additional income in order to meet his/her basic needs. If getting such additional income on the job illegally is an option, s/he is very likely to consider the

prospect. Another reason for the endemic nature of corruption in Nigeria is that those who are rich and flaunt their riches are treated with great respect without anyone probing the source of their wealth. Royal institutions take turns to give chieftaincy titles to them while universities queue up to award them honorary Doctorates degrees. The relatively indigent but diligent and upright public official would feel slighted by the lack of appreciation by the society. S/he may then seek recognition by making money at all cost. The situation is worsened by the injustice in the Nigerian judicial system. Petty thieves often get their limbs chopped off or sentenced to long prison terms. Others simply await trial for years longer than the constitutional prescription for the offence they committed (or alleged to have committed). In contrast, the rich rarely go to trial when they contravene the law, and when they are made to face court trial, they are rarely remanded in prison custody during the trial period. Very few rich people are eventually convicted of the crimes they are charged with as they often enter into a plea bargain with the government to return some of their loot while the state allows them to keep the rest. One interesting case is that of a John Yusuf Yakubu, a civil servant who allegedly stole 23.1 billion naira (over \$US141million). He went through a highly publicized trial at the end of which he was asked to pay a fine of 750,000 naira (\$US 4,580). He didn't go to jail and he escaped with most of his loot. The trial judge was later suspended for one year by the National Judicial Council (NJC) for his handling of the case (TVCnews.tv, 2014) but the judgment was not reviewed neither was the case revisited. In another case that occurred in year 2011, a public investigation on pension administration in Nigeria led to the discovery of "N500 million and \$2m in the account of certain Mrs. Phiana U. Chidi, a Deputy Director (Finance and Accounts), and N12m in the account of 29-

years old Grace Francis, who is the clerk in the office,” (Omah, Anifowose, & Ogundina, 2013, p. 11).

Sadly, a number of those that were convicted of corruption have received presidential pardon over the past few years. Two notable examples are senior members of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Bode George and Chief Diepreye Alamiyeseigha. All these are insignificant when compared to the treatment given to commoners accused of lesser crimes, and they are pointers to the state of injustice in the Nigerian judicial system. Therefore, many Nigerians have been led to conclude that the degree of respect and influence an official has in the society is relative to the intensity of his/her level of corruption as well as the amount of money s/he is able to amass illegally. Consequently, governmental corruption is increasingly becoming a norm across Nigeria.

Contemporary governmental corruption in Nigeria cannot be discussed without the case of the immediate past Nigerian minister for Aviation Stella Oduah. Her case has introduced a new word to the Nigerian media vocabulary “Oduahgate”. She was dropped from the cabinet following public outcry over her involvement in the illegal purchase of two bullet-proof vehicles for her official use. Miss Oduah directed a governmental agency under her supervision, Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to purchase two bulletproof BMW cars at inflated costs of 255 (two hundred and fifty-five) million naira (\$US 1.6) (Soriwei & Okechukwu, 2014). Under Nigerian laws, a minister cannot approve an expenditure that is over 100 (one hundred) million naira. Also the purchase was irregular and unnecessary because the minister already had befitting cars in her convoy. Independent investigations later revealed that the real cost of the cars was \$US 267,000 (Soni, 2014).

In the course of journalistic investigations into the “Oduahgate” scandal, it was revealed that the minister had also lied about her academic qualifications; this is a criminal offence in Nigeria. According to the information provided on the website of the Ministry of Aviation, the minister “obtained a Master’s degree in Business Administration from St. Paul’s College in Lawrenceville, Virginia in 1982” (Adesomoju & Famutimi, 2014). This claim was proven to be untrue as the college said it has never run any graduate programme.

Although the minister (Stella Oduah) was dropped from the cabinet, she has not been prosecuted and she is in the process of making a swift return to public office as a senator in the forthcoming 2015 general elections. The freedom she enjoys today is an indication that the Nigerian government pays lip service to the fight against corruption.

#### **2.4.4 Boko Haram**

The most recent and perhaps most threatening problem facing Nigeria today is the activities of the terrorist organization called terrorist group *Boko Haram*. Officially, the group prefers to be known as “Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad”, which translates as "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad." However, it is globally known as *Boko Haram* which in Hausa language literally translates as “western education is forbidden”. The appellation *Boko Haram* became prominent when the leaders of the group ordered their followers to burn their certificates which were earned in English speaking schools. The series of deadly attacks on educational institutions in Nigeria by the group also gives legitimacy to the name *Boko Haram*. The group was formed “in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the northeastern state of Borno, by Islamist cleric Mohammed Yusuf. The group aims to establish a fully Islamic state in Nigeria” (Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

*Boko Haram* grew rapidly due to the high level of poverty and illiteracy in the region. The poor are often asked to look unto God for their help; thus religion provides a distraction from the prevailing socio-economic and political problems. While illiteracy made them gullible, politics provided them with the weapons. In their quest to win elections, Nigerian politicians usually provide arms to thugs in order to intimidate political opponents. A former governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff allegedly created and funded a militia group called ECOMOG (the original ECOMOG is an acronym for ECOWAS Monitoring Group, the West African regional peace keeping force) for the protection of his political interests.

The roots of terrorism, especially in Borno, Hombe, Yobe and Bauchi States, could be traced to groups or associations such as ‘ECOMOG’, ‘Yan Kalare’ and ‘Sara Suka’ which have links to prominent politicians in these States. However, similar to the militant groups in the Niger Delta area, the groups usually grow out of control and become a threat to the politicians that supported and financed them (Falana, 2014).

It is interesting to note that after elections, most of these armed groups do not return the arms given to them by politicians; they use the arms for criminal activities. With this background information, many Nigerians see the former governor (Ali Modu Sheriff) as a major founder and funder of *Boko Haram*. “Ali Modu Sheriff is said to have supported *Boko Haram* with funding and arms in exchange for electoral support in the 2007 elections” (Ofstedal, 2013, p. 64). Also he had appointed “Alhaji Buji Foi, a *Boko Haram* leader as the Commissioner of Religious Affairs in Borno State” (Falana, 2014). The former commissioner was summarily executed in 2009 perhaps in a bid to prevent him from revealing their sponsors. The group did not turn violent until 2009 when the group coordinated a public disobedience of a government-policy on transportation.

In July 2009, *Boko Haram* members refused to follow a motorbike helmet law, leading to heavy-handed police tactics that set off an armed uprising in the northern state of Bauchi and spread into the states of Borno, Yobe, and

Kano. The incident was suppressed by the army and left more than eight hundred dead (Sergie & Johnson, 2014).

The government responded violently and the situation escalated. The group engaged the authorities in a mini warfare in Bauchi and Borno states. The founder of the group (Mohammed Yusuf) was captured by the army after a gunfight and he was handed over to the police for prosecution but he was extra-judicially killed by the police. After the death of Mohammed Yusuf, the group was factionalized over the selection of a new leader. Consequently, Imam Abubakar Shekau (an extremist) emerged as the new leader. Abubakar Shekau launched a war on the Nigerian government, killing many government officials in Borno state through guerilla warfare. The group also killed some relatives of the former leader (Mohammed Yusuf) who were willing to negotiate with the government. The group has also carried out several bombings of government buildings and public facilities (including a United Nations building) across the country over the years.

The Nigerian government has declared a State of Emergency in three states that have been mostly affected by the insurgency (Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states). Also the Nigerian government is making collaborative efforts with the governments of Chad and Cameroon to overcome the terrorist group (*Boko Haram*). This became imperative because the terrorist group operates in a geographical space that is close to the borders of Chad and Cameroon. The group also kidnapped the wife of the Cameroonian Deputy Prime Minister.

Although the terrorist activities of the group were widely known, the group reached a new height of infamy with the kidnap of 276 (two hundred and seventy-six) school girls from a predominantly Christian village called Chibok in the northeastern state

of Borno. This sad event took place on the night of April 14 2014. This singular act increased the international awareness about the group and led to the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign and the “#bringbackourgirls” hashtag on Twitter. A few days after the kidnapping of the school girls, “Fifty-seven managed to escape, but more than 200 are still being held.” (Nigeria, Boko Haram Reach Cease-Fire, Agree to Free Schoolgirls, 2014).

While individuals, groups and governments across the world rose to condemn the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, the response of the Nigerian government to the abduction of the girls was inconsistent with logical reasoning. The Nigerian Army claimed that it had rescued the girls. This claim was immediately proven to be false. The Federal Government of Nigeria however claimed that there was no case of kidnapping saying that the case was just an anti-government propaganda despite the video evidence released by *Boko Haram* showing the girls in captivity. After weeks of protest by the Bring Back Our Girls” campaigners, the government belatedly admitted that the girls were truly kidnapped. Although the Federal Government later admitted the sad reality of the girls’ abduction, President Goodluck Jonathan did not meet with the families of the kidnapped girls to commiserate with them. President Jonathan ignored calls for him to meet with the girls’ families until Pakistani activist (and Nobel Peace Prize winner) Malala Yousafzai visited and urged him to do so. This happened three months after the abduction of the girls (bbc.com, 2014).

*Boko Haram* has grown so powerful that it has taken over many towns and villages in Borno and Adamawa states of northeastern Nigeria. The traditional rulers in these towns are killed and sect members are installed as new rulers. Many military bases and formations have been overrun and their equipment and facilities taken over by

the terrorist group. The steady expansion of the sect in the region led to insinuations that the government deliberately allowed the group to grow in order to weaken the North and facilitate victory for President Jonathan in 2015. It is important to note that states that have been mostly affected by the insurgency are controlled by opposition parties. The state of Adamawa was relatively free from the activities of the sect until its governor defected to the opposition after accusing the Federal Government of genocide. The governor was soon impeached and the state has been a theater of political absurdities since then.

The public criticized the Nigerian government for the poor performance by the military in the fight against *Boko Haram* and the Federal Government in turn blamed the West for placing embargo on heavy arms purchase by the Nigerian military. This led to the government to seek alternate routes of arms supply. On September 5, 2014, the South African police seized \$US 9.3 million undeclared cash from a private jet belonging to the president of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The Nigerian government claimed that the money was meant for the purchase of arms and military equipment that would help it in the fight against *Boko Haram*. Some days later, another \$US 5.7million was intercepted by the South African authorities. (Gbadebo, 2014). These seizures created a mini diplomatic row between Nigeria and South Africa.

Following public outcry, the Nigerian Army started recording victories in their battles against *Boko Haram*. They reclaimed a number of towns from the sect. This series of victory increased the public rating of the Nigerian military. However, by October 17, the Nigerian military announced that it had reached a ceasefire agreement with *Boko Haram* and that they were in the process of securing the release

of the kidnapped girls (Nossiter, 2014). The ceasefire deal was reportedly brokered by the president of Chad Republic. Many observers took this news with skepticism.

Barely two weeks after the announcement of a ceasefire, *Boko Haram* struck again taking over Mubi town (The town is home to three army formations is the second largest town in Adamawa state). They group took the army barracks in the town without resistance (Anwar, Adamu, & Mutum, 2014). By October 31<sup>st</sup>, *Boko Haram* released a video denouncing the reported ceasefire agreement. The leader of the group (Abubakar Shekau) “ruled out future talks with the government and said the girls had converted to Islam and been married off since being kidnapped more than six months ago” (Johnston, 2014).

## **2.5 The Role of the Media and PR in Peace Building and Conflict**

### **Resolution in Nigeria**

Public Relations and the mass media are crucial to the development of every society. If properly used, then the society would experience peace and well-rounded development, but if they are not effectively used, the society would experience conflicts. While Public Relations, is livewire of the society, the mass media are the vehicles through which PR efforts are projected to the publics.

Peaceful coexistence is only possible with tolerance based on understanding among the political actors in any society. However, such understanding is only possible with effective communication. The facilitation of understanding among the political actors is the duty of Public Relations which is about the creation and sustenance of mutually beneficial relationship among people, groups and organizations. The most effective instrument in the achievement of this goal (i.e. building development

through understanding) is the mass media. Therefore, it could be said that the mass media is a double edged sword that could either serve as a theater for the promotion and actualization of national development goals or the arena for the stoking and fanning of the embers of divisive tendencies among people.

The Nigerian press has been subjective in their reportage because of the political preferences of the publishers. “However, this lack of objectivity could be much more discerned if close textual and contextual analysis is adopted” (Bello, 2014, p. 71).

There are a number of instances where the media has been negatively “used to stir up conflict and exacerbate war” (Nyama, 2003, p. 9) in many parts of Africa, (e.g. Somalia and Rwanda) and its continued negative use could portends great danger in future. Basil Nyama sums up the potential outcome of negative media usage in Africa thus:

Indeed, if recklessly used, media as social agents have the potential to promote all kinds of vices and violence, all detrimental to society. They can encourage what I may call the gun-and- blood culture, e.g. propaganda that promotes ethnic cleansing, ethnicity, selfish hegemony, reprisal, repression, racism, genocide, such as the one in Rwanda ... At other times they can be motivated by incorrect interpretations and practice of limited spheres of life, such as religious, ideological or theological hermeneutics (Nyama, 2003, p. 10).

However, these fears do not diminish “the power of media to transform violent conflicts into non-violent ones” (Nyama, 2003, p. 9). The ability of the mass media to reach a wide audience at great speed could be harnessed to mobilize people for developmental activities and peace building initiatives; for instance, “free and strengthened media can promote a popular culture of participatory democracy, basic human rights, coexistence, tolerance, and peace” (Nyama, 2003, p. 9). If the Nigerian media report on the positive aspects of the union, there would be greater

understanding, tolerance and cooperation among Nigerians. For instance, it would be better to report on a wedding between a Christian and a Muslim instead of a fight between a Christian and a Muslim. If news is selected based on their positive values, then the public would focus on the positive aspects of the nation and consequently, they would blur the ethnic and religious differences existing among the constituent groups in Nigeria.

## **2.6 Nigerian Government and Reputation Management in the Fourth Republic**

The Federal Government of Nigeria has made many attempts (since 1999) to promote the image of the country to both her citizens and the international community. For a country that was forged by a forceful aggregation of various independent tribes and ethnic nations with each having its own distinct language, history and culture, conflict is inevitable. However, the goal of every purposive leadership is effective management of the various conflicts in order to prevent them from escalating into crises. Consequently, past (Obasanjo 1999-2007 and Yar'adua 2007-2010) and present (Goodluck Jonathan 2010-date) Nigerian governments have made efforts to ensure the existence of harmonious co-existence among the various groups. One of such efforts is the creation of more states within the federation. This gives a degree of autonomy to the sub-groups within the country (Alapiki , 2005, p. 50). Although state creation allows people of common ancestries, histories, and traditions to legally live as a sub-unit, it only leads to temporary peace and eventually creates foundations for further agitations for creation of more states in the country. At the moment, Nigeria has thirty-six states, but there are at least eighteen demands for new states.

Since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, there have been two massive and one discreet attempt at augmenting the reputation of the country and revamping her poor image both locally and internationally. The first attempt took place in year 2006, under the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo. The theme of the public relations effort was “Heart of Africa” obviously coined from the strategic location of the country on the map of Africa. The project gulped millions of dollars of tax-payers’ money as series of advertisements were put on American Cable News Network (CNN). Similarly, the government paid an American foundation (The Eddie Johnson Foundation) the sum of five million US dollars (\$US5.000.000) to play a number of American football matches in Nigeria even though the game is alien to Nigerians. (Sahara Reporters, 2006). While the American organizations smiled to the bank as a result of their dealings with the organizers of the “Heart of Africa” project, Nigerians were angry at the amount of financial waste that characterized the PR effort. I share the view that the millions of dollars that were poured into the American economy through the campaign would have helped improve the Nigerian economy.

It is important to note that the “Heart of Africa” project was meant to be a massive Public Relations effort, but it ended up being a woeful propaganda effort. While it was targeted at revamping the image of the country (Nigeria) and her leaders, it ended up creating more bad press for her both internally and internationally. For instance, popular American sports channel ESPN rejected a deal to broadcast the American football matches billed as part of the campaign (Sahara Reporters, 2006). In the same vein Nigerians widely criticized the project, describing it as an indication of the misplaced priorities of the Federal Government. Interestingly, this campaign was launched simultaneously with the failed tenure elongation bid of the former president. Therefore the public outcry is understandable. Perhaps the project would

have been successful if the government had won the hearts of the local populace before launching the audacious effort at image laundering.

In the year 2009, following a change of political leadership in 2007, a popular campaign was launched by the Information Minister, Professor Dora Akunyili, it was called the “Rebranding Nigeria” campaign. The theme was “Nigeria: Good People, Great Nation”. This campaign was an indictment on the preceding political leadership and its fund-sapping campaign of 2006. I make this assertion because the arrowhead of the “Nigeria: Good People, Great Nation” campaign, Dora Akunyili said that the government (led by President Umar Yar’adua) would not sink any funds in the new campaign besides a “left-over” one million dollars that was unspent from the previous “Heart of Africa” campaign of the Obasanjo administration. She sought private (or corporate) capital to fund the new PR campaign (The Economist, 2009). While the decision to avoid the waste of public funds on the revamping of the nation’s image is commendable, it is important to state that the campaign was needless as no amount of Public Relations or positive press can sell a bad product twice. The rebranding campaign was aimed at attracting foreign investors and improving tourism in Nigeria, but it failed to achieve its objectives because the long-standing problems of governmental corruption, unemployment, piracy, ethno-religious tensions, power shortages, etc. had not been addressed.

The choice of Mrs. Akunyili as Information Minister itself was a Public Relations stunt on the part of President Yar’adua because Mrs. Akunyili, (a professor of pharmacy) had built an enviable reputation for herself as head of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) -the government agency responsible for the regulation of processed food and drugs- under the

administration of President Obasanjo. She met the agency in a chaotic state and sanitized the agency and the industry despite threats to her life. Her nationalist credentials were boosted by the fact that an overwhelming number of the big players in the fake drugs trade were from her ethnic group and her state of origin (Anambra State) was the “arena” for the production of these harmful products. Her efforts as head of the agency (NAFDAC) endeared her to many Nigerians. At that time, she was unarguably one of the most respected and loved Nigerians both at home and abroad. Therefore, she was an asset to the country and the new administration which came in through a flawed electoral process. The imperfection of the election was admitted by the major beneficiary of the process, President Yar’adua. The president publicly vowed to make drastic positive changes in subsequent elections and governance in Nigeria. The appointment of the professor of pharmacy as minister for Information in a country that parades many professors of communication, journalism and countless public relations gurus is a testament to the sincerity of the president on one hand as well as the dire state of the country’s image both locally and internationally. Perhaps the campaign could have yielded positive fruits with time but President Yar’adua became ill and died in office and the rebranding campaign was literally interred with him. Yar’adua’s deputy Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as the next president and the nation continued its search for favorable image both at home and abroad.

The image of the Nigerian government as seen by an overwhelming majority of the citizens has not improved since the advent of President Jonathan’s administration, neither has the image of Nigerians as seen by other nationalities, as a matter of fact, Nigerians abroad struggle for acceptability by their hosts. The image crises got worse earlier this year when over 200 school girls were abducted from their school in

Chibok, a village in the north-eastern state of Borno. The bad press generated by this abduction further reduced the already low public rating of the government. In a bid to stem the tide, the Federal government discreetly hired American Public Relations firm Levick as image consultant. The deal was worth over one million dollars. The brief was “to help rev up the president’s plummeting public approval rating following what local and international observers consider his administration’s inept handling of the abduction of over 250 schoolgirls by the extremist *Boko Haram* sect” (Ibekwe, Nigerians declare war on President Jonathan’s image consultant, Levick, 2014).

Although the engagement of public relations is inevitable in the management of an organization or country, it must also be said that the manner in which the Nigerian government went about it was quite wrong. The effort was conceived and executed in secrecy like it is something sinister. Public relations is not a secret activity. It is done to facilitate mutual understanding and ensure mutual benefits, thus, the parties concerned by the effort should have been carried along. Another wrong step taken at the beginning is the choice of consultants for the public relations effort. Although there are several public relations and marketing/political communications outfits in Nigeria, the government chose an American firm to advise it on how to solve an indigenous problem. While it is arguable that developments in globalization could enable an American firm to do a great job on a Nigerian problem, as the top players in the global advertising and public relations industry now have “extensive network of subsidiaries and offices” as well as partners in the developing countries (McPhail, 2006, p. 237), I posit that a congregation of local brains would have been more acceptable by the populace and they would have produced better results. Obviously,

the discreet attempt at image redemption by the Jonathan administration also backfired.

## **2.7 North/ South Dichotomy: Roots and Branches of Division in Nigeria**

The perennial divisions along ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria can be attributed to many factors which are both historic and contemporaneous. The principal cause is the quest for the control of the economic resources through the occupation of the political offices that provide access to the vaults of the nation. Ray Jacob says the crises are products of "... power competition and decision making over economic resources and other important human factor, like position" (Jacob, 2012, p. 13). While this can be said to be true of the elite class, the reasons for conflicts and ethnic suspicion among the lower classes can be attributed to other factors like nepotism, tribalism, and governmental corruption, as well as poor infrastructural and social amenities among others. These things often unite the enlightened people of the lower classes in their expression of resentment towards the ruling classes. They could also create divisions among the lower classes especially when they feel that someone else is enjoying certain benefits by virtue of being from a certain tribal or ethnic group. This position is supported by Jacob (2012) thus:

Unequal and differential treatment of ethnic groups was responsible for the intense competition in the society. It created disparity in educational achievement and widened the political and economic gaps between northern and southern Nigeria (Jacob, 2012, p. 14).

Ethnocentrism and tribalism has widened the gap among Nigerians that residents are classified as indigenes and settlers. Provision of social amenities and appointments into positions of service are often reduced to the lowest level of reason by focusing on the origin and religion of potential beneficiaries. For instance, in the year 2012,

the Federal Government appointed a qualified citizen (Professor Musbau Akanji) as Vice-Chancellor of a university (Federal University of Technology Minna). The appointee is an indigene of a neighboring state (Kwara State). Although no legal provision was flouted in making the appointment, the host community vehemently protested the appointment saying it was the host community's turn to produce the next Vice-Chancellor. The Minna Emirate (traditional authority) accused the university authorities of marginalization in the appointment of staff and award of contracts among other anomalies. They therefore "threatened that unless one of its own was considered and appointed vice chancellor, the peace hitherto enjoyed by the school would be no more" (Ogiji, 2014). The host community went further to institute a civil case against the appointment in a federal court but the court upheld the appointment. In essence, it didn't matter to the Emirate that the appointee could do a better job in running the institution than "indigenes" of the Emirate, It also didn't matter that the appointee share the same faith (Islam) with most of the locals. The opposition by the local community to the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor (despite their mutual faith) is an indication that religion and ethnicity are not the main issues in Nigeria but elite power struggles. However, the elites would go to great extents to use religion, ethnicity and region to beat up public sentiment and mobilize the masses for their political and economic causes. This kind of power struggle is one of the reasons why many Nigerian intellectuals prefer to live and work outside Nigeria.

Case like the one mentioned above are very disturbing and they have been part of the basis for military intervention in Nigerian politics. There have been seven significant coup d'états in Nigeria since independence. These seven coup d'états are significant because they led to changes in the political leadership of Nigeria. The widespread

governmental corruption, ethnocentrism, religious intolerance and other negative issues have led to fears that the military may strike again to put an end to the Fourth Republic. Recent negative and divisive events outweigh the events that led to military coup d'états in the past. However, the leadership of Nigerian military has consistently said that the military has no business in politics. It is curiously unprecedented that the Nigeria has experienced uninterrupted democratic rule for so long (fifteen years) and witnessed transfer of presidential power from one democratically elected president to another. So far, the Nigerian military has resisted calls and “provocations” to interrupt the democracy. Ehwarieme (2011) attempts an explanation of the relationship between the Nigerian military and democracy.

... It is certainly appropriate and timely to reflect on why the Fourth Republic has survived for an unprecedented ten years (sic). Despite improvements in certain areas, several of the structural, socioeconomic, and political conditions including corruption, poverty, decay of infrastructures, and above all peripheral economy and state weakness used to account for military coups in the past existed and in the last decade even intensified. This makes a closer examination of the military itself compelling. Yet, as we have shown earlier a good number of recent reflections have tried to account for the relative democratic stability in terms of increasing institutionalization, constitutionalism, and vibrancy of civil society (Ehwarieme, 2011, p. 507).

Although Nigeria has made a number of gains socially, it is good to note that nepotism and favoritism based on regional affiliations are perennial threats to the political balance of Nigeria. As a matter of fact, no leadership has shown immunity to the albatross of regional influence on Nigerian politics since independence. While it is arguable that the nation rose above religious sentiments twice in political leadership (as evident in the selection of General Muhammadu Buhari and General Tunde Idiagbon for the top two political jobs in 1984 and the election of Moshood Abiola and Babagana Kingibe as president and vice president respectively in 1993. They were all Muslims), the short life-span of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime and the stillbirth of the Abiola/Kingibe presidency are indicators that Nigerian power

equation may never be separable from religion. The age-long tradition of “balancing” the presidential ticket regionally by ensuring that the president and the vice-president do not come from the same region may further increase the menace of regional loyalty as political leaders and public servants would believe that they owe their appointments or elections to their ethnic or regional origin and not the fact that they are Nigerians. If this trend continues, then the potential break-up along ethnic and regional lines, as predicted by many pundits may become a reality.

## **2.8 International Interests in Nigeria’s Unity**

Nigeria elicits sharp attention in the international community for a number of reasons. Nigeria is “the political and commercial center of the West African region. Hosting the headquarters of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and being the major contributor to its peace- building operations” (Oftedal, 2013, p. 1) therefore, it is unarguably the leader of the West-African sub-region based on its population and economy in addition to being a frontrunner in the African Union (AU). These positions are products of its high numerical strength as well as its rich and vast reserves of natural resources. The importance of Nigeria in the global economy cannot be underplayed as it is the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world. The European depends on Nigeria for more than seven percent (7%) of its oil. This is a huge volume of transaction when the size of the European Union as well as its energy needs is put into consideration. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only South Africa represents a better market for the European Union than Nigeria. Nigeria’s importance to the United States is evident in the fact that it is “the fourth largest supplier of oil to the United States” (Ogundiya, 2011, p. 58). The deduction from these is that political and economic events in Nigeria have ripple effects on the economies of the United States of America and the European Union. As noted by

McLoughlin & Bouchat, “Nigeria is the key country in Sub-Saharan Africa for the success of American policy and interests, but is poorly understood by policymakers” (McLoughlin & Bouchat, 2013). An understanding and perhaps a mastery of the Nigerian political sphere is crucial to the protection of American interests in Nigeria because its (Nigeria’s) future is important to the United States and other leading global powers. The protection of American interests in Nigeria is exemplified by the “proactive” assistance given to Nigeria in the ongoing search for over two hundred Nigerian girls abducted by terrorist group *Boko Haram* in April 2014.

The most popular socio-economic paradigm in the world is the American-styled democracy. This is attributable to the military and economic strength of United States of America. America and her allies have made rigorous efforts to market democracy and its Siamese twin capitalism to the world. These two concepts are vital to the American way of life because democracy often allows capitalism to flourish. However, I think capitalism is more fundamental to the American interest, and the United States would support any regime overtly or covertly as long as such a regime is willing to open-up its market to American capitalists. This is deducible in the words of American president Barack Obama “America’s support for democracy and human rights goes beyond idealism – it’s a matter of national security. Democracies are far less likely to go to war. Free and open economies perform better, and become markets for our goods” (Obama, 2014). His words show relative positions of democracy and capitalism on the American scale of preference. Thus the covert and overt American support given to many autocratic regimes around the world over the years becomes more comprehensible. African leaders (Nigerian leaders in particular) whom perfectly understood the American policy have opened up their markets to

American investors and their allies while maintaining firm grips on the politics of their countries.

The “global prefects” (i.e. Permanent members of the UN Security Council) have been too glad to look towards other directions while African leaders perpetrate atrocities against their own people. Besides, the actions and body language of Western powers on the international stage deprives them of the moral right to pontificate to developing countries like Nigeria on democratic rule. Since dialogue and compromise are rudimentary features of democracy, the non-negotiable position of the United States during the presidency of George Bush Jr. (who infamously declared that ““if you are not with us – you are against us””) in the build up to the Iraqi invasion of 2003 sends negative signals to dictators in developing countries (Petrén, 2003, p. 4).

The socio-economic and political position of Nigeria in the international community vis-à-vis the interest of the western powers in Nigerian politics generates curiosity. While Nigeria is undoubtedly a leader on the African continent, it is unarguably a pawn in the global power game among the counties that are global super powers. There have been concerns that the West may engineer the disintegration of the country following a CIA prediction in 2006 that Nigeria could disintegrate by 2015. The lingering unrest in the Arab world (especially in oil-rich countries) is seen as a template for what awaits Nigeria. If the West is guaranteed free access to the Nigerian oil fields and the oil market in the event of a break-up, then I see the West pursuing the disintegration of Nigeria as predicted as soon as possible.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter focuses on the methodology employed in the conduct of this study. I'm using Norman Fairclough's textual, contextual and social analyses as the methodological framework (Fairclough, 1997, p. 421) with Teun Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the power relations in Nigeria. Power relations in this context refer to the complex interactions in the struggle for, acquisition of, and exercise of political power in Nigeria.

The main method used in the conduct of the study, Critical Discourse Analysis is then discussed in detail. Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is also discussed. The chapter goes ahead to provide background information on the Nigerian national newspapers whose semiotic data provide the material for this study. It also gives an overview of the columns and columnists whose textual narratives are critically analyzed in this research.

#### **3.1 Research Questions**

This research seeks answers to the following questions:

- i. Are Nigerian columnists encouraging ethno-religious violence through their writings on power relations?
- ii. Does the religion and ethnicity of Nigerian columnists influence their narratives on power relations?

- iii. Does ethnic, political and religious history of Nigeria influence the narratives of the columnists?
- iv. Does the political preference of the owner of a newspaper influence the narratives of the columnists writing for such a newspaper?

### **3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical paradigm that is interested in the demystification of ideologies “and power through the systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data” (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 3). Semiotic data in this regard refers to writings or recordings and researchers using CDA freely take clear positions reflecting where their interests lay without neglecting the scientific methodology. According to Teun Van Dijk, Critical Discourse Analysis is a dissident research which allows analysts and researchers to take “explicit positions” in their quest to “understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352).

CDA is a method of research which primary focuses on “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). It focuses on how language influences power and how power influences the use of language within a social context. By focusing on the relationship between power and language use, CDA “reveals the way discourses are used ... for the development of new knowledge” (Taiwo, 2007, p. 219).

The evolution of Critical Discourse Analysis can be traced back to some of the ideas developed at the Frankfurt School before the World War II (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352).

However, its maturity into its current state can be attributed to developments in linguistic studies around the 1970s and 1980s. It was called Critical Linguistics (CL) in that era and later it became Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Ezeifeke, 2013, p. 176) because of this background, the terminologies CDA and CL are synonymously used by scholars but “recently, the term CDA seems to have been preferred and is being used to denote the theory formerly identified as CL” (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 1). Teun Van Dijk (2001) argues that the emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis could be seen as an inevitable “reaction against the dominant formal paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). The reaction was necessary because the dominant paradigms were not critical, rather they simply explained the prevailing order and maintained the status quo.

Wodak and Meyer narrated the birth of Critical Discourse Analysis as follows:

The CDA as a network of scholars emerged in the early 1990s, following a small symposium in Amsterdam, in January 1991. Through the support of the University of Amsterdam, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak spent two days together, and had the wonderful opportunity to discuss theories and methods of Discourse Analysis, specifically CDA (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 3).

Critical Discourse Analysis differs from Discourse Analysis; this difference is found in their subject of study. While Discourse Analysis focuses on linguistic unit, Critical Discourse Analysis goes beyond the surface to examine the socio-political, economic and cultural undercurrents that led to the visible linguistic pattern. In essence, Critical Discourse Analysis shows deep interest in the study of complex social phenomenon (Wodak & Meyer, 2008, p. 2).

Based on the explanations above, Critical Discourse Analysis is employed for this study because it will help to provide the historical, contextual and social backgrounds

behind the textual narratives employed by the columnists in their bid to influence their readers towards their preferred political directions. On a superficial level, Discourse Analysis “can be used as a framework for analysis of national identity ... Many different forms of text and talk could be selected for analysis.” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 2).

Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis was selected for this research because it is “firmly anchored in social reality and with a deep interest in actual problems and forms of inequality in societies” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 6).

### **3.3 Van Dijk’s Socio-Cognitive Approach**

Teun Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach views media discourse as process and products of institutional practices which involves the production and reception of news. “It is not enough to analyze media texts and show textual biases without looking at the wider socio-economic and cultural factors that may have influenced a particular form of news construction” (Bello, 2014, p. 72). Van Dijk’s position shows that the meaning which readers make out of newspaper columns is a product of their socio-cultural and politico-economic experiences. Consequently, the presentation of the text within a social context influences the cognitive outcome of such text on the readers. Therefore to appreciate the influence of media discourse in the society, it becomes imperative to “analyze the cognitive and social factors, conditions, constraints, or consequences of such textual structures and, indirectly their economic, cultural and historical embedding” (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 176).

This research employed Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach to CDA to analyze the possible influence of the textual narratives by the three columnists from three

Nigerian newspapers on the thoughts and actions of their readers. Interestingly the relationship between discourse and power relations is a symbiotic relationship. They shape and are shaped by each other. Most times, the dominant power determines the dominant discourse. The media plays a dual role in the tussle between discourse and power relations; it serves as the instrument of for the attainment of dominance while also providing the stage for the contention for dominant influence between discourse and power relations.

### **3.4 Norman Fairclough's Textual, Contextual, and Social Analysis**

Norman Fairclough' approach to Critical Discourse Analysis is based on an analysis of the relations between discourse and society in terms of power and hegemony. It explains how media owners are used by political elites to spread ideologies which would enable the creation of political hegemony. To Fairclough there are three crucial components to Critical Discourse Analysis. They are; the social event [text], the social structure [language], and the social practice [discourse] (Fairclough, 1995, p. 135).

For Fairclough, the texture of a text is as important as the content of the text; the organization of the text is also vital to the effective analysis of the discourse taken by the text under critical analysis" (Fairclough, 1997, p. 4). In this research the weight and texture of the texts used in the columns under analysis would be carefully examined.

The contextual analysis is concerned with the social and mental space within which a discourse is narrated. While texts may carry universal meanings, contexts provide for

localized interpretations of the texts. Van Dijk explains the importance of context in discourse thus:

In local meanings propositions are expressed which the speaker or writer thinks the recipient should know. That such relevance decisions may be in the interest of the speaker or writer is obvious; for instance, information about an event that may give a bad impression of the speaker/writer, or which in any other way may later be used —against the speaker or writer, may be left out in order to influence the models of a recipient in the preferred direction (Van Dijk, 1998, p. 267).

From the quotation above, it is deducible that context is based on prior knowledge and shared experiences between the writer and the readers. Understanding of the context facilitates deeper understanding of the texture and weight of the text under analysis. In this research, I will draw a lot of contextual information in the analysis of the columns from the three newspapers in order to help my readers to understand the texts better.

The third level is the social analysis which deals with the behavioral manifestation of the contextual experiences. The history and environment within which a text is produced generates certain social practices which in turn produce more texts in future. For example, in the Nigerian context, when a columnist uses the social space provided by the newspaper to promote an idea or opinion, it is usually done against the social interaction/practices facilitated by historical events.

### **3.5 Language, Ideology and Power**

The use of language plays a key role in the establishment and renegotiation of power relations in the society. The creative use of language and media narratives helps dominant social actors to create and sell ideologies that could lead to the actualization of their political and economic objectives. As Fairclough puts it, “language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology,

and through being both a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 15). The media is a vital tool for the communication and promotion of ideology which enables the creation of hegemony. It also facilitates ideological developments for the dismantling of hegemony.

In the context of this research, it is observed that competing elite forces in the Nigerian political sphere use the media to create narratives that are favorable to their political objectives. For instance, the dominant narrative in the camp of the president is that the opposition represents the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy which had ruled the country for so long to the exclusion of other tribes. In this narrative, the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy created the socio-economic problems facing the country through years of misrule. The narrative also claims that the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group has created hegemonic relationship with other Nigerian ethnic groups. “Electing President Jonathan” for another term would signify defiance of the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy.

This narrative is the crux of the excuses provided by the presidency to deflect attention from the president’s perceived poor performance. Newspapers that are loyal to President Jonathan regularly use this narrative.

In the opposition camp, the dominant media narrative promotes the idea that the incumbent president is a weak, sectional individual who encourages corruption. Facts and figures are frequently used to show that the volume of financial fraud experienced under the present administration is the highest in the history of the country. Newspapers that are loyal to the opposition regularly use this narrative. When such stories are told and retold by the media, they generate discussions across all levels of the political space and their ideas become engraved in the minds of the

public. Consequently, the political choices made by the public would be influenced by the ideologies created by the narratives and they become decisive in the electoral process.

### **3.6 Sample and Selection Rationale**

Three national newspapers were selected for this research; they are *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust*, and *Nigerian Tribune*. At this point, it is important to note two fundamental challenges to this study; the first one is that it is very hard to ascertain the circulation figures of Nigerian newspapers because “over the years, actual newspaper sales have been shrouded in secrecy” (Franca, 2014). The second peculiarity is that Nigerian newspapers lack specific socio-political ideologies. The only Nigerian newspaper that is ideologically distinct is “Guardian” newspaper which is clearly targeted at intellectual elites. Nigerian “Guardian” newspaper is excluded from the sample in this study because the newspaper lacks a mass appeal. Most of the newspapers frequently change their ideologies whenever their publishers take new political outlooks. Below is some background information on the newspapers used for this research.

#### **3.6.1 Vanguard**

*Vanguard* newspaper is a national newspaper that is published in the southern city of Lagos. Over eighty percent (80%) of Nigerian newspapers are published in Lagos irrespective of the ethnicity of their publishers. This is because Lagos is the economic nerve center of Nigeria and most corporate businesses in Nigeria have their operations headquartered in Lagos. Although *Vanguard* newspaper is based in Lagos, it is owned by a man from the Niger-Delta region, Sam Amuka Pemu.

Sam Amuka Pemu is a veteran journalist and columnist in Nigeria. The publisher (Mr. Pemu) hails from Delta State in the South-South geo-political region of Nigeria (same as the president). The newspaper commenced publication in 1983 and it has grown into one of the most-read newspapers in Nigeria over the years.

*Vanguard* was selected because its publisher is from the same geo-political region as the incumbent Nigerian president. Because ethnicity is a basic consideration in the Nigerian society, it is possible that a newspaper that is published by a kinsman of the president would provide unwavering support for the political activities of the president. The veracity of this assumption is put to test by the selection of a column from this newspaper (*Vanguard*). While the ethnicity of the publisher makes the newspaper less critical of the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan in its news reports, columnists have a greater level of independence and freedom than correspondents and staff reporters. This relative independence could make the columnists a bit critical of the “friends” (i.e. people who share the same ethnic, religious or business interest) of the newspaper’s publisher.

### **3.6.2 Daily Trust**

*Daily Trust* newspaper is published in Abuja which is Nigeria’s capital city. It is published by Media Trust Nigeria Limited which is owned by Kabiru Abdullahi Yusuf a former university lecturer and columnist who hails from northern Nigeria. The newspaper started as *Weekly Trust* in 1998, and it became a daily publication in 2001. The newspaper is the most widely read newspaper in northern Nigeria; this is understandable because the newspaper is published by a northerner. It is a common tradition for government ministries departments and agencies in northern Nigeria to subscribe to *Daily Trust*, *Weekly Trust*, and *Sunday Trust* newspapers because they are published by a northerner.

*Daily Trust* can be described as a newspaper that protects the interests of the northern region of Nigeria. This became necessary because none of the national newspapers that existed in Nigeria prior to that time was based in the northern part of Nigeria neither was any of them published by a northern Nigerian. The description of *Daily Trust* as a protector of the interests of northern Nigeria is informed by the tone of the news reports in the newspaper. Also most of the columnists in the newspaper are from the northern region. It is often at the forefront in defending the collective interest of the northern region.

*Daily Trust* is selected for this study because it is the most influential newspaper in northern Nigeria. The selection is justified by the fact that a section of northern Nigerian elites strongly oppose the President Goodluck Jonathan because they believe a northerner should have completed the tenure of late president Umar Yar'adua despite constitutional provisions that the vice-president should take over when a president dies in office. The extent to which the newspaper and its columnists agree with the position of the northern elites who are opposed to the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan is unclear, but a Critical Discourse Analysis of the narratives in the columns would help me in this research to take a position on that.

### **3.6.3 Nigerian Tribune**

*Nigerian Tribune* is the oldest running newspaper in Nigeria. It was one of the newspapers that were established for the actualization of Nigeria's independence from Great Britain. It was established by Obafemi Awolowo a lawyer and politician who was the first Premier of Western Nigeria.

The newspaper (*Nigerian Tribune*) entered the Nigerian news market in 1949 and it has been based in the South-Western city of Ibadan since then. Following the death

of the founder in 1987, the newspaper's ownership moved to his nuclear family and it has been an influential voice in the politics of Nigeria especially on political issues that affect the South-West geo-political zone.

*Nigerian Tribune* makes the sample for this study on account of its ethnic composition; most of its principal staff and columnists are from the Yoruba tribe and its founder vigorously used the newspaper to propagate his political ideals. In the current Nigerian political dispensation, *Nigerian Tribune* can be seen as a neutral newspaper because nobody from the region holds a top political job/position at the federal level.

The choice of the sample for this study is greatly influenced by ethnic consideration; *Daily Trust* represents the Hausa ethnic group while *Nigerian Tribune* represents the Yoruba ethnic group and *Vanguard* represents the minority groups of the Niger-Delta region. Priority is given to the minority groups of the Niger-Delta region because the incumbent president hails from the region. It is easily observable that the third major Nigerian ethnic group (Igbo) is not represented in the sample for this study. The reason for the exclusion of a newspaper representing the Igbo ethnic group is that at the time of conducting this research, most of the Igbo elites are in support of the presidential ambition of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015. Therefore, it is unnecessary to elect a newspaper representing the Igbo ethnic group in this study.

One column was chosen from each newspaper; the columns are "Wakaman" by Tunde Asaju (*Sunday Trust*), "People and Politics" by Ochereome Nnanna (*Vanguard*), and Lanre Adewole's "Gibbers" (*Nigerian Tribune*). From each column, two articles were selected for analysis. The time frame for the selection is from June

2013 to November 2014. In the selection of the articles, only pieces that focus on power relations and national security within the time frame under focus were considered for selection.

### **3.7 The Columnists**

The columnists whose writings are selected for this research are all Nigerians. They are all journalists with at least a decade of practice. They represent different political ideologies; while Ochereome Nnanna (*Vanguard* newspaper) and Lanre Adewole (*Nigerian Tribune* newspaper) seem to ally with the presidential status quo, Tunde Asaju (*Daily Trust*) takes a critical approach to the status quo. Below are snippets of the profiles of the three columnists selected for this study.

#### **3.7.1 Ochereome Nnanna**

Ochereome Nnanna is a veteran Nigerian journalist. He is currently the Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board of *Vanguard Media Limited*, Publishers of *Vanguard* newspaper. He is also a columnist on the newspaper; he has a column titled “People and Politics”. The column “People and Politics” is dedicated to power relations in Nigeria.

Although Ochereome Nnanna lives in Lagos, he hails from Abia state in the South-East geo-political zone. Like many Nigerians, he is a staunch supporter of his ethnic group and his region. His inherent suspicion of the northern region is reflected in his writings especially in one of the two that I am analyzing in this research.

#### **3.7.2 Tunde Asaju**

Tunde Asaju is a Nigerian columnist living in Ottawa, Canada. He writes for Media Trust Limited, Abuja. His opinions feature in the newspaper two times in a week (i.e. Wednesdays and Sundays). He has been a journalist for more than twenty years and

he has been a columnist for over ten years. Tunde Asaju is a journalist with experience in print, broadcast, and social media. He also engages in Public Relations and social media consultations. He writes on socio-cultural and political issues around the world, but he dwells more on African and Nigerian affairs.

Tunde Asaju is an indigene of Kogi state in north-central Nigeria and he regularly takes positions that favor northern Nigeria in his columns. His writings reflect a deep knowledge and understanding of social and political events in Nigeria even though he lives in Canada.

### **3.7.3 Lanre Adewole**

Lanre Adewole writes for *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper. He lives in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State (*Nigerian Tribune* is published in Ibadan) but he hails from the neighboring Osun state in the South-West geo-political zone. He has been a reporter for *Nigerian Tribune* for over ten years. He specializes in political reporting and his column –Gibbers, which is published on Sundays-, is based on politics. He often writes on other topics (e.g. sports) but when he does, he focuses on the political aspect of such topics.

Lanre Adewole is a keen supporter of the ruling People's Democratic Party. His support for the party is observable in his columns as he constantly promotes members of the party while bashing members of the opposition parties.

## Chapter 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED COLUMNS

The selected articles by the selected columnists are analyzed here using Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. This approach is based on the belief that the words we speak and write are products of our minds (Olagunju & Ajadi, 2014, p. 35). Therefore the articles under analysis are representative samples of the columnists' cognitive processes. Their attempt to influence the minds of their readers and consequently move the readers towards their preferred social and political causes is the focus of this chapter. The analysis is set against the background that "actual discourse is determined by socially constituted orders of discourse, sets of conventions associated with social institutions" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 17). The position of Van Dijk that "Power, no less than other dimensions of social structure and process, does not and cannot affect discourse directly, but does so through language users, and therefore through cognitive processes, that is, through social cognitions" (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 133) also provides a valuable background to the analysis.

The analysis was conducted to figure out the role of the columnists in the stability of the Nigerian polity. The researcher also intends to stress the role of these columnists in the possible reconstruction of presidential power relations in Nigeria by 2015. The six articles are analyzed in three subheadings according to their authors. First is *Vanguard* newspaper, next, is *Daily Trust*, and *Nigerian Tribune* is analyzed the last.

This arrangement does not reflect the researcher's perception of the importance of the newspapers.

#### **4.1 Analysis of Ochereome Nnanna's "People and Politics"**

The first article is from the column in *Vanguard* newspaper "People and Politics" written by Ochereome Nnanna. The article is titled "What is "North's" Plan B?" it was published on October 2, 2014. The article is a frontal attack on a group of northern Nigerian elites called Northern Elders Forum, (NEF). The spokesman for the group (Professor Ango Abdullahi) had earlier conducted a press conference at which he stated that the "North" would "stop" President Jonathan by ensuring that his political party loses the presidential election slated for March 28, 2015.

The columnist (Ochereome Nnanna) refers to the group of northern elder statesmen as "reactionary". His opposition to the group (and by extension anybody that opposes the reelection of President Jonathan in 2015) is based on his desirability for presidential power to remain in the "South". The perceived performance (or non-performance) of the president is immaterial to this writer. He clearly thinks the "North" had stayed too long in power. His reveals that the basis for his criticism of the group is motivated by power by alluding to the Northern Elders' Forum as:

...Overpopulated with former holders of prominent offices at the federal level. They were the people that the late leader of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, slaved throughout his life to educate and pump into prominent positions during the years that the region exclusively dominated the Nigerian political sphere (Ochereome, 2014).

This position gives the uninformed reader the impression that the southern part of Nigeria had been totally marginalized in the exercise of political power in Nigeria. It also gives a connotation that these former public office holders were inordinately

appointed or selected to serve the nation. These cognitive pictures cannot be farther from the truth because there has never been any government in Nigerian history which has been exclusively constituted of one region to the exclusion of other regions; also most of those in the political pressure group (NEF) are accomplished professionals whom have distinguished themselves in public service. There alleged domination of the political sphere is attributable to the communal and hierarchical culture of the Hausa/Fulani people (who are the largest ethnic group in Northern Nigeria). The narrative on the Northern Elders' Forum adopted by the columnist gives credence to Fairclough's position that "orders of discourse are ideologically shaped by power relations in social institutions and in society as a whole" (Fairclough. 1989, p. 17).

While the average Yoruba or Ibo person strives for individual excellence, the average Hausa/Fulani person is taught the values of "cooperative excellence" and collective bargaining. It is on record that the Yoruba tribe had produced western-trained lawyers, doctors and engineers before the official British amalgamation of the many tribes and kingdoms to form what is today known as Nigeria. Similarly, the tribes of the South-East and South-South geo-political zones had produced wealthy individuals whom engaged in trade competition with the Europeans before the era of colonialism. In contrast the tribes of the northern region have often achieved educational and career advancements in uniform. This does not mean that individual progression is certain; rather, it means that there is equal opportunity for any bright individual to make the next grade on the social ladder along with his/her peers.

In concurrence with the position of Hanks (2009) that Critical Discourse Analysis "emphasizes power, exploitation, and inequality as the social conditions of language"

(Hanks, 2009, p. 120), it is true that there is inequality in Nigeria based on economic and political exploitation. However, this is not the product of regional or tribal exploitation; rather, it is a product of class exploitation. There are millions of poor and deprived people across all regions and religions in Nigeria. The writer therefore is a part of the intellectual elite seeking the domination of the intellectual department of Nigerian politics.

The obvious link between political and economic power in African politics (in general) and Nigerian politics (in particular) is deducible from the quotation below:

It was this class of Northern elite that wrecked the country, its economy and institutions set up by the colonial masters and post-independence leaders. Like parasitic cankerworms, they ate down federal parastatals such as the Railways, Shipping Line, Nigeria Airways, Ajaokuta Steel, Alcon, NITEL, NIPOST, among others, until they were either scrapped or sold off for pennies under questionable privatisation programmes (Ochereome, 2014).

In the quotation above, the writer clearly blames the “North” for the infrastructural collapse in Nigeria. The columnist failed to acknowledge the fact that the privatization of most of the government owned businesses mentioned was done under the presidency of President Obasanjo who is a southern Nigerian. The complex problems which CDA deals with need a historical approach (Van Dijk, 2014, p, 65) and the columnist provides the historical context in the extract above. While a good number of “northerners” must have headed these government enterprises, a number of southerners must have headed some of them too. The writer clearly attempts to sway public opinion and manufacture new realities. This is because “language users manipulate, direct or redirect the thoughts of others, and create an entirely different but dominantly circulated worldview which tends to replace reality over time” (Olagunju & Ajadi, 2014, p. 35).

Back to the article, the writer suggests that the “north” maintained hegemony over the rest of the country from independence till 1999 except for the brief interlude between 1976 and 1979 when a southerner General “Olusegun Obasanjo, their [North’s] surrogate ... succeeded Gen Murtala Mohammed when he was killed in a power struggle between Northern factions in 1976 to 1979, the North reigned for 39 years” (Ochereome, 2014). The reference to the former Head of State (General Obasanjo) as a “northern surrogate” clearly rearticulates the facts of his emergence. Obasanjo is a leader who appeals to Nigerians irrespective of tribal or religious affiliation. If Obasanjo had engaged in nepotistic and tribalistic activities as Head of State (1976-1979) he would not have had the national appeal and acceptance which led to his emergence as president in the year 1999. It is a known fact that Nigeria experienced years of military rule which were occasioned by coups and counter-coups. The major beneficiaries of successful coups are often those brave enough to conceive and execute them.

The fact that northern army officers benefitted more from military coups in Nigeria can be attributed to their numerical advantage in the armed forces. In the colonial era when the tribes of the southern region focused on western education and commerce while neglecting the military, northerners embraced the military because it provided them with means of livelihood. It must also be stated that the long period “northern military rule” would not have occurred if the first Nigerian military coup had not taken place. Interestingly, the first Nigerian military coup was conceived and executed by a group of young Igbo and Yoruba army officers. It is also on record that the major beneficiary of the first military coup in Nigeria is a Southerner.

Reference is made to the class dimension of political power struggle in Nigeria by accusing the group of northern elites of embezzlement and nepotism;

they appropriated all the money and power they derived from their dominance of the Federal Government to themselves, friends and family members and produced a tiny core of super-billionaires, with their children attending the best schools in the world (Ochereome, 2014).

The statement above amounts to double-speaking. The writer chastises former president Obasanjo for being a “northern stooge” because he ruled without giving special attention to his region of origin (the South) or his children and friends; in the same piece, he condemns those who appropriated money and power to themselves as well as their friends and families. However, the writer points out that the historical and prevailing political and economic order in Nigeria puts most Nigerians in an appalling state of poverty. He also suggests that the poverty and inequality in Nigeria has partly been the social capital for the establishment and nurturing of the terrorist group *Boko Haram*. The columnist’s choice of words shows that language users “interpret, represent, reproduce or change social structures such as social inequality and injustice” (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 66) within the social structure.

The Northern Region that the British colonial master created and made a monster to rule Nigeria either through ballot or bullet is no more. The three old regions are dead. The old Northern region was the last to die. It was the inheritors of Ahmadu Bello’s largesse like Ango Abdullahi who killed the North through religious extremism and oppression of Minorities and non-Muslims who helped them and the Yorubas in the war against Igbos during 1966 to 1970. At the just-concluded National Conference, the Middle Belt separated themselves cleanly from Arewa Muslim North and sided with the combined South to create a new political possibility which potentially renders Arewa to an underdog (Ochereome, 2014).

The text refers to the perception that the colonial government handed over power to lesser educated northern politicians at independence to spite their better educated counterparts from the south and retain considerable socio-economic and political influence over the country after independence. It is agreeable that the old regions

upon which the foundation of Nigeria was laid is no more; as we now have 36 states spreading across six geo-political zones. However, the death of the regions does not negate the historical, cultural and religious ties which are strong bases for political alignments and cooperation.

The ethno-religious dimension is introduced by using the spokesman of the NEF as a reference point in the “death” of the “North through religious extremism and oppression of Minorities and non-Muslims who helped them and the Yorubas in the war against Igbos during 1966 to 1970” (Ochereome, 2014). It is quite easy to perceive a tone of latent anger and bitterness over the failed bid by the Igbos to lead the then South-East region out of the Nigerian federation. The Igbos lost the civil war which ensued from the secession attempt and since then, many of them have harbored ill feelings towards the two other major tribes Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba. Decoding and encoding of texts is not a simplistic action. Interpretations of texts and social issues involve the “process of matching features of the utterance at various levels with representations you have stored in your long-term memory” (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 10-11). Therefore, the columnist gives a hint of the images he has acquired about other tribes in the country.

Ochereome Nnanna attempts to divide and rule the “North” by insinuating that the “Middle Belt” separated themselves from the “Muslim North” to unite with the “combined South” in a new political alliance. This is a fallacy as the people of the “Middle Belt” are a fine mix of Muslims and Christians whose only source of disagreement is politics and not religion or ethnicity. He also fails to admit that there are significant Christian populations in areas which he classifies as “Muslim North” (e.g. Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Adamawa and Taraba states). His allusion to a

“combined South” is also simplistic and misleading because the people of southern Nigeria are politically, ethnically and religiously diverse. As a matter of fact, the dominant political party in the South-West (All Progressives Congress) is clamoring for the emergence of a northerner as president. Ochereome’s choice of words in his narrative suggests that he is a Christian-centric writer.

As for Coomassie’s Plan B, it no longer exists. North used to bring in the army whenever their civilian wing in power was no longer sure-footed. They used to change even military regimes whenever the one on ground was no longer acceptable to them. Those days are over. If Boko Haram was Plan B, it is failing. It will not affect the eventual outcome of the 2015 elections (Ochereome, 2014).

In concluding the piece, the writer indirectly mentioned that a military coup is possible because it had happened severally in the past. He also made a veiled allegation that *Boko Haram* is a creation of the “North” to frustrate the reelection of President Jonathan. He signed off on a confident note that neither a military take-over nor *Boko Haram* would stop the reelection of the president in 2015.

The second article from the same columnist is titled “Attention Ambassador Campbell: North is pampered, not alienated”. It was published online on July 1, 2013. The piece is a reaction to an interview published in another Nigerian newspaper (The Guardian). In the interview, a former American envoy to Nigeria, Ambassador John Campbell spoke about the alienation of the “core North” of Nigeria. The definition or description of the “core north” is open to discussion because it is a matter of perception. The diplomat had published a book at the end of his posting to Nigeria; the book is titled “Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink”.

Campbell describes himself as “a friend of Nigeria”, who is so concerned for the unity of the country... The aspect of the diplomat’s assertions that tickles my interest is his contention that the “core North” (Arewa, or the Muslim North) is “alienated ... He is concerned that Nigeria’s leaders are not doing enough to address the “discrepancies in the social statistics” that portray

“alienation” of the region. These, he insinuates, manifest in violence, terrorism, mind-boggling poverty and high level illiteracy. He is of the view that “most of the elements in the North do not participate in the modern economy (Ochereome, 2013).

There are many issues raised by Ambassador Campbell in his book and the interview. An important issue is the possible disintegration of Nigeria by 2015. However, by the columnist’s selective perception, the projected disintegration of Nigeria is not as important as the assertion that a segment of the country is alienated. The columnist’s obvious apathy to the fate of a united Nigeria beyond 2015 suggests that he places regional interests above national interest in his setting of agenda for public discourse. As Van Dijk points out; researchers and readers must realize that the broader social, political or economic situation may not reach or impact on discourse because a writer may find it irrelevant for the discourse which a writer chooses to narrate (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 75). He rearticulates what Ambassador Campbell described as “core North” as “Arewa or Muslim North”. This rearticulation shows the religious affiliation of the columnist. The doctrine of social responsibility demands that journalists protect the integrity and unity of their countries; therefore, it is expected of a respected columnist on a national newspaper to address the social issues without making undue utterances about religion and ethnicity when they are not the main issues on the table. In this regard, the columnist gave himself away as a religious chauvinist.

One thing is clear though; members of the lower class are alienated irrespective of their religion or geographical location in the country.

The British colonialists gerrymandered the political constituencies and made sure that the Northern Region would be dominant in terms of land mass and real or imagined population; enough to be able to seize control of political power at independence. The colonialists also created the military institution making sure that North would control military power. Any surprise that after

independence, the North went on to dominate the political landscape for a total of thirty nine out of fifty three years. They ran the country in a manner suggesting they merely replaced the foreign colonialists because emphasis was placed on economic and political exploitation of the South. They also centralised the economic resources of the country, ensuring that proceeds from the oil and other resources of the Niger Delta and Southern Nigeria are brought into the federation account and shared in a manner whereby the North always carts home by far the largest chunk (Ochereome, 2013).

From the extract above, it is deducible that the foundations of ethnic mistrust in Nigerian politics were laid during the colonial era. The writer associates the “North” with, “power”, “control”, “economic and political exploitation” to back his theory of historical northern hegemony in Nigeria. He makes his point clearer in the next paragraph by stating that the “North carts home ... the largest chunk” (Ochereome 2013) of the oil proceeds from the Niger-Delta region. This unveils a very important aspect of the power struggle, which is money. It is true that the southern part of Nigeria provides more than 90% of the nation’s total earnings. However this is because successive governments have failed to diversify the economy by developing other earning potentials across the country.

It is also important to state that the attempted secession by the defunct Eastern Region which led to the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) also had an economic motive based on crude oil in the South-South region. The columnist also selectively forgot that before the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, the country had survived on cash crops especially groundnuts and cocoa which were produced in other parts of the country; especially the north which some people call a parasitic region today. Members of constituent groups in a society often have prejudiced social representations of the members of other groups. In Van Dijk’s view, some of the aspects in which the prejudice manifest are “Appearance, Socio-economic goals, Socio-cultural norms and values, and Personality; Social position,

and hence group membership of social members, may further influence specific variations, contents or strategic uses of such prejudices” (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 169).

The perceivable anger of the columnist over the political economy of Nigeria can be attributed to his own ethnic preconception.

Ochereome (the columnist) further revealed the influence of his ethnicity on his writings by attempting to use imagery to sway his readers’ cognition of the social reality, thus constructing his own reality.

By the time you gather all the statistics, the “discrepancies” will startle you. The reality is that Nigeria gives the North everything on a golden platter, while the Igbo people are given the scraps. They are marginalised and oppressed in every conceivable sector while the North is treated like royalty. But despite this, the Igbo people and the South as a whole maintain the lead in vital social indicators of human development. Those who are alienated come out like the privileged, while pampered exhibit attributes of alienated people. It is an irony of Nigeria! (Ochereome, 2013)

In the columnist’s reality, “Nigeria gives the North everything on a golden platter” (Ochereome, 2013). Northerners are given the treatment befitting of “royalty”; the Igbo people on the other hand “are given the scraps” as a manifestation of their marginalization and oppression by successive Nigerian governments. This narrative limits Nigeria to just two tribes (Hausa and Igbo) while excluding the other major tribe (Yoruba) and a plethora of minor tribes. The perspective of the writer is capable of worsening the mistrust which already exists among Nigerian tribes. He ended his argument by saying that “the alienated” succeed like the privileged while “the pampered” ironically end up with the traits of the alienated. This is a veiled reference to the general and widely accepted perception that the southern tribes perform relatively better than the northern tribes in the area of western education.

Two points are important here; the first is that if the generality of the “Muslim North” as the writer puts it, is truly favored and pampered by Nigeria, then there would be general prosperity in the region and the widespread poverty and illiteracy that exists in the region would have been confined to history books. A small group of elites cannot be an appropriate representation of a whole region with at least three religions and over 100 tribes.

Secondly, the perceived educational advantage of the South over the North is a product of centuries of contact with Europeans long before the “North” had the same opportunity. This is similar to the relative advantage which the northern tribes have over the southern tribes in the area of Islamic education and Arabic language by virtue of their centuries of contact with Islam and Arab traders long before the “South” had a similar opportunity.

Again the columnist fails to acknowledge that poverty, illiteracy and other social problems are products of power relations between the elite groups and the masses which cut across all tribes, religions and region. Power, poverty, illiteracy, corruption diseases, etc. know no tribe or faith. Therefore there is no proof that the masses of the “Muslim North” are “pampered” neither is there adequate evidence that the “Southern” elites are “alienated”. It is important to note the social context within which the columnist produced his narrative. The newspaper is published by a southern Christian and most of their readers are southerners. This background allows the columnist to take very strong positions against northerners and Muslims. Context helps “language users adapt their discourse to the social environment, so that it is socially *appropriate*” (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 73). He may have not been so critical of

northerners and Islam if he were writing for a medium that is widely read in the north or a medium owned by a northern Muslim like *Daily Trust*.

... the North is bogged down by an archaic oligarchy that caters to the ... comforts of the aristocracy. All the money, all the power that the North takes from Nigeria are used to feather the nests of the upper classes; the traditional, political and bourgeois gentry. The Northern oligarchy tramples upon the masses of the poor (Talakawa), chaining them with the thrall of religion and using them as cannon fodder in political contests. The terrorism in the North East is seen as a sample of such political machination after the North failed to regain power following the death of President Umaru Yar' Adua. Ambassador Campbell must take note that the leaders of the "core North" are chiefly responsible for the illiteracy, poverty and violence in the North. Nigeria has given the North more than it deserves. If these resources had been responsibly invested, the North would be light years ahead of the rest of the country (Ochereome 2013).

In the extract above, the columnist finally admits that there is a clear distinction between the northern oligarchy and the northern masses. He describes the power relations between the northern oligarchs and the masses as a manipulative one in which the "the oligarchy tramples upon the masses...and using them as cannon fodder in political contests" (Ochereome, 2013). He concluded that "the leaders of the 'core North' are chiefly responsible for the illiteracy, poverty and violence in the North". This description aptly captures the general power relations in Nigeria irrespective of the region. The only difference is that the extent of manipulation is relative to the history, culture and religion of the geographical location under consideration.

The first Nigerian columnist (Ochereome Nnanna) whose work I have analyzed appears to be ethnically, religiously and economically inspired in his writings. His narratives on politics (which are heavily spiked with religious and ethnic bias) may resonate with those who think in along segregated lines. Consequently, such readers

may be influenced to vote for retention of the status quo in the presidential election slated for March 28, 2015.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Tunde Asaju’s “Wakaman”**

The second columnist under consideration is Tunde Asaju. His first article I am analyzing is titled “Naija Politics of Miracles” and it was published on October 19, 2014. It is a satiric piece on the 2015 presidential race. Nigerian politics has defied logic and tested principles over the years. Therefore political intrigues in Nigeria can only happen in the realm of miracles, hence the title of this piece by Tunde Asaju. He analyzes the election with the metaphor of war. As suggested by Van Dijk context controls all other variables in a discourse therefore, it should not be too complex (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 74). Consequently, the columnist’s use of the metaphor of war provides a simple context for the readers to understand the piece.

If you are diplomatic, you say that the elections would be between two parties – the PDP and the APC ... But if you are mean spirited, you could say that the battle is between the north and south; or that it would be an epic battle between two archenemies - Islam and Christianity. Wherever you pitch your tent, you would not be wrong (Asaju, 2014).

In the extract above, Tunde Asaju subtly criticizes the perennial conflict between the north and south of Nigeria on one hand and the politics-induced conflict between Christianity and Islam. Electoral contests in Nigeria are heavily characterized by ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments while developmental issues are placed aside. The writer therefore regards those who place religion and ethnicity high when considering political decisions as “mean spirited”. Reducing the elections as a battle between Christians and Muslims portrays a picture of binary opposition between the two religions, consequently, it falls short of responsible and developmental journalism which calls for the avoidance of “reductive identification and misleading or irrelevant difference” (Fairclough, 1994, p.432).

Faced with the convincing power of the rented crowd called TAN, the PDP has forced our ... president, to swallow his promise not to seek a second (or is it a third) term. Without asking him, the party adopted him sole candidate daring anyone with arsehole rock ambitions to kick against the goads. The adoption of President Jones as PDP's sole candidate makes him the man to beat come February (Asaju, 2014).

The reference to “the rented crowd called TAN” in the extract above depicts a popular tradition in Nigerian politics in which politicians hire people to cheer them at political events. TAN is the acronym of “Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria” an unofficial campaign team of President Jonathan. The group which is filled with many top government officials has held several rallies across the country demanding that the president runs for another term. Many analysts believe that the demands of the group are not altruistically motivated. The writer attempts to point out the irony in the adoption of the president as his political party's candidate for the 2015 election. While seeking the mandate of Nigerians in 2011, the President Jonathan promised not to seek reelection in 2015. But like most African politicians, he has reneged on his promise because the “people” want him to continue in office despite his alleged incompetence. He condemns the sit-tight syndrome exhibited by the president through a semiotic re-articulation of the presidential villa. The presidential villa is called “Aso Rock” but the columnist does a semiotic jujitsu to it by renaming it “Arsehole Rock”. He bets on the president winning the election in 2015 against all odds by saying that his adoption by the ruling party (PDP) “makes him the man to beat come February”. The columnist's position brings to mind the reality of African politics in which incumbents hardly lose elections. This context provides an interface between the columnist and his readers (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 74).

Not only is the upcoming presidential ... is redefining APC. This party was initially built for the Talakawa but with a presidential ticket at N27.5 million, what is poverty? The amount has discouraged stragglers. So far, only two have picked the form. The first, Atiku Abubakar has a war chest that dates back to his days as a Customs officer ... The other is General Muhammadu

Buhari ... Buhari is having problems finding the cash to pay his way. Readers should note that the nomination fee does not include enormous campaign costs. So, is APC still a talakawa party? (Asaju, 2014)

While the writer is critical of the president and the ruling party, he does not spare the major opposition party called All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC claims to be based on progressive ideas and values for the improvement of the standard of living of the poor. Tunde Asaju attempts to point out the hypocrisy of the party by using the presidential nomination form as a pointer. At 27.5 million naira, (USD 152,989), the nomination fee is a deterrent to ambitious and capable but not so affluent individuals. This negates the impression that the APC is a populist party. The frequent mass defection of politicians from PDP to APC (and from PDP to APC) also shows that the two parties are not different ideologically. They only serve as platforms for the protection of the interests of the elites.

The PDP presidential war room is seven generals less. Over the week, Liebaron Maku led six of his colleagues out of weekly contracts and solid money. They are leaving to fulfill their dreams of becoming governors or, in military terms - platoon commanders. By leaving to contest as governors, Maku and his fellow dreamers have demoted themselves from generals to the rank of colonels (Asaju, 2014).

Of interest in the extract above is the semiotic jujitsu done to the name of the immediate-past information minister, Labaran Maku. He plays on the name "Labaran" (which interestingly means news in Hausa language) to give it a new meaning "Lie Baron". It is expected that the Minister for Information will be the chief image maker of the government. In this case, it is a curious co-incidence that the information minister's name translates as "news". The minister is widely adjudged to have embarked on an audacious propaganda campaign to improve the rating of the administration among Nigerians. His propaganda efforts involved a lot of lies, hence the appellation "Liebaron".

As far as electoral battles go, the Naija scenario is different from normal battles... On the one hand, if the daydreamers realize their ambition, they would be laying the foundation for the realization of Vincent Ogbulafor's prediction to ruin this nation for the next 60 years. If they hit and miss ... they can put their tails in between their legs and return as take a bow and loot returnees after the adventure... This deserter list is curious. Usually only performing public officers are encouraged to circulate until they have made efficiency contagious. Some of these ones are archetypal bunglers while others have not been heard from since they were sworn in to the day of their exit? Now they want to take on the management of entire states (Asaju, 2014).

The unusual peculiarity of Nigerian politics is emphasized in the extract above. Constitutional provisions are often ignored to serve the interest of the rulers. Electoral contests are won without the ballot as people get bribed, intimidated, maimed, or killed in the process. There are several reported cases where results were written without elections taking place. A former chairman of the ruling party (PDP) had predicted that the party will rule "the nation for the next 60 years" irrespective of the performance of the candidates. The writer plays on the word "rule" and it becomes "ruin".

He then decries the circulation of incompetent but "loyal" public office holders in Nigeria. Those who are close to those in power are always "rehabilitated" when they lose out on elective positions. The tradition is to compensate those who fail in their bids to become governors with ministerial or ambassadorial positions. When these people are sent for screening in the Senate, they are rarely grilled by the senators to measure their competence. Those who have served as ministers or senators in the past are often asked to just "take a bow" and leave (or resume the looting like the writer puts it). In contrast many former public officials who are deemed to have performed credibly have not been given further opportunities to serve because of their ideologies. Most of them are independent-minded and they do not equate

national interest with the interest of those in power. This is not pleasant to those in power.

Ayo Fayose, the Ekiti comeback kid. He was coasting into the Book of Miracles even before he was sworn in. With a pack of stomach-infrastuctured thugs they sacked the state judiciary by donating slaps to judges. Shortly after taking oath, he made the office of SA on Stomach Infrastructure legit. Now they are working on a new mathematical calculus where seven is higher than 17 and with that formula they hope to install a Fayose-loyal Speaker. Believe me, it can happen (Asaju, 2014).

The writer takes a jibe at another controversial Nigerian public official, Ayo Fayose who is the governor of Ekiti State in the South-West. While Mr. Fayose was waiting to be sworn in as a governor, a case was filed to stop his inauguration. Rather than contest the suit in court, Mr. Fayose allegedly stormed the court with his supporters to beat up the judge that was to hear the case; they also vandalized judicial properties in the process. Despite the public outcry, the Federal government turned the proverbial blind eye to the case. Mr. Fayose has been inaugurated as the governor of his state.

The writer alluded to the dearth of rule of law in Nigerian politics by using a new mathematical formula “where seven is greater than 17” which would enthrone a Speaker (of the state’s House of Assembly) loyal to the Governor. He was sadly optimistic that the Speaker could be impeached and it happened on November 19, 2014. The Ekiti state legislature has 26 members; seven of them belong to People’s Democratic Party (the governor’s party) while 19 of them belong to the opposition (APC). The Speaker belongs to the APC but the governor was not comfortable with that. He then used policemen to prevent the 19 opposition members from entering the legislative complex while the seven members of his party impeached the Speaker, thus seven becomes greater than 19.

The precedence for this anomaly had been set by ruling party in two instances. In July 2013, six members of the Rivers State legislature attempted to impeach the Speaker who was supported by 26 other members. Earlier in May 2013, the Nigerian Governors' Forum held a chairmanship election where two people claimed victory. The governor of Rivers State (who is politically opposed to the president) had 19 votes while the governor of Plateau State (an ally of the president) had 16 votes. The presidency congratulated the loser. Such a scenario is only possible in Nigeria. This justifies the nation as an arena of "politics of miracles".

Reading through the article, it is observable that the columnist refrained from taking any clear position on the presidential election. He presents both parties as slightly different from each other; this means that the power relations in Nigeria will continue to be in favor of the elites irrespective of the winner of the presidential election in 2015. His criticism of the monetization of the emergence of the presidential nomination process of the opposition party suggests this position. Also it is hard to detect his ethnicity or religion from his writing. He addresses issues in the polity without canvassing for any individual, group, or region. This is an appropriate way to go about column writing.

The second article by Tunde Asaju is titled "Get well speedily Mr. President". It was published on November 24, 2013. The piece is a satirical analysis on the poor state of infrastructure (especially health) in Nigeria. The president had visited the United Kingdom on his 56<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. The reason for the trip to the United Kingdom was uncertain; while the president's publicity team said it was meant to woo foreign investors, unofficial sources speculated that the visit was for medical check-up. The columnist then uses his column to address the issue.

This government's Transformation Agenda has made uncommon strides in health care. There are more ambulances in Aso Clinic than there are in federal hospitals. The doctors placed at the president's disposal have more qualification than the Imperial Hospital in London. The equipment at Aso Clinic beat any even in America, I know because at least two presidents have answered God's call from their able hands in the last 20 years (Asaju, 2013).

The first statement in the extract above is an ironical reference to the state of health facilities in Nigeria. When President Jonathan was sworn elected in 2011, he presented a "Transformation Agenda" for the people. The idea was to create positive transformation in all sectors of the society, but living conditions are getting worse in Nigeria. The provision of health services has been so poor that members of the middle and upper classes frequently travel to Europe and Asia for treatment of minor ailments. The "uncommon strides in health care" mentioned in the extract refers to the worsening health situation. It is paradoxical that public hospitals are not adequately funded (to cater for the health needs of the masses) while the clinic at the presidential villa is equipped with the best facilities (to cater for officials at the presidency); yet the president and other top politicians leave these facilities to seek treatment in Germany, Britain, Saudi Arabia and India for illnesses as little as headache. He then alludes that the questions the professional competence of the doctors at the presidential clinic; he argues that the death of two sitting heads of state in the past twenty years is a proof of their incompetence. While General Sani Abacha died in power on June 8, 1998, President Yar'adua died on May 5, 2010.

Our hospitals have medicines manufactured in India for the sole purpose of mortally wounding Naija kidneys. Generator noise would help any patient decide whether to transform to heaven or stay on earth (Asaju, 2013).

The extract above alludes to the menace of substandard drugs in the Nigeria. It is ironic that rather than heal the ailment of Nigerians, the drugs are having fatal effects on Nigerians. The colossal achievements made by the National Agency for Food and

Drug Administration and Control before 2007 have been terribly eroded as sub-standard drugs permeate the health sector. The inability to produce quality drugs in Nigeria is partly attributable to the epileptic state of electricity in Nigeria; power generating sets have become basic household equipment. The noise and emission from these generator sets could hasten the death of the patients in our poorly equipped hospitals. Although the writer didn't blame anybody directly for the problem in the health sector, it is directed at the president because he is responsible for appointing the cabinet and giving policy directives. However, blaming the president for the failures in the health sector is quite harsh because the decay in the system preceded his administration, therefore, all past administrations to share the blame rather than President Jonathan alone.

But Thursday morning at the investor's forum, Mr. President could not honour the role. Most people would have attributed it to jetlag but for snitches that swore the president had taken ill...Unfortunately rather than share these patriotic concerns with me, there were those who would rather snigger at a perceived recurrent hangover that equally stopped the president from addressing the African Union earlier in the year. These people snigger at the Transformation Agenda that replaced wheat bread with cassava bread and transformed the feeding formula from 1-1-1 to 0-1-0. This is why all well wishers must join me in ... wishing the president a speedy recovery so that he can return on time to flag off the 2015 presidential campaign. Naija has never had it so good, they deserve continuity! I assure investors that they can count on return tickets to Abuja in time to help commission the multi-million Naira Naija City Gate (Asaju, 2013).

In the extract above, the writer takes a swipe at the president for his rumored excessive drinking habit. It was reported that President Jonathan could not attend the investment forum which was the "official" reason for embarking on the trip in the first place. This gives credence to the rumor that he went to the United Kingdom for medical reasons. Earlier in 2013, the president attended an African Union summit, but disappeared when it was time to address the members of the regional group. This act of disappearance raises questions on the public speaking ability of President

Jonathan. It also calls for public scrutiny of his Ph.D. The transformation of the “feeding formula from 1-1-1 to 0-1-0” implies that the standard of living in Nigeria has worsened under the administration of President Jonathan. Most families cannot afford three meals in a day (1-1-1); in fact many have resorted to just one meal daily (0-1-0). The figures represent breakfast, lunch and dinner. The complex problems which CDA deals with need a socio-economic approach (Van Dijk, 2014, p, 65). The columnist provides the reader with the socio-economic background of the presidential contest in his narrative.

Instead of concentrating efforts on fixing the economy, the president is channeling his energy towards seeking another term in office despite his promise to serve for only one term when he sought election in 2011. Since the president seemed so preoccupied with getting reelected, the columnist “prayed” for his speedy recovery so he could “flag off the 2015 presidential campaign” (Asaju 2013).

Critical scholars are interested in how discourses reproduce social domination which manifests in the “power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse” (Van Dijk, 2014, p. 63). The columnist offers a solution to the current state by urging Nigerians to vote out President Jonathan in 2015. By saying Nigerians “deserve continuity!” he clearly meant the opposite because in the preceding statement, he said that Nigerians have moved from eating three meals in a day to one meal in a day. He also alludes to the perceived lack of direction by the Jonathan administration. While Nigerian roads are becoming less pliable, the administration planned to spend 64 billion naira (USD 354.077.189) on the reconstruction of a new city gate at Abuja. (Agbo, 2013). This is a clear sign of insensitivity.

Taking a critical look at the writing of Tunde Asaju, one could conclude that his messages would be less effective in moving Nigerians to demand good governance from the ruling class. The reason for this position is that only those with an appreciable level of literary appreciation can comprehend his style of writing. His use of satire, irony, pun, allusion and innuendoes (occasioned by his background as a linguist) could confuse the average Nigerian voter. That his medium (*Daily Trust*) is most popular in northern Nigeria (where the literacy level is relatively lower) is another militating factor against his messages; this is because his writings would resonate with only the intellectual elites, and the intellectual elites have little influence on the electorates.

His refusal to use ethnic and religious colorations in his writing also alienates him from the traditional voter who has been socialized into seeing the merits and demerits of religion and ethnicity in electoral choices. Conclusively, Tunde Asaju's style of column writing is ideal albeit, he may have come too soon for Nigerians.

### **4.3 Analysis of Lanre Adewole's "Gibbers"**

Lanre Adewole's "Gibbers" completes the narratives sampled for this research. His first article which I am analyzing was published on October 5, 2014 and is titled "The River Buhari must Cross". It is an analysis of the General Muhammadu Buhari's (a former Head of State) ambition to unseat President Jonathan in the presidential election earlier slated for February 14, (now shifted to March 28) 2015. The writer attempts an objective analysis of the topic without revealing his ethnic or religious bias.

In 2011, Muhammadu Buhari famously shed tears while rounding-off his presidential campaign, presumably for a sinking Nigeria he might never be able to rescue. He also promised it would be the last time he would offer to help. Then, the North said a deafening aye, the rest of Nigeria, a crushing

nay. Times and seasons have passed. Goodluck Jonathan's fresh breath is not completely demulcent, though it is contestable if it is fouling the air more. The transformation agenda is evolving but not revolving. Without doubt, the Nigerian ship could be better steered and differently directed. Buhari has broken his promise not to offer rescue mission again (Adewole, 2014).

The extract above provides a background to the rekindled ambition of the former Head of State, whom has been in contention for (and losing) the presidency since year 2003. Although the general is widely seen as incorruptible (in a country where corruption has become a norm), he has failed to win the mandate of Nigerians for a number of complex reasons. On his last attempt, he publicly wept and vowed to abandon his "rescue mission" if he lost the election. He eventually lost. Although he won in many states in the northern region, he couldn't muster the needed amount of votes in the South. His narrative that the "North said a deafening aye, and the rest of Nigeria, a crushing nay" (Adewole, 2014) subtly portrays General Buhari as regional leader without any form of acceptance outside the north. Although this portrayal is relatively true, it only reflects the historical paradigm of political culture in Nigeria. With the exception of former president Olusegun Obasanjo, no Nigerian democratic leader has ever been massively accepted outside their regions of origin. There are more than one perspective from which a reader could look at the topic presented by the columnist. As argued by Van Dijk, Social Representations "such as stereotypes or ethnic prejudices, just like socially shared knowledge, are essentially reproduced in society through discourse" (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 165). Consequently, it is safe to conclude that the columnist exercised his agenda setting privilege as a columnist to reproduce a social representation of the politician under analysis.

In the buildup to the 2011 presidential contest, President Goodluck Jonathan promised Nigerians a breath of "Fresh air". "Fresh air" in this context means a

departure from the massive corruption and underdevelopment of the past to a future of empirical development based on transparency and dignity to all Nigerians. The columnist is non-committal in giving his opinion on the performance of the president since 2011. His words were carefully selected thus: “Goodluck Jonathan’s fresh breath is not completely demulcent, though it is contestable if it is fouling the air more” (Adewole, 2014). This means that the promises of the president have been relatively unfulfilled. He makes an excuse for the failure of the president by referring to the Transformation Agenda as an “evolving but not revolving” concept. In the same breath, he reluctantly admits that the president has performed poorly by saying that “the Nigerian ship could be better steered and differently directed”. But he would rather have the national voyage steered by another candidate instead of General Buhari.

While the columnist subtly faults the decision of General Buhari to renege on his vow not to contest the presidential election after 2011, he is curiously silent on the failure of President Jonathan to keep his words. While seeking a fresh mandate after completing the tenure of his late boss (President Yar’adua), President Jonathan promised to spend only one term and return power to the “North” by 2015. It is fair that any analysis of broken promises by one presidential candidate should be balanced with an analysis of broken promises by the other candidate. This would give the average voter a greater picture of the context within which their electoral choices will be made.

(A)n ally of Kano State governor and presidential-wannabe, Rabiu Kwakwanso, also disclosed that Buhari’s u-turn is internally destabilising the party. Is this fellow just playing a Kwakwanso joker or Buhari is actually deficit in honour ...? Is this campaign of honour against Buhari a possible “plan B” after the Boko Haram suicide bombing (?) plan A” failed? (Adewole, 2014)

In the extract above, the columnist tries to show that there is discontentment within the All Progressives Congress (APC) [Buhari's political party] by referring to a statement credited to a member of the party that Buhari's decision to run for the office again despite his earlier vow to the contrary is a cause of instability in the party. The columnist's disapproval of the opposition party (APC) is also deducible from his simplification of the inevitable tussle for the presidential ticket of the party. He raises the issue of the failed bomb attack on the General in July 2014. His question mark "?" after the suicide bombing is an indication that he doubts the "veracity". This is in line with the popular narrative within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) that the suicide attack on General Buhari was staged to deflect attention from the General and his political party in the search for the true sponsors of the terrorist group *Boko Haram*. This is against the allegation that *Boko Haram* is the military wing of the opposition.

I suspect his handlers at the entry point into politics in 2001 were mainly Northerners. They obviously did a good job in projecting him as "the defender" of the North (?) and Islam, against a rampaging Southern president in Olusegun Obasanjo who also professed Christianity, but did a poor job in marooning him on the same spot 13 years after and three failed presidential odyssey, beaten by a Westerner, Northern and Southerner. They possibly didn't realise how resolute the South and Northern minorities were in demystifying the Hausa/Fulani on political power ownership (Adewole, 2014).

The extract above alludes to the strong influence of ethnicity and religion in Nigerian politics. The columnist provides a possible explanation of the perception of General Buhari as a northern and Islamic fundamentalist. He attributes the perception to the inadequacies of the General's handlers within the context of the political realities at the time of his entry into democratic politics in 2001. It is true that this perception has lingered until this day, but the reasons could be deeper than that given by the columnist because the handlers of the general may not have had unfettered access to

the heart of the media which is dominated by players from the southern part of the country. It is important to note that the media set the agenda for the public and media owners have great influence on media content. The visibility and image given to groups and individuals in the media depends on the media (Altschull, 2010, p. 68).

While Adewole blames it on the general's Public Relations team, it is arguable that the perception lingered for long because of the concentration of the national media in the south-west geo-political zone. He also fails to add that none of these national newspapers based in the South is owned by a northerner. The third and perhaps the most important reason why the perception has stayed for so long is that the former Head of State preaches and practices socialist politics; his kind of politics is definitely not in the interest of the economic elites who control the national media.

He also mentions the determination of the southern and northern minorities to demystify the Hausa/Fulani hegemony. This erroneously connotes a tribal hegemony by a group to the exclusion of others. This is erroneous because no ethnic or religious group has ever ruled Nigeria to the exclusion of others. It is also improbable in the near future. The so-called Hausa/Fulani hegemony is also a fallacy because out of the 39 years of northern rule in Nigeria, 18 were spent under minority rulers from the Middle-Belt. General Yakubu Gowon (from Plateau State) spent nine years; General Ibrahim Babangida (from Niger State) spent eight years) and General Abdulsalam Abubakar (also from Niger State) spent one year. Three of them belong to minority tribes, so the Hausa/Fulani hegemony is a creation of the South-controlled media.

Truth be told, the political South is no longer as hostile to him – even if the majority of Christians in North and South still doesn't trust him – thanks to another historic alliance with Asiwaju Bola Tinubu-led Western political power bloc, reminiscent of late Ladoke Akintola's alliance with Sardauna's

North, though with major collateral damage and grave implications (Adewole, 2014).

Using the extract above, Lanre Adewole presents a contemporary reality of General Buhari's relationship with the South. Since the general renewed his presidential ambition, he has been seen around top politicians from the south. The political elites of the South-West geo-political zone have used their media to promote his good qualities. Meanwhile, most of the influential political and economic elites of the South-South and South-East geo-political zones have stuck to the incumbent president (perhaps due to ethnic and religious reasons). The columnist indirectly predicts the failure of the new alliance between General Muhammadu Buhari and the South-western "political power bloc" led by Bola Tinubu. He subtly shows his disdain for the new alliance by likening it to the alliance between Sir Ladoke Akintola (Premier of the old Western Region) and Sir Ahmadu Bello (Premier of the old Northern Region) both of whom were killed in Nigeria's first military coup in 1966. Historical records show that Sir Akintola and Chief Obafemi Awolowo (first Premier of the old Western Region) were political allies turned political foes. Even in death followers of Awolowo have refused to forgive Akintola for his "treachery". It is also important to note that *Nigerian Tribune* (which published the column) was established by Awolowo and it is still run by his family. The analysis given by Lanre Adewole buttresses the position earlier taken by Fairclough; which states that "discourse has effects upon social structures, as well as being determined by them, and so contributes to social continuity and social change" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 17). While the dominant social players in the South-West rejected the candidacy of General Buhari in the past, the re-articulation of narratives on him over the years have led to a significant level of acceptance of the General (by the major political forces in the South-West) in the build up to the 2015 presidential election.

Therefore, a reader could observe that Lanre Adewole carefully chose his words to covertly dissuade Yoruba voters from supporting General Buhari.

He is obviously not perfect as his worshippers would want us to believe... the Daura General should be answering charges of pre-meditated murder over the execution of Lawal Ojuolape, Bernard Ogedengbe and Bartholomew Owoh, using a retroactive decree. But the past may not haunt him as much as the present realities...The Nigeria he ruled with iron fist...had no social media and its current mob that would have harassed his regime to submission over the controversial execution... In summary, the man of yesterday is seeking to control a today of speedy-internet rapidity (Adewole, 2014).

In his subtle argument, the columnist talks about the imperfections of General Buhari. There are many actions which the former Head of State took while in office that has come to haunt him since the return of democracy. He had a number of disagreements with the independent media at that time. One popular misdeed was the killing of three Nigerians for drug offences. The peculiarity of the case is that the young offenders were executed through a retroactive decree which was promulgated by the military government headed by General Buhari.

It is indeed a shame that these young Nigerians were executed through a retroactive law. However, blaming only the Head of State for the execution is simplistic and diversionary. Even in military regimes, serious decisions are seldom taken by only the Head of State. Events over the years have shown that the young drug offenders (drug couriers) were killed in order to protect the drug barons some of whom were in the ruling military council. The subsequent dethronement of General Buhari by one of the alleged drug barons (General Babangida) is an indication of the possible helplessness of the former Head of State. It is important to note that the cognitive state of readers and writers contextually varies and this variation in cognitive state could be attributed to the inherent differences in the readers' "knowledge, opinions, wants, attitudes, etc., and this will affect the ways the information is understood and

linked to (other) information in memory” (Van Dijk, 1979, p. 149). This contextual information is hardly included in the narratives against the general and it accounts for the pattern of narratives produced by segments of the media about the former Head of State.

The writer also presents the presidential aspirant as a man out of tune with contemporary realities by describing him as “the man of yesterday is seeking to control a today of speedy-internet rapidity” (Adewole, *The River Buhari must Cross*, 2014) . He refers to the emergence of the internet as a major social force which the former Head of State may struggle to cope with. This implies that the writer prefers the emergence of a younger and better educated person as president in 2015. This is a tacit support for the incumbent president Jonathan (who holds a PhD).

Abubakar is a better politician than Buhari. Open field contest is likely to go the way of the Adamawa tactician, now that Tinubu is reportedly not too interested after “losing out” on the VP agenda. If Buhari somehow bests Atiku... there are chances he could be fourth time lucky (Adewole, 2014).

In the extract above, the columnist describes another presidential aspirant of the All Progressives Congress, Atiku Abubakar as a better politician than General Buhari. He predicts that Atiku Abubakar (a former vice president) would win the presidential primary of APC because he is a better political tactician. This position is quite misleading because the two aspirants are very different in their personalities. While Atiku, a very wealthy businessman (capitalist) and former customs officer who is widely perceived to be corrupt, General Buhari is widely believed to be untainted and pro-poor (socialist). The emergence of Atiku Abubakar would be in the interest of the ruling party as he has less mass appeal across the country. The columnist reluctantly admits the high electoral value of General Buhari by predicting that “If

Buhari somehow bests Atiku... there are chances he could be fourth time lucky” (Adewole, 2014).

The second article by Lanre Adewole is titled “Bye, Mr. President!” It was published on March 23, 2014. The piece discusses solutions to the insecurity and ethno-religious conflicts plaguing Nigeria. In the article, the columnist argues that the quest for presidential power is the biggest threat to national security in Nigeria. He also argues that ethno-religious conflicts and the “Boko Haram” insurgency are products of presidential power struggle.

Far more highly-inflammable than Boko Haram insurgency, presidential election is Nigeria’s most destructive ticking time-bomb... nationwide election of the most single powerful individual in the land would not only be hotly-contentious as before, but the tell-tale signs of a conflagration of an outcome are too obvious to ignore. Hence, the heart-warming signals from the confab and Nigerians of all hues that a return to parliamentary system of government may be in the offing in June ((Adewole, 2014).

The extract above sets the tone for the article. He sets an agenda for public discourse with his topic in the column. While many Nigerians may share the columnist’s sentiments that the presidential system of government is not the best for Nigeria, it may not be at the top of their agenda at the moment due to the attentions given to the upcoming presidential election. Different readers will have different cognitive sets and processes (Van Dijk, 1979, p. 149); therefore, what they consider as important will be different. The columnist identifies the quest to attain the presidency of Nigeria as a “destructive ticking time-bomb”. He argues that the presidential election has the potential to bring an end to the corporate existence of Nigeria. This argument is true to a great extent because all other vices in Nigeria are ripple effects of the presidential power struggle. The columnist sees the insurgency in the north-east of Nigeria as a product of the political contention; official corruption is also greatly due

to the over concentration of political power in the hands of the executives. According to Van Dijk, “The cognitive state of a reader ... is contextually variable ... and this will affect the ways the information is understood and linked to (other) information in memory” (Van Dijk, 1979, p. 149). Consequently, it is arguable that the presidential system of government is not a problem in itself rather the problem is its application by the Nigerian government.

Nigeria operates a presidential system of government based on the principles of federalism. However, it has been practicing Unitarianism since the first military coup in 1966. In this new system, the federal government controls the exploration and sharing of the proceeds of the natural resources. The federal government takes over 50% of the funds generated by the country, the rest are shared among the 36 state governments and 774 local governments. This system creates a very wealthy and powerful government at the center while the state governments are less powerful. Consequently, every region, ethnic group, and religion desires to produce the president with the aim of controlling the funds accruable to the country from the sale of natural resources. Nigerian politicians therefore arouse ethnic and religious sentiments in their quest for presidential powers. The writer predicts that Nigeria will never have a presidential election devoid of rancor and bloodletting.

The columnist advocates a return to parliamentary democracy (which we had in the First Republic) as suggested by some members of the National political conference which was held to address Nigeria’s future in 2013.

In fact, one poignant insight by a cerebral mind is the fact that of all the countries colonised by Britain, Nigeria alone still hangs the powerful presidential system emblem. We might have embraced ‘America wonder’ presidential system without the requisite cultural orientation, given that we were fed more British values than American’s at independence, but we

cannot castigate those who gave us the American idea in 1979 because global mood then, favoured the fad (Adewole, 2014).

In the extract above, the writer argues that Nigeria is the only former British colony still using the powerful presidential system of government. This is not very correct because there are many former British colonies in Africa that still operate the presidential system. Ghana, Zimbabwe and Gambia are some of them. While Ghana's democracy has witnessed a steady change of presidents over the years, the systems in Gambia and Zimbabwe is worse than that of Nigeria because their presidents have remained in office for too long. The Nigerian presidential system obviously gives too much power to the center at the detriment of the federating units. Such concentration of power and wealth without effective checks and balances ultimately leads to corruption.

In the extract above, Lanre Adewole suggests that Nigeria's failure to maximize the benefits of the presidential system is due to Nigeria's historical adoption of "British values" rather than American values. As Van Dijk suggests, "socially situated cognitive representations and processes ... have an important discourse dimension. Social representations are largely acquired, used and changed, through text and talk. Therefore, discourse analysis may be used ... to reveal the underlying contents, structures and strategies of SRs" (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 165). This perhaps explains Lanre Adewole's simplification of the imperfection of the presidential system in Nigeria. This position of his is not true because true democratic values are universal irrespective of the democratic system practiced.

Inherent characteristics of Nigerian democracy like nepotism, tribalism, bribery, thuggery etc. are neither American nor British.

Now the nation's mood and feeling of the system is that of a humongously-expensive arrangement that makes a natural dictator of a most meek president, with limitless capacity to dispense favour and unrestrained access to official power of coercion (Adewole, 2014).

In the extract above, the columnist explains the demerit of the presidential system in Nigeria. He believes that the amount of money involved could transform a meek man into a dictator. This indirectly puts the image of the current president in the mind of the reader. President Jonathan indeed seemed a meek man when he became president after the death of President Yar'adua in 2010, but he is becoming a dictator in his quest for reelection. While this is true, it must be stated that the office of the president cannot transform anyone into a dictator if s/he doesn't want to. Adewole's chosen narrative shows the link between political power and social discourse in Nigeria. Van Dijk notes that "it is not power itself, but rather its shared or contested representations in social cognitions of group members which provide the link that connects social power with social discourse" (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 133). Adewole's representation of political power in the column presents dilemma to the reader.

It is also good to note that a number of Nigerian leaders have shown that executive power does not necessarily transform a saint into a villain as suggested by the columnist. For instance, Generals Murtala Mohammed and Muhammadu Buhari occupied the highly coveted office yet they did not amass wealth for themselves. They are widely seen as the most upright leaders in the history of Nigeria. As a matter of fact General Buhari is the only living former Nigerian Head of State without a house in Nigeria's capital city Abuja; this proves that corruption is a personal decision. Making the office of the president less attractive will help in reducing the violence and unhealthy rivalry that characterizes the race to the presidency. However, Van Dijk argues that "from the point of view of cognitive

sociology this may again be trivial, but what matters is that we draw the right conclusions and opt for the adequate approaches that follow from such a statement of principle” (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 133).

The laughable checks we have in judiciary and National Assembly; with the latter, generally perceived as a money-gobbling democratic corner of cheap blackmail, roguish over-sight functions and lately, retirement seat for thieving ex-governors. An apt wicked coinage of “legislathief” says it all. With the call for a return to parliamentary system, the two arms are expected to be made unattractive; with a largely ceremonial president, a prime minister leading MPs to be paid only sitting allowances, and a part-time lawmaking arrangement (Adewole, 2014).

The extract above summarizes the systemic shortcomings of the presidential system of government as currently practiced in Nigeria. The Nigerian legislature and judiciary have become collaborative arms of the executive with a relationship devoid of the required checks and balances. Justice is on sale for the highest bidder while poor masses spend years awaiting trial for minor offences. The legislature on the other hand is fast becoming a refuge ground for past executives who have stolen from state treasury. Danjuma Goje, Saminu Turaki, Bukola Saraki and George Akume are former governors whom have taken refuge in the Senate in their quest to remain politically relevant and truncate the corruption cases against them. At least four current governors who are deemed poor in performance are muscling their way to the Senate by 2015.

A return to parliamentary system would eliminate the rancor that goes with the expensive presidential system. Making legislative work a “part-time” job like the columnist suggests would also attract bright and passionate people who lack the financial clout to win elections in the present arrangement. A drastic reduction in the money and power available at the center would lead to a reduction in the killings and oppression that characterize the present arrangement. If this is not done, more lives

would be lost in the struggle for presidential and gubernatorial powers across the country. Judging from the history of elections in Nigeria, it would be surprising if no life is lost over the presidential election of March 28, 2015.

...came up with certain hybrid ideas of smaller, more-efficient, less-expensive, less-rancorous system of governance that would leave Nigeria intact and free the zones in developmental race (Adewole, 2014).

As stated earlier, a transformation to a part-time parliamentary system would create significantly less rancor across ethnic divides. When candidates are elected by their communities (i.e. tribes and ethnic groups), the tendency for inter-tribal clash is drastically reduced. It also reduces the tendency for religious clashes because most Nigerian communities are almost religiously homogeneous except in some big cities. Class violence between the rich and the poor is also reduced by demonetizing elective positions. This would attract only those whom really want to serve the nation. This system would ensure accountability and create positive development across all regions and sectors of the country. The columnist uses attractive social representations which may not be widely shared in across Nigeria. Van Dijk submits that Social Representations (SR) “just like socially shared knowledge, are essentially reproduced in society through discourse” (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 165). Therefore, it is good to note that while the fundamental political recommendations made by the columnist are laudable, they may not come to reality because they may not be the dominant discourse in the Nigerian polity in the foreseeable future.

The central idea is breaking the nation into six or eight regions, in the case of the latter, with one extra for both North and South to accommodate minorities wailing of subjugation, eight vice-presidents, representing each region, with propensity to becoming president when it is the turn of the zone (Adewole, 2014).

The proposal in the extract above is close to the system at independence. However, it could further erode our national unity as Nigerians are likely to become more

ethnocentric and region-centric. Similarly, eight regions are inadequate to meet the demands of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. If the creation of thirty-six (36) states has failed to pacify ethnic agitators, then eight regions would be grossly inadequate. It is good to note that social power is manifested, enacted, represented, or legitimated by means of text and talk and “in this important way, insights are being contributed also to the micro enactment and organization of social power” (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 133). Therefore, the columnist exercises his social power by applying it as a solution to a political problem. It is also important to note that the constant complaint of marginalization by ethnic minorities in Nigeria is a product of the inequality in the political and socio-economic systems. Therefore regionalism without demonetization would only lead to more injustice, chaos and destruction of lives and properties with the potential to end the corporate existence of Nigeria.

Lanre Adewole (the author of the last two articles analyzed), tries to shape public opinion about a presidential aspirant using facts and logic. His preference for President Goodluck Jonathan over General Muhammadu Buhari may not be obvious to the reader, but he reshapes the reader’s perception on the two presidential aspirants. The manner of writing could determine how the readers cast their votes in the upcoming general elections. He also provides possible solutions to the lingering ethno-religious and socio-political conflicts which have plagued Nigeria since independence.

The three columnists have presented their discourses on power relations in Nigeria with the aim of pulling their readers to their schools of thought. They took different approaches in passing their views to their readers. Ochereome Nnanna used ethnic and religious framing in his articles to motivate his readers towards the retention of

the political status quo in 2015. His reference to a section of the country as “Muslim North” epitomizes his use of religion and ethnicity to achieve his political objectives. Tunde Asaju on the other hand, uses his poetic license to play on words in his articles to change the political status quo in Nigeria by making APC win the elections. He addresses social issues like unemployment, poverty, and incompetence among others. Lastly, Lanre Adewole takes a subtle swipe at the personality of General Muhammadu Buhari with the aim of moving voters against him in the upcoming presidential election.

There is an interesting twist to the position of each of these columnists. Although only one of them (Ochereome Nnanna) openly plays the ethnic card, it is observable that all of them support a presidential aspirant from their regions of origin. Ochereome Nnanna and Lanre Adewole who are both from the southern part of Nigeria support President Goodluck Jonathan (who is also a southerner); Tunde Asaju (who is from the northern part of Nigeria) on the other hand supports the presidential ambition of General Muhammadu Buhari who is also a northerner. This is however a coincidence because the struggle for political power transcends regional affiliation and takes other complex issues like economic interest of the owners of the newspapers, friendship, marital ties, ideological leaning etc. into consideration.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

The previous chapters of this work attempted to provide a background to power relations among Nigerian elites and its effects on the society at large, leading to the development of several new perspectives on a number of issues that shape the balance of power in the country from pre-independence through various democratic and military experiments to date (February 2015). The presented perspectives on these issues have been influenced by historical and contemporary accounts and experiences of researchers and columnists.

The study has identified the quest for political power (especially presidential power) as the major problem of Nigeria; all other manifestations of conflict in the country like ethnicity, religion, insurgency, corruption, poor infrastructure etc. are products of the power struggle among Nigerian elites. The power tussle among the elites extends to other classes in the social system.

The study has also shown that the interest in the balance of power in Nigeria transcends the local space because events in Nigeria would have impact on other African countries and the world at large. For instance, political instability in Nigeria could affect the global oil price; therefore global powers will be keenly interested in what happens in Nigeria.

Nigerian newspaper columnists are influential members of the society; and they use their influence to generate support for the political interests of their publishers and political candidates. In conformity with Eric Louw's theory (which states that there are three groups in power relations) which was discussed in Chapter Two, this research has shown that Nigerian columnists are indeed "semi-insiders" in the political process (Louw, 2005, pp. 17-18). They have privileged information about the political process which the general public may not have. Consequently, the columnists use their privileged position and privileged information to mobilize the citizens towards their preferred balance of power.

The research endeavored to explain the powers of Nigerian newspapers and their columnists over the electorates through the Agenda Setting and Discourse Theory frameworks. The interplay among the publishers, managers, columnists and politicians is crucial to the political directions taken -and choices made- by the readers who also constitute the electorates. While politicians and media owners set agenda, media managers build discourses around the agenda, and columnist narrate, reiterate and/or reconstruct the discourses to win the souls of the readers.

Using Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and Norman Fairclough's textual, contextual and social analysis, the study examined how some Nigerian newspaper columnists reiterate and rearticulate popular discourses in Nigerian politics to achieve their socio-political objectives. In the process of reiterating and rearticulating these discourses, the columnists shape the cognition of the electorates.

Through the analyses of the writings of three columnists (Nnanna Ochereome, Tunde Asaju and Lanre Adewole) from three newspapers (*Vanguard*, *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*), the researcher tried to explain how the political and economic elites maintain their power by creating chaos among the lower classes through the deceitful use of volatile concepts like religion, ethnicity and regionalism.

From the critical analysis of the narratives employed by the three columnists, it is seen that trivial concepts like ethnicity and religion play big roles in electoral choices while serious issues like competence and selfless service to the electorates are sacrificed. This may explain why Nigeria has failed to achieve its potentials; instead remaining perpetually in the category of Third World countries.

A close observation of the three newspapers shows that although they are all “national newspapers”, all of them are “sectional” in outlook; this influences the type of columnists on their platforms. The ownership structure also influences the sectional outlook of the newspapers; while *Vanguard* and *Daily Trust* are owned by individuals, *Nigerian Tribune* is owned by a famous political family. It is arguable that they would have been more interested in national interest instead of personal/sectional interests if they were Public Liability Companies.

The findings from this research show that Nigerian newspaper publishers and columnists, while drawing historical events in the country, contribute to the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts through their ethnocentric narratives on socio-political events.

In conclusion, the study has clearly shown that the conflicts and crises experienced in across sections of Nigerian society are created the elites in their intra-class struggle for political and economic powers. Fundamentally, there is no conflict among the various tribes or ethnic groups in Nigeria neither is there conflict among the adherents of the major religions practiced in Nigeria; rather the main problem of the country is a clash of interest among the elites on one hand and between the elites and the masses on the other hand. While the elites fight collectively against the masses and succeed in establishing and maintaining hegemony over the masses, they fight among themselves over the sharing formula of their loot. The hegemony established over the masses is then used as a weapon in the battle for supremacy among the elites. The mass media especially newspapers provide platforms for the creation and telling (and retelling) of stories that institutionalize the hegemonic relationship with the masses. While the newspapers are the production sites and facilities, columnists are the workers whose intellectual labor keeps the system alive and running efficiently. That is where volatile concepts like religion (which provides a veil for *Boko Haram* insurgency), ethnicity and region of origin come to play. This poses a threat to national security and cohesion.

With the overt and covert ethno-religious framing of narrative by many Nigerian columnists in the build up to the 2015 presidential election, the researcher believes that many voters will make their choices along ethnic and religious lines. If this happens, there could be an emergence of a wider ethno-religious chasm among the constituent groups in Nigeria. The outcome of the 2015 presidential election could therefore, have grave implications for the immediate future of the country. Violence is inevitable irrespective of the winner; but will the country disintegrate as widely projected and clamored for? That is hard to predict because Nigeria is a country of

many illogical paradoxes. Therefore, the researcher sees Nigeria weathering the storm and surviving the possible negative consequences of the divisive narratives used by the elite owned and controlled media.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix: A. Titles and Dates of the Columns**

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Published: October 02, 2014

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By LANRE ADEWOLE

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(6) Bye, Mr. President!

By LANRE ADEWOLE

Published: March 23, 2014

## **Appendix: B. News Stories**

(1) What is “North’s” Plan B?

October 02, 2014

By Ochereome Nnanna

A national newspaper over the past weekend carried a bold headline: “North Vows to Stop Jonathan”, with riders: “We will ensure PDP loses” – Ango Abdullahi; Arewa Chair Commassie: “We are keeping Plan B to our chest”.

Professor Ango Abdullahi is the spokesman of the reactionary Northern Elders Forum, NEF, which is overpopulated with former holders of prominent offices at the federal level. They were the people that the late leader of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, slaved throughout his life to educate and pump into prominent positions during the years that the region exclusively dominated the Nigerian political sphere.

Ango Abdullahi and his cohorts were given free education and pampered like princes while at school because they were just a handful when compared with their teeming colleagues from the former Eastern and Western Regions.

When they graduated, their classmates at Barewa and other colleges in the North who were sent to the military had occupied prominent positions in the Federal Military Government. They enjoyed all the plum postings between 1966 and 1999. At a point they believed that Nigeria was a colony of Arewa because apart from Olusegun Obasanjo, their surrogate who succeeded Gen Murtala Mohammed when

he was killed in a power struggle between Northern factions in 1976 to 1979, the North reigned for 39 years.

It was this class of Northern elite that wrecked the country, its economy and institutions set up by the colonial masters and post-independence leaders. Like parasitic cankerworms, they ate down federal parastatals such as the Railways, Shipping Line, Nigeria Airways, Ajaokuta Steel, Alscor, NITEL, NIPOST, among others, until they were either scrapped or sold off for pennies under questionable privatisation programmes.

Back home in the North, they appropriated all the money and power they derived from their dominance of the Federal Government to themselves, friends and family members and produced a tiny core of super-billionaires, with their children attending the best schools in the world.

On the other hand, the children of the talakawa – the poor and downtrodden – were rendered into fly-infested al majiri; street urchins who live with exploitative koranic mallams. They frequently deploy them to kill non-Muslims and non-indigenes in the North. The youth have now channelled their anger into Boko Haram insurgency to overthrow the ruling class of the North for which Ango Abdullahi is a noisy spokesman.

These system wreckers want to gate-crash back into power by all means. These were the people who threatened that if Jonathan was allowed to enjoy his inalienable constitutional rights to vie for presidency of the country, they would make Nigeria ungovernable for him.

Their argument is that after the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua, his Deputy, Dr Goodluck Jonathan should have forfeited his constitutional rights to succeed his

boss. He should have given up his inalienable rights to vie for the presidency because of the rotational principle of the PDP.

They call it a fight for justice. Where was equity when Ango Abdullahi and other Arewa freeloaders exclusively called the shots for 39 years, reducing the South to mere spectators? Is it now that a president from the South-South in the former Eastern Region is presiding over Nigeria and gradually restoring the broken institutions of state that Abdullahi attaches a sanctimonious meaning to “equity”?

The truth of the matter is that Ango Abdullahi and the NEF are in no position to carry out the threat they have issued. They cannot stop Nigerians from voting for Jonathan or the PDP if that is what Nigerians want. Also, they have no power to facilitate the victory of the All Progressives Congress, APC. APC victory will happen in spite of the NEF if that is the wish of the Nigerian electorate.

The Northern Region that the British colonial master created and made a monster to rule Nigeria either through ballot or bullet is no more. The three old regions are dead.

The old Northern region was the last to die. It was the inheritors of Ahmadu Bello’s largesse like Ango Abdullahi who killed the North through religious extremism and oppression of Minorities and non-Muslims who helped them and the Yorubas in the war against Igbos during 1966 to 1970. At the just-concluded National Conference, the Middle Belt separated themselves cleanly from Arewa Muslim North and sided with the combined South to create a new political possibility which potentially renders Arewa to an underdog.

Even at that, Arewa North does not dance to the political tune dictated by the faction that Ango speaks for. Ango Abdullahi, Lawal Kaita and Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie, who boasted that the North would release “Plan B”, are agents of Alhaji Atiku

Abubakar's faction of the APC. They used their Northern posturing to vie against Jonathan in 2011.

Northern presidential aspirants closed ranks against Jonathan and Atiku emerged as consensus candidate. Jonathan still thrashed Atiku at the PDP primaries by scoring 2,736 against Atiku's 805. Jonathan went ahead to beat Muhammadu Buhari at the presidential election of 2011, scoring 59% to Buhari's 32%. Using the ogre of North to frighten political opponents no longer works.

Nigerians still vote along ethnic and religious lines to some extent, but that is not the deciding factor. The deciding factor is where the various political leaders belong. The North is a major stakeholder in both APC and PDP.

The North (both Arewa and Middle Belt) is a major stakeholder in the Jonathan presidency. The choice before these leaders in 2015 is whether their interests are better served with the incumbent, President Jonathan, or whoever emerges as the APC flag bearer. They will direct their loyalists at the localities to vote accordingly. Ango Abdullahi is just letting off empty, hot air.

As for Coomassie's Plan B, it no longer exists. North used to bring in the army whenever their civilian wing in power was no longer sure-footed. They used to change even military regimes whenever the one on ground was no longer acceptable to them. Those days are over. If Boko Haram was Plan B, it is failing. It will not affect the eventual outcome of the 2015 elections. (Ochereome, What is "North's" Plan B?, 2014)

(2) Attention Ambassador Campbell: North is pampered, not alienated

July 01, 2013

By Ochereome Nnanna

I READ Martins Oloja's front page story on The Guardian (Monday, June 24th, 2013) with interest and decided to put in a word. Oloja, the Editor of the newspaper, interviewed Ambassador John Campbell in Washington DC. Campbell was the chief envoy of the United States of America in Nigeria. When he was through with serving his country, he wrote a controversial book: Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink.

Campbell describes himself as "a friend of Nigeria", who is so concerned for the unity of the country that he opted to speak "the truth" about the situation in a country bedevilled by instability and threatened with an uncertain future. The aspect of the diplomat's assertions that tickles my interest is his contention that the "core North" (Arewa, or the Muslim North) is "alienated".

He is concerned that Nigeria's leaders are not doing enough to address the "discrepancies in the social statistics" that portray "alienation" of the region. These, he insinuates, manifest in violence, terrorism, mind-boggling poverty and high level illiteracy. He is of the view that "most of the elements in the North do not participate in the modern economy". The general impression he creates is that the nation has not done enough to carry the North along in its modestly improving circumstances.

I beg to vehemently disagree: I agree with Campbell that the North, particularly the "Core North", has been manifesting attributes of an alienated entity. Social scientists will tell you that prolonged relative deprivation creates frustration, which in turn causes alienation that often results in violence.

The case of core northern Nigeria is more complex than meets the ordinary eye. It is easy for a foreign envoy to miss the peculiar causative factors troubling the North (and hence Nigeria) and instead focus on the effects.

I am strongly of the view that the North is not a deprived entity. The poverty, illiteracy, destitution and unending chains of religion-driven social conflicts have nothing to do with the marginalisation of the North by the Nigerian nation. If anything at all, overwhelming historical tons of evidence portray the North as the most favoured; in fact, pampered section of this country from the colonial days till tomorrow.

Let us run a brief checklist: The British colonialists gerrymandered the political constituencies and made sure that the Northern Region would be dominant in terms of land mass and real or imagined population; enough to be able to seize control of political power at independence.

The colonialists also created the military institution making sure that North would control military power. Any surprise that after independence, the North went on to dominate the political landscape for a total of thirty nine out of fifty three years.

They ran the country in a manner suggesting they merely replaced the foreign colonialists because emphasis was placed on economic and political exploitation of the South.

They arbitrarily created states, local governments, senatorial and federal constituencies, as well as electoral divisions giving the lion's share of political power to the North.

They also centralised the economic resources of the country, ensuring that proceeds from the oil and other resources of the Niger Delta and Southern Nigeria are brought into the federation account and shared in a manner whereby the North always carts home by far the largest chunk. Let us take a sampler.

The May 2013 sharing of the federal allocation indicated that non-oil producing Arewa zones (North West: seven states, N157b and North East: six states, N109b) got a combined share of N266 billion. South East with five states, two of which are oil-producing, got a mere N85b.

Others were – South West: six states, N127b; North Central, six states, N105b, and South-South: six states, N285b (because of the derivation principle).

Ironically, within the same period, the National Examination Council (NECO) issued the cut-off points for admission of students into Federal Government (Unity) Colleges. Four states of the South East were given the highest points to attain: Anambra: 139; Enugu: 136; Imo: 135; and Abia: 128 on the one hand. On the other, northern states got as follows: Kebbi: 35; Jigawa: 33; Sokoto: 27 and Yobe: zero! If you are a male from Yobe State seeking admission into a federal college and you score zero in all your papers you will be admitted while an Anambra chap who garners 134 points, which is well above the cut-off allocated South West states, will be denied admission!

By the time you gather all the statistics, the “discrepancies” will startle you. The reality is that Nigeria gives the North everything on a golden platter, while the Igbo people are given the scraps. They are marginalised and oppressed in every conceivable sector while the North is treated like royalty. But despite this, the Igbo people and the South as a whole maintain the lead in vital social indicators of human

development. Those who are alienated come out like the privileged, while pampered exhibit attributes of alienated people. It is an irony of Nigeria!

Full scale modernism

The root cause is easy to locate. While the South has embraced full-scale modernism with social equity ethos, the North is bogged down by an archaic oligarchy that caters to the sweet-tooth comforts of the aristocracy. All the money, all the power that the North takes from Nigeria are used to feather the nests of the upper classes; the traditional, political and bourgeois gentry. The Northern oligarchy tramples upon the masses of the poor (Talakawa), chaining them with the thrall of religion and using them as cannon fodder in political contests. The terrorism in the North East is seen as a sample of such political machination after the North failed to regain power following the death of President Umaru Yar' Adua.

Ambassador Campbell must take note that the leaders of the “core North” are chiefly responsible for the illiteracy, poverty and violence in the North. Nigeria has given the North more than it deserves. If these resources had been responsibly invested, the North would be light years ahead of the rest of the country.

If Campbell is a genuine “friend of Nigeria” he should campaign for equity and fairness for all Nigerians rather than carrying coal to Newcastle. (Ochereome, Attention Ambassador Campbell: North is pampered, not alienated - See more at: <http://www.vangAttention Ambassador Campbell: North is Pampered Not Alienated, 2013>)

(3) Naija Politics of Miracles

19 October 2014

By Tunde Asaju

First things first, do not believe that elections are wars. They are battles. The war starts usually after the battle has been won or, if you are the uncharitable loser - rigged. So, February's presidential election battle is just by the corner. Two kingdoms would be fighting this war and in classifying them, you can either be diplomatic or outright crude. If you are diplomatic, you say that the elections would be between two parties – the PDP and the APC.

But if you are mean spirited, you could say that the battle is between the north and south; or that it would be an epic battle between two archenemies - Islam and Christianity. Wherever you pitch your tent, you would not be wrong.

The PDP has put all its eggs in one basket. Faced with the convincing power of the rented crowd called TAN, the PDP has forced our usually reliable president, to swallow his promise not to seek a second (or is it a third) term. Without asking him, the party adopted him sole candidate daring anyone with arsehole rock ambitions to kick against the goads. The adoption of President Jones as PDP's sole candidate makes him the man to beat come February.

On the part of the opposition APC for a while it seems as if someone tried to put them to sleep but only succeeded in making them dose off for a while. Anyhow politics is an incredible anaesthesiologist. Not only is the upcoming presidential a wake-up call, it is redefining APC. This party was initially built for the Talakawa but with a presidential ticket at N27.5 million, what is poverty? The amount has discouraged stragglers. So far, only two have picked the form.

The first, Atiku Abubakar has a war chest that dates back to his days as a Customs officer and some would say further reinforced by two terms in the villa plus a chain of businesses, known and unknown. The other is General Muhammadu Buhari, the man whom Yokosuna recently declared a serial electoral loser. Buhari is having problems finding the cash to pay his way. Readers should note that the nomination fee does not include enormous campaign costs. So, is APC still a talakawa party?

Most kingdoms go to battle with their generals all reporting at the war room. I understand even armchair generals, those ones who got their promotions without smelling teargas since their days as recruits, show up. Faced with a major battle, according to the usually unreliable media, the PDP presidential war room is seven generals less. Over the week, Liebaron Maku led six of his colleagues out of weekly contracts and solid money. They are leaving to fulfill their dreams of becoming governors or, in military terms - platoon commanders. By leaving to contest as governors, Maku and his fellow dreamers have demoted themselves from generals to the rank of colonels.

That must be very hard for their field marshal but then they have asked for forgiveness. As far as electoral battles go, the Naija scenario is different from normal battles. Nothing of ours is normal. On the one hand, if the daydreamers realize their ambition, they would be laying the foundation for the realization of Vincent Ogbulafor's prediction to ruin this nation for the next 60 years. If they hit and miss, which is what their political foes are praying, they can put their tails in between their legs and return as take a bow and loot returnees after the adventure.

Never tell a Naija politician that a ministerial appointment is higher than a gubernatorial one, one is appointive and the other is either elective or selective.

Governors have siren immunity and security votes. Another anathema not to say to a Naija politician is – retirement, it causes hallucination. Third, never tell a Naija politician that he cannot win especially if they are PDP.

This deserter list is curious. Usually only performing public officers are encouraged to circulate until they have made efficiency contagious. Some of these ones are archetypal bunglers while others have not been heard from since they were sworn in to the day of their exit? Now they want to take on the management of entire states.

Forget gunrunning bishops for a moment, miracles are a dime a dozen without them. If you doubt me, check out Ayo Fayose, the Ekiti comeback kid. He was coasting into the Book of Miracles even before he was sworn in. With a pack of stomach-infrastuctured thugs they sacked the state judiciary by donating slaps to judges. Shortly after taking oath, he made the office of SA on Stomach Infrastructure legit. Now they are working on a new mathematical calculus where seven is higher than 17 and with that formula they hope to install a Fayose-loyal Speaker. Believe me, it can happen. (Asaju, Naija Politics of Miracles, 2014)

(4) Get well speedily Mr. President

24 November 2013

By Tunde Asaju

Events of last week justified the wisdom in the statement credited to the DG NCAA in the wake of the bulletproof car saga, that conscientious evil servants should be bothered about the leakage of official secrets than the substance of the scandals.

Imagine the shame that Stephen Keshi, (a man who owes Naija a lot of gratitude for doing the job of a foreign coach and earning a local salary) cost a World-Cup

qualifying nation? Sports minister Bolaji Abdullahi, put it mildly while decrying Keshi for leaking the story of the seven-month salary arrears him by NFF.

A patriotic coach would have groveled at the feet of the sports minister for intervention instead of the international embarrassment. Here is why all those who work in public sphere should be made to take that trip to Okija Shrine, now that the election curfew has been lifted over Anambra. This should be done immediately before the leak goes to the Naija Railway Corporation and embarrasses both our party and its fixer board chairman - again.

Ever since President Jones made the evil servants working under him to swear to an oath of secrecy, sleaze files have defied the laws of the photocopier while whispers have not been heard outside the thick walls of the presidency. If the ingredients of the oath of secrecy could be mixed into the concoctions of the oaths that our judges, lawmakers and ministers swear, no secret would ever leak and opposition media would have been bankrupt – which is very good for business.

Ironically, while the oath of secrecy works with the efficacy of Alabukun powder on hangovers, the efficacy dwindles once the deponents cross the boisterous Atlantic Ocean. This is a research opportunity for the priests who administer these oaths and the reason would become clear at the end of this narrative.

Last week marked President Jones' 56th birthday and the papers were awash with congratulatory messages by loyal citizens. With such goodwill messages, who cares if the enemies have a headache? Though those of us who are born at night are precluded from celebrating birthdays, we do know a thing or two about landmark celebrations. They come with hangovers. But our hard-working president is not one to sacrifice matters of state transformation on the altar of birthday celebrations. By

Thursday, he had jetted out of Abuja to meet the ever-increasing crowd of investors willing to take a bite out of Dangote's exclusive pie.

To Stella Oduah's credit, his plane landed at Heathrow again confirming that there is nothing wrong with our air navigation systems and oven airport. But Thursday morning at the investor's forum, Mr. President could not honour the role. Most people would have attributed it to jetlag but for snitches that swore the president had taken ill and sought help in a foreign hospital where muzungu doctors advised him to take his leave in London instead of Obudu.

Out of genuine concern for the President's safety and the image of our country, I was combing everywhere for the telephone number of his Excellency, Alhaji Nnamdi Sambo. I was going to suggest that he should send the presidential air ambulance to bring back our president with immediate effect and automatic alacrity.

The reasons are not far-fetched. This government's Transformation Agenda has made uncommon strides in health care. There are more ambulances in Aso Clinic than there are in federal hospitals. The doctors placed at the president's disposal have more qualification than the Imperial Hospital in London. The equipment at Aso Clinic beat any even in America, I know because at least two presidents have answered God's call from their able hands in the last 20 years.

Our hospitals have medicines manufactured in India for the sole purpose of mortally wounding Naija kidneys. Generator noise would help any patient decide whether to transform to heaven or stay on earth. But above all, for national pride, our beloved president must not be placed on the gurney of foreign hospitals as specimen for a study in executive diseases more so when they have no access to his medical history.

Unfortunately rather than share these patriotic concerns with me, there were those who would rather snigger at a perceived recurrent hangover that equally stopped the president from addressing the African Union earlier in the year. These people snigger at the Transformation Agenda that replaced wheat bread with cassava bread and transformed the feeding formula from 1-1-1 to 0-1-0. This is why all well wishers must join me in As for me in wishing the president a speedy recovery so that he can return on time to flag off the 2015 presidential campaign. Naija has never had it so good, they deserve continuity! I assure investors that they can count on return tickets to Abuja in time to help commission the multi-million Naira Naija City Gate. (Asaju, Get well Speedily Mr.President, 2013)

#### (5) The river Buhari must cross

05, October 2014

By Lanre Adewole

IN 2011, Muhammadu Buhari famously shed tears while rounding-off his presidential campaign, presumably for a sinking Nigeria he might never be able to rescue. He also promised it would be the last time he would offer to help. Then, the North said a deafening aye, the rest of Nigeria, a crushing nay. Times and seasons have passed. Goodluck Jonathan's fresh breath is not completely demulcent, though it is contestable if it is fouling the air more. The transformation agenda is evolving but not revolving. Without doubt, the Nigerian ship could be better steered and differently directed. Buhari has broken his promise not to offer rescue mission again. Incidentally, the issue of trust, credibility and honour that should ordinarily come with the broken promise is being more trumpeted in Buhari's party.

A member of the House of Representatives from Kano who is also of APC, Dr. Abdulmumin Jibrin, was in the media, practically calling Buhari a dishonourable fellow for it. The lawmaker, reportedly an ally of Kano State governor and presidential-wannabe, Rabiu Kwakwanso, also disclosed that Buhari's u-turn is internally destabilising the party. Is this fellow just playing a Kwakwanso joker or Buhari is actually deficit in honour as Jonathan is also being accused? Is this campaign of honour against Buhari a possible "plan B" after the Boko Haram suicide bombing (?) plan A" failed?

For Nigerians who see a saviour in Buhari, he can come out of retirement as many times as he wishes and his integrity would be intact. He needs not explain his return. In fact, his feet and bums would have been put to fire if he had adopted siddon look. He is worshipped in the North. His few admirers in the South see no alternative to him. I suspect his handlers at the entry point into politics in 2001 were mainly Northerners. They obviously did a good job in projecting him as "the defender" of the North (?) and Islam, against a rampaging Southern president in Olusegun Obasanjo who also professed Christianity, but did a poor job in marooning him on the same spot 13 years after and three failed presidential odyssey, beaten by a Westerner, Northern and Southerner. They possibly didn't realise how resolute the South and Northern minorities were in demystifying the Hausa/Fulani on political power ownership.

Truth be told, the political South is no longer as hostile to him – even if the majority of Christians in North and South still doesn't trust him – thanks to another historic alliance with Asiwaju Bola Tinubu-led Western political power bloc, reminiscent of late Ladoke Akintola's alliance with Sardauna's North, though with major collateral

damage and grave implications. Only time will tell of the implications of this new collabo.

Buhari is being more positively viewed by the day as Jonathan's administration bumbles through self-inflicted crises and opposition's good job in projecting government's failures. Ever than before, Buhari is at a touching distance of the presidency. He is obviously not perfect as his worshippers would want us to believe. If Wole Soyinka's treatise on his stint as military dictator is used as a guide, the Daura General should be answering charges of pre-meditated murder over the execution of Lawal Ojuolape, Bernard Ogedengbe and Bartholomew Owoh, using a retroactive decree.

But the past may not haunt him as much as the present realities. 72-year old Buhari is not exactly the WAI General of 28 years ago. The Nigeria he ruled with iron fist alongside the late Tunde Idiagbon had no social media and its current mob that would have harassed his regime to submission over the controversial execution as well as his refusal to appear before Oputa panel to answer allegations of gross human rights, there was no mercantile National Assembly to "trade" with over executive bills, particularly appropriation, there were no party Mr.Fix-It to be appeased, there were no renegade ambitious governors, but kow-towing MILADS, political wheeling-dealings were limited to the traditional institution, there was no Boko Haram and its damaging affiliation. In summary, the man of yesterday is seeking to control a today of speedy-internet rapidity.

But the today he is seeking to govern is not completely strange to him. It evolved before his very eyes and he can catch up with its pace. But there are real obstacles to his dream. I think Atiku Abubakar is a bigger foe than Jonathan. Surmounting him at

the primaries may not be an easy task and APC will surely not remain the same with Buhari not being on the ballot, regardless of his promise of cooperation, if party faithful decided against him. Many ambitions like Nasir el-Rufai's, are founded on his aspiration. He is the Iroko of APC with his famed 12 million "clean" (?) votes at the last outing. The coalition was built around his presidential aspiration, but Atiku, who has been angling to be president since 23 years ago, is seriously surging. I watched his calm demeanour penultimate Sunday in Lagos as he unfolded before media executives, his Nigerian dream. Something tells me his real message to the party that night he said he would support Buhari, if defeated at the primaries, was the unspoken. Abubakar is a better politician than Buhari. Open field contest is likely to go the way of the Adamawa tactician, now that Tinubu is reportedly not too interested after "losing out" on the VP agenda. If Buhari somehow bests Atiku, the Customs Officer he redeployed over the controversial 54 suit cases, there are chances he could be fourth time lucky.

(Adewole, 2014)

(6) Bye, Mr. President!

23, March 2014

By Lanre Adewole

Far more highly-inflammable than Boko Haram insurgency, presidential election is Nigeria's most destructive ticking time-bomb. With nerves frayed and jarred across the land over who should lead the country beyond 2015, nationwide election of the most single powerful individual in the land would not only be hotly-contentious as before, but the tell-tale signs of a conflagration of an outcome are too obvious to

ignore. Hence, the heart-warming signals from the confab and Nigerians of all hues that a return to parliamentary system of government may be in the offing in June. Even God designed a man's life to be in phases, then a return. Nigeria has gone through its democratic phases, why not a return to where we were before the mania of presidential government seized us.

I have interacted with some conferees, including those participating by proxy. In fact, one poignant insight by a cerebral mind is the fact that of all the countries colonised by Britain, Nigeria alone still hangs the powerful presidential system emblem. We might have embraced 'America wonder' presidential system without the requisite cultural orientation, given that we were fed more British values than American's at independence, but we cannot castigate those who gave us the American idea in 1979 because global mood then, favoured the fad.

Now the nation's mood and feeling of the system is that of a humongously-expensive arrangement that makes a natural dictator of a most meek president, with limitless capacity to dispense favour and unrestrained access to official power of coercion, stoked by fierce ethnic loyalty rooted in "it's-our-turn" leadership, indolence founded on hedonism, craze for cheap funds locatable in greed and total lack of institutional checks and balances.

The laughable checks we have in judiciary and National Assembly; with the latter, generally perceived as a money-gobbling democratic corner of cheap blackmail, roguish over-sight functions and lately, retirement seat for thieving ex-governors. An apt wicked coinage of "legislathief" says it all. With the call for a return to parliamentary system, the two arms are expected to be made unattractive; with a

largely ceremonial president, a prime minister leading MPs to be paid only sitting allowances, and a part-time lawmaking arrangement.

It is understandable that after years of presidential system and certain sign-posts, a switch to total parliamentary system might be structurally befuddling. Sessions with certain high-profile conferees however came up with certain hybrid ideas of smaller, more-efficient, less-expensive, less-rancorous system of governance that would leave Nigeria intact and free the zones in developmental race.

The central idea is breaking the nation into six or eight regions, in the case of the latter, with one extra for both North and South to accommodate minorities wailing of subjugation, eight vice-presidents, representing each region, with propensity to becoming president when it is the turn of the zone. Rotational arrangement should still be there, but not replacing merit, because the region's representative is expected to emerge from a merit-based process.

Each region should have a premier or governor-general, with governors of each state answerable to him or her, while he or she relates with the president at the centre through the vice-president representing the region.

The parliament in regions should make laws for the states and the process of removing such governors should reside with both the parliament, (headed by a speaker) and the governor-general, while the sacking of the governor-general too should not be a cumbersome process.

In our multi-dimensional discourse, the general thinking is that the nation-building challenges would be more manageable with the devolution of power in the centre. I concur to the extent that the challenges at that level might just be about managing

conflicting tongues, cultures and aspirations but still in a politically-charged polity with awareness that was not there in the 60s.

If the nation would do away with presidential system in June, then INEC, its budget and activities should be on the radar from now. Yes, there would still be a president but he does not have to emerge by national election which would still be acrimonious whether the president is awesomely-powerful or a pseudo, since the issues at fault-line are more ethnic and religious than ideology. It is also deluding to say that the office would not be completely competitive because power would be decentralized. The centre is still expected to control the military and para-military, currency, foreign relations et al. Who says these are not enough attraction for a modest person who truly wants to serve.

I want to personally suggest that the parliament (expected to have the same number of representatives from each region) should be an electoral college to vote for the president among the eight that would emerge from the regions. The Electoral College should also have power to impeach the president and a replacement pick from the seven while the sacked president can continue as V.P of his region at the federal level if he so desires. By this, we can truly have Chief Servants and not Lords of Manor as we currently do.

Tension would abate instantly once a presidential election is off the table, but what are we going to do, justiciously, with a Goodluck Jonathan that was elected on the basis of the constitution that allows him a second term, though second term option is also not a popular sentiment among conferees?

(Adewole, Bye, Mr. President!, 2014)