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## Chapter Thirteen

### THE MEDIA, ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND ACCEPTABILITY OF CANDIDATES: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

A. K. AGBOOLA & N. O. DUROJAYE

#### Introduction

The problem of examining the role of the mass media in political communications and their effects on national issues is not confined to Nigeria. In other parts of the world, the media have always been involved in politics, formation of public opinion, perception of images of candidates for political offices, definition of social reality and social norms. They are also part of the transformation in the education, information, enlightenment and entertainment sectors as well as the presentation and clarification of issues, values, goals and changes in culture and society. They also shape the kinds of communication on certain issues brought to the attention of the people under some kinds of conditions' (Berelson, 1948, cited in Olayiwola, 1991).

The mass media have always remained a key factor in the political sphere and democracy at large. During elections, the mass media, especially the broadcast media and in recent times, the social media provide a link between the political party or candidate and the electorate. The mass media serve as a platform for political parties or candidates to campaign for votes. Through coverage of electioneering campaigns and airing of political advertisements, the electronic media help in influencing voters' decision either in favour or against a given political party or candidate through the information they provide (Obot, 2013).

Information is an essential tool for ensuring good democratic governance in a Nation State. As a matter of fact, it is an effective

instrument through which the populace get enlightened about the activities of government as well as actions or inactions of people in the society. However, information can be disseminated through some equipment which in mass communication parlance is regarded as the "mass media". Mass media according to Head and Sterling (1982) are those means of communication that use technology to reach large parts of the population almost simultaneously with the kind of news and entertainment that ordinary people find attractive and at a price that ordinary people can afford to pay. Mass media often time play a tremendous role in ensuring growth and stability of the society vis a vis governments operations. The media have also been a mechanism through which citizens make contributions for or against government policies. Mass media assumed a powerful position in Nigeria's political discourse especially in the attainment of a full fledged democratic governance having played an outstanding role in overthrowing military forces and its allies (Obot, 2013).

Nationalist like Chief Jeremiah, Obafemi Awolowo, Herbert Macaulay, Chief Nnamdi Azikwe, etc, employed the mass media to fight the colonial masters to achieve freedom for Nigeria. Scholars have been concerned for centuries with the possible influence of the mass media on the formation of public opinion and attitudes. In this regard, there have been divergent and diametrically opposed views on the subject. The result of many disputes about the role of the media is arguably, what the French call a 'dialogue of the deaf', where nobody hears the other side's argument. The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that there are effects from the media, yet it seems to be the issue on which there is least certainty and least agreement (McQuail, 1983, cited in Olayiwola, 1991).

In the past few decades, escalating tensions between the ideals and the perceived performance of democratic institutions have been witnessed in the World polity. Though, there was no 'crisis of democracy', but many believed that something was amiss and to say all was well was an understatement with the body polity. For example, in the United States, there was awareness on the widespread cynicism about political institutions and leaders, fuelling fears about civic disengagement and a half-empty ballot box. The common view in American politics is that the public turns off, knows little, cares less

and stays home. Similar worries have been expressed in Europe, particularly at the supranational level. Commentators have noted a crisis of legitimacy as the power and scope of the European Union have steadily expanded despite public disengagement from critical policy choices. One indicator is plummeting turnout in European elections, falling to under half the electorate in 1999, down from three quarters of two decades earlier. The growth of critical citizens is open to many explanations, explored in a previous study, including the failure of government performance, changing cultural values and problems of institutional design (Norris, 2000).

### Objectives

This paper focuses on the interconnection and interfaces between freedom of the media and elections. It offers a broad retrospective analysis of the role of the media in the democratisation processes in Nigeria. It explores the role of elections in fostering democratization and the role played by the media in the processes. It examines the continuing importance of the role of the media and communications in constituting the meanings and practices of democracy.

The paper also seeks to examine the factors undermining the normative role of the media during elections. Accordingly, the article would be discussed under the following sub-headings: review of related literature, studies on the effect of appearance, theoretical perspective, importance of the mass media in politics, media and political practices in Nigeria, the praxis of 'free and fair elections in Nigeria, the Nigerian media: guardian-of or dagger to democracy, results of 2015 presidential election: what was the media projection. The paper concludes and makes some recommendations.

### Literature Review

Several recent studies indicate that candidates who simply look more capable or attractive are more likely to win elections. Also, it was reported that candidates in U.S. Senate and House elections who appeared more competent to naive subjects enjoyed markedly greater electoral success, even though the subjects' judgments were based on brief exposure to unlabeled, black-and-white photographs of the candidates in question. It was therefore, concluded that rapid,

unreflective inferences may contribute to voter's choices. These findings are congruent with psychological research which indicates that people often judge unfamiliar individuals according to their appearance, inferring personality traits such as competence, intelligence, honesty and trustworthiness from facial features alone. Likewise, people mostly rely more heavily on such impressionistic assessments when they know little else about the subjects of their assessments, meaning that they utilize appearance as a low information heuristic (Hassin & Trope, 2000, cited in Lenz & Lawson, 2011).

### **Studies on the Effect of Appearance**

Research on candidate appearance and voting is burgeoning. Most recent studies in this literature follow the same general design. Credulous subjects view images of candidates' faces with all identifying information removed. They then rate the candidates on various traits (e.g. apparent competence), guess the outcome of the election, cast votes in hypothetical contests or offer some other summary judgment. Researchers then use subjects' responses to predict candidates' actual electoral performance. Studies employing this approach have documented appearance effects in a range of contests, such as U.S. House, Senate and gubernatorial races, national and municipal legislative contests in Finland, etc. The magnitude of the effect varies from one study to another, but it can be quite large. In this study, naive coders correctly predicted the outcome of approximately 70% of races. Yet another study, which focused on a low-information context where photographs of candidates for urban development boards appeared on the ballot depict contenders who looked best to raters had close to a 90% chance of winning; their less appealing-looking rivals had only a 10% chance (Todorov, Anesu, Amir & Crystal, 2005).

These findings could be subjected to several and alternative interpretations. One such interpretation could be that raters and voters may be responding to candidates' race and gender, rather than to their facial features. Another is that raters may be more familiar with winners, even though they report not recognizing them and so rate them as more competent or more likely to win (Zajonc, 2001).

Yet another interpretation is that harder-working or better-funded candidates may procure better-looking pictures of themselves and so look better to raters. Researchers have addressed these and other alternative interpretations from several angles. The appearance effect holds in most cases when: 1) candidates are matched on race and gender; 2) raters are unfamiliar with the candidates because they are from other countries; 3) the pictures used for rating are from a standardized source; 4) differences in image quality and other aspects of the pictures such as visible light are taken into account; 5) candidates are comparable in actual quality and in resources; 6) researchers control for candidate spending and party strength; 7) legislators compete against members of their own party and in non-partisan contests; and 8) researchers control for the apparent competitiveness of races at the time candidates are making decisions about entering the race (cited in Lenz & Lawson, 2011).

Additionally, given that television is a visual medium, it was reported that voters who were exposed to a great deal of TV are likely to be disproportionately exposed to images of candidates. Thus, television viewers may then rely on candidate appearance in deciding which candidate to support. As a result, candidates who enjoy a significant advantage over their opponents in terms of appearance should do well among television viewers during electioneering. However, it was hinted that this effect should be much greater among those who are poorly informed about politics and less pronounced among those who are better informed about politics (Lenz & Lawson, 2011).

However, Norris (2000) highlights three perspectives that dictate the profound roles of the media in political communications and candidate exposure. One of the commonest perspectives deserving critical examination concerns developments in political communications. During the last decade, a rising tide of voices on both sides of the Atlantic has blamed the news media for growing public disengagement, ignorance of civic affairs, and mistrust of government. This view has become so widespread that it has developed into something of an unquestioned orthodoxy in the popular literature, particularly in the United States.

Another related perspective, more prevalent in Europe,

regards the growth of professional political marketing by parties as also contributing towards greater public cynicism. The evidence remains that limited and systematic data is lacking to confirm or deny whether other assumed long-term changes in the news culture have occurred in post-industrial societies, for example whether there has been a growth in negative coverage of politicians during election campaigns, or whether a more adversarial relationship has developed between journalists and governments. The available studies, however, strongly suggests that changes in journalism observed in particular countries are often highly contextual, rather than representing trends common across post-industrial societies. For example, the most comprehensive comparison of news cultures in 21 countries based on surveys of journalists, found almost no consensus about professional roles, ethnic values and journalistic norms. Rather than the emergence of a single prevalent model of journalism, based on American norms there is considerable diversity worldwide (Norris, 2000).

Political campaigns have been transformed by changes in the news industry and also by the widespread adoption of political marketing techniques. Other countries have not simply imported American campaigning practices with politicians in many democracies often paying more attention to formal feedback mechanisms like polls and focus groups, with an expanding role for campaign professionals of marketing and public relations. Comparative surveys have found that in a 'shopping' model, parties adopt whatever techniques that seem well suited for their particular environment, supplementing but not discarding older forms of electioneering. Even in America, traditional forms of grassroots voter contact have been maintained, alongside older forms of campaign communications. Rather than decrying the professionalization of political communications and the 'black arts of spin doctors', this development can be regarded as an extension of the democratic process *if* these techniques help to connect parties more closely with the concerns of the electorate. The key issue is less the increased deployment of marketing techniques per se, which is not in dispute, than their effects upon politicians and voters (Norris, 2000).

## The Systematic Model of Political Communications

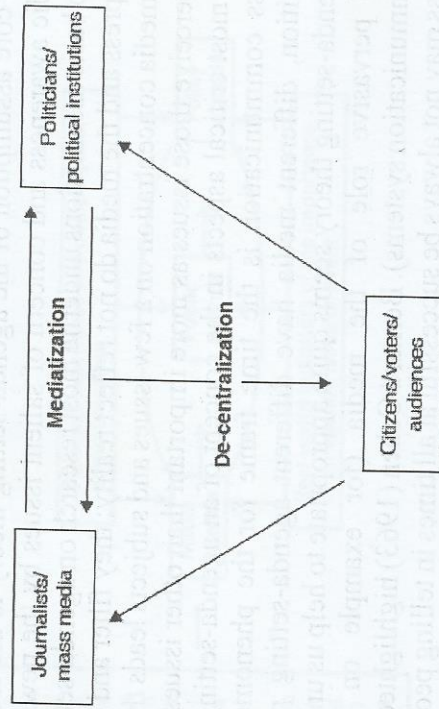


Figure 1.1 Changes in political communication

This figure is taken from Brants, K. & Voltmer, K. (2011). *Political Communication In Postmodern Democracy: Challenging The Primacy Of Politics*. Ed Kees Brants And Katrin Voltmer.

### Applicable Theoretical Perspective

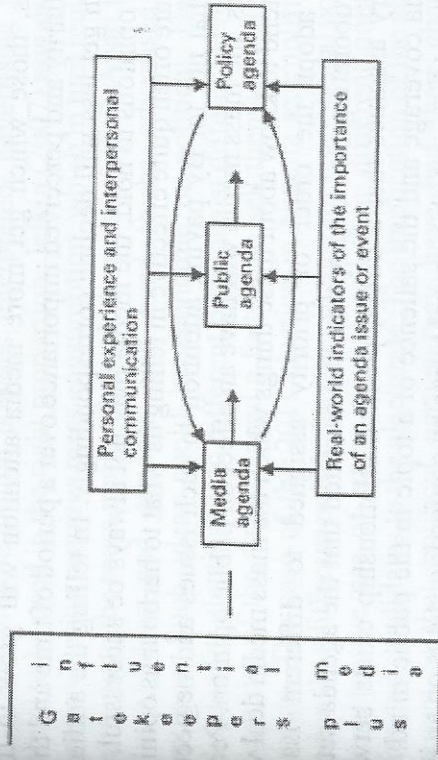
Agenda setting describes a very powerful influence of the media – the ability to tell us what issues are important. As far back as 1922, the newspaper columnist Walter Lippman was concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public. McCombs and Shaw investigated presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972 and 1976. In the research done in 1968 they focused on two elements: awareness and information. Investigating the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important issues and the actual content of the media messages used during the campaign. McCombs and Shaw (1991) concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign.

### Core Assumptions and Statements

The core assumption of the agenda-setting theory is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basic assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for the phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. Agenda-setting theory seems quite appropriate to help us understand the pervasive role of the media (for example on political communication systems). Bernard Cohen (1963) highlighted that the press may not always be successful at all times in telling people what to think, but it is in most cases successful in inspiring them on what to think about. For example, McCombs and Shaw (1991) focused on the two elements: awareness and information. Investigating the agenda-setting function of the mass media in the 1968 presidential campaign, they attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important issues and the actual content of media messages used during the campaign. McCombs and Shaw (1991) concluded that the mass media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign (cited in Obot, 2013).

Additionally, McCombs and Shaw quoted by Griffin (1991) explain that the mass media have ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda to the public agenda. We judge as important what the media judge as important. Media coverage of issues confers importance on them and helps the audience to treat certain issues as also being more important than others. The conferment consequently influences the attitudes or decisions of the audience towards the subjects on the agenda. The setting of agenda by the media implies that people look up to them for cues to issues of salience.

### Conceptual Model



Source: McQuail & Windahl (1993)

In most cases, people seek the help of the media to assist them to determine 'reality' and influence norms. The media often choose and emphasize certain topics, thereby causing the public to also choose and emphasize these issues (Griffin, 1991). Also, the media help to give priorities to certain societal problems and objectives. Thus, it is argued that people who criticize newspapers and broadcasting believe in their power being the controller and director for the media agenda because they are the ones that select issues that they considered as prominent for discussion and debate and eventually making decision on these issues while ignoring other issues as non-existent (Burns, 1977 cited in Obot, 2013).

Through what Burns calls news tasting, which is a process of selecting what should count as news and what should not, the media allow the public to crave that which they already adjudged salient. McQuail and Windahl (2003) related from McCombs and Shaw (1991) where they mentioned that audiences apart from learning about how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it, they also learn about public issues and other matters through the media (cited in McQuail & Windahl, 2003).

Basically, the idea is that amongst a given range of issues or topics, those which get more media attention will grow in their familiarity and perceived importance over a period of time and those which get less will decline correspondingly. In telling the audience what opinions to hold, the media may not always be successful, but they are often quite effective in telling us what to harbour as opinions or what not to. By paying attention to such issues and neglecting others, the mass media will have an effect on public opinion. People will tend to know about these things which the mass media deal with and adopt the order of priority assigned to different issues. Corroborating this assumption, it was stated that the agenda-setting theory assumes that a direct, positive relationship exists between media coverage and the salience of a topic in the public mind. The relationship is stated in causal terms by conferring status on an issue (Cassata & Asante, 1979).

For the purpose of this study, the following theoretical frameworks are extensively reviewed in relation to the evaluation of the media coverage of the general election in Nigeria. The setting of agenda by the media implies that people look up to them for cues to issues of salience. People want the media to assist them to determine 'reality' and influence norms. The media often choose and emphasize certain topics, thereby causing the public to also choose and emphasize these issues (Griffin, 1991).

#### **Importance of the Mass Media in Politics**

Thomson (1964) related how Aristotle and Plato highlighted the immense power of propaganda carried out in the face-to-face setting during their days. Some writers believe that the media are very powerful, while others see the powers of the press as very limited. For example, politicians and journalists agreed that the role of the media is crucial, though they disagree about how effectively it is being played. Further tribute to this role is paid by the various social scientists who have made research into mass media and political communications a growth point in academic industry. Yet clear and specific descriptions, definitions and analyses of what the mass media actually contribute or ought to contribute to the political communication process are still inconclusive (Olayiwola, 1991).

In the same vein, if political messages are understood and internalized with economic policies interpreted, advertising must continue to be used in the right proportion. Jefkin (2007) argues that "mass production requires mass consumption, which in turn requires advertising to the mass market through the mass media". Apart from products, ideas and services also need to be advertised for acceptance. Such ideas could be economic or political. Hence, candidates for elections into different positions at different levels in all countries of the world, spend a fortune to sell themselves to the electorate. The case of the 2011 election in Nigeria exemplifies a situation that different political parties in the race for political power made extensive use of advertising to sell their different political parties and candidates to the electorate. The implication of the above statement is that political parties may have had their chances enhanced through advertising messages persuading the electorate to vote for their parties or failed in realizing their goal because they ignored this or did not do it the right way (Udeze & Akpan, 2013).

Harold Lasswell (1969) itemizes three functions performed by the mass media, namely, surveillance of the world to report on-going events, interpretation of the meaning of events and socialization of individuals into their cultural settings. Another attribute of the media is the deliberate manipulation of the political process. The manner in which these functions are performed; it is argued affects the lives of individuals, groups and social organizations as well as the course of domestic and international politics (Olayiwola, 1991).

However, lamenting on the affirmative comments of Agba (2007), Aghamelu (2013) explicates that the fore knowledge of Nigeria's unhealthy political culture should form the springboard for media action. Its present status as an elite media that is the preserve of the powerful and the harbingers of government does not augur well for the media, government and society. The media should go back to the concept of journalism in public interest to be able to discharge its proper role in times of election. In this regard, the very first task of the media is how to make politicians respect people's right to candid electioneering. In this regard, news should not mean alienating the audience and keeping the electorate groping in the dark.

Additionally, electioneering campaign reportage should seek-out relevant truths for the people who cannot witness or comprehend the events that affect them (Nwaozuzu, 1997). Cohen (1970) hinted that the news has gotten so intricate that mere reportage only, is not sufficient during an election, but that the journalist needs to ginger campaign news with explanatory analyses. This notion suggests that the media can do more by interpreting campaigns in the light of the electoral needs of the people by indicating the implications as well as actions to people and its role towards the realization of a vibrant political system. This simply means directing the goals of electioneering campaign to the desirable goal of responsible democratic principles that recognize the sovereignty of the people's votes. Further still, the media should aim at convincing the entire political actors to truly believe in one Nigeria and to accept unflinchingly the rules which are made to guide the conduct of electoral process. Concurring on the fact that electioneering campaign for political power in Nigeria has become part of the problem of national cohesion and integration. It has therefore become an anathema to Nigeria's socio-political success. Electioneering campaign has become an indispensable part of national development which is inherently problematic and blood-letting in nature, also rife with incessant ethnic rivalry and struggle for the usurpation of the national cake (Agba, 2007).

Indisputably, the mass media play a paramount role in directing electioneering campaigns to serve the goal of national development. Being that the mass media is a conduit for social interaction, delving to utilise the inherent power of mass information as panacea to problem of national unification and integration, which are both important for the sustenance of a healthy electioneering campaign (Agba, 2007). However, since there are as many media organisations as there are many political interests, the mass media in Nigeria needs to solve its internal problem of cohesion and integration. Unobjectionably, there are external and internal obstacles in achieving the positive role of the media in electioneering campaign. In this regard, scholars have stressed that the media need a political ideology that ensures freedom of speech and access to information. Thus it was noted that free flow of information is

necessary for the promulgation of political expediency during election. This argument hinges on the fact that without a free press, the reporter becomes a public servant, a puppet of the powerful who acts out the scripts of callous politicians. Rife with these characteristics, the media becomes less regarded as worthy representatives of the people that they expect to serve (Kalu, 1985).

Apart from the issue of critical self-examination of the role of the media at elections, the media also shares in the responsibility of channeling the electoral process towards the desirable goal of national development and integration. For instance, it was expected that the mass media most focus on matters that portend serious outcomes for the people and their civic activities (Kalu, 1985). In other words, the media must objectify issues during election campaigns, by bringing electoral candidates at close proximity with the electorate and educate them on the differences between each and every political party and their candidates to ensure an intelligent choice and voting. If this is not done, the political reporting will be jettisoned of its fervor if it does not deal adequately with such issues as national problems, policy guidelines, party programme and government performance (Kalu, 1985). The mass media should enable the electorate to analyse campaign messages of politicians.

### **Media and Political Practices in Nigeria**

In the discussion of media power by both Habermas (2006) and Castells (1994) there is an underlying assumption of a pivotal role for the mass media in politics and political participation. They also raise the question of media and power processes in the society. Downing (1995) stressed that the media are structures of power in any society. The media mediate; they do not stand independent of a given social system but instead provide channels of communication between elements within it. To varying degrees this has meant that they are instrumental to dominant institutions and interests within the society (Randall, 1998). The mass media also act as the platform through which people and interests in the society express their views (Ibraheem, Ayedun-Aluma & Adewoye, 2013).

The media are universally referred to as agents of power and political control, such that those who hold sway of political power

and authority are always conscious of the fact that information management and control is central to the capturing, retention and exercise of political power. The larger implication of this is that the ownership, control and accessibility to the media are considered to be critical to the wielding and sustenance of political power. This recognition of the role of mass media as agents of power and political control is partly responsible for the decision of the governments of developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) to either own their own media or regulate news and information flow within and into their countries (Sussman, 1989).

### **Praxis of 'Free and Fair Elections**

The connection between elections and democracy is aptly described by Herman Finer in his classical study *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*; in which it was stated that the real question is not whether the government deigns to take notice of popular criticisms and votes, but whether it can be voted out of office or forced by some machinery or procedures to change its policy, above all against its own will (cited in Ndlela, 2010). Furthermore, while there are many perspectives on democratization, there is an agreement that elections are the common denominator of what democracy is or should be. In a democracy, it is much more than a platitude that free and fair elections are a prerequisite and foundation to the building of democratic societies.

However it should be noted that elections alone are not a sufficient measure of democracy. Elections should be also regularly, periodic, participatory and competitive. The electoral processes through which political competition is channelled comprises of a set of related set of rules such as freedoms of association, expression and information, rulings pertaining to the conduct of polls, rulings governing the constitution of political parties and eligibility of candidates. The legal and political conditions under which elections are organised are an important ingredient of democratisation processes.

Elections today are judged by the conformity to standard norms that constitute free and fair elections. A free election is based on the presumption that fundamental human rights and freedoms are

respected. These would include freedom of assembly, association, expression and information. In addition, freedom would include freedom from violence, intimidation and coercion, freedom to access the polling stations by both voters and monitors and freedom to make choices without fear of repercussions. Whereas, a fair election has been described as one where the field is reasonably level and acceptable to voters, parties and candidates. That would include the existence of impartial election bodies to administer the process, a constitutional framework that support the conduct and eventual outcome of the elections, legislation that allows freedom of expression and fairness in media coverage to all contesting for office, equal opportunities for the electorate to receive fair information about all candidates vying for office, transparency in the counting and that voting takes place in a free and safe environment. Hence the principle of free and fair elections encompasses the entire electoral process, from campaigns, polling days, counting and announcements, to acceptance or rejection of outcome are crucial elements in the judging the legitimacy of the outcome (Ndlela, 2010).

### **The Nigerian Media: Guardian-of or Dagger on Democracy**

In civilized nations of the world, during elections, the media plays the role of effective management of reportage as a way of maintaining peace and stability. However, in the developing world, the role played by the media sometimes does not help matters. This was the case up to the eve of the 2015 Presidential Election, which has made scholars to question the assumption that the media should act to protect democracy. Much earlier, Mu'azu (2003) had argued thus:

In the era of politics, the assumption is that the media would serve as platform not only for the provision of information to the citizenry, but also as important instruments in the mobilization of the people and providing civic education for them to play their role in the democratic process. There is a desire to create a discerning and critical electorate. One of the goals of this political education is to provide a convivial environment for the choice of political leaders through



elections with rancor and violence, make peaceful legitimate demands on political leaders, tolerate and accommodate dissenting or opposing political opinions. The public is expected to see through the exploitation of primordial loyalties including acts of thuggery at the expense of issues in the drive to capture political power. Expectedly, the people are to resist being drawn into acts of violence and blind support for political parties and politicians. The media are therefore required to become agents and promoters of peace to the electorate so that they can make informed political choice and take control of their political destiny. There is an expectation that this would contribute to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

It was rather unfortunate that the media continued to play the role of the devil's advocate as they became alarmists and instruments of destruction in the hands of the politicians. At a time, a wealthy owner of popular media outfit was even made the head of campaign team of a party. In this way, it was expected that he put into effective and efficient use his media outfit for the party. For example, it was noted during this period that while the Imo Broadcasting Corporation was used by some politicians to systematically, ceaselessly portray Jonathan as a hater of the Igbo so that General Buhari will be seen as a better alternative, the Africa Independent Television and Nigerian Television Authority were employed to air damaging documentaries on Buhari. As systematic as the orchestrated campaigns were designed, clothed and executed in languages that could enrage the people against Jonathan and Buhari, the operators of these media outfits were smiling to the banks.

#### **Media Projection of the Results of 2015 Presidential Election**

This section of the study examines the disparity between mass media projections of the outcome of the Presidential Election and the actual result. The examination is however restricted to the print media,

mostly the online versions of some national daily newspapers. There is no doubt that the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria was one of the keenly contested elections Nigerians ever witnessed since their independence in 1960. This is attested to by not only the high level adoption of strategy and tactics for political advertisements embarked upon by the two major political parties (APC and PDP) but also the volume of interest the election generated across the nation and beyond. It will be recalled that the high level of tempo and tension the elections generated culminated into the international community getting tangentially involved via encouraging the two major parties and actors involved in the election to sign a peace pact. The tempo it generated led to some Nigerians relocating to their local government and land of birth due to perceived violence that might erupt after the election.

The elections also witnessed unprecedented mass media coverage ever in the history of elections in Nigeria. The mass media were inundated with not just political advertisements but also news analysis, news features, news stories, editorials, opinion articles, predictions among other media genre to the extent that on daily basis before the election on March 28th 2015, the mass media (print and electronic) became the mass educator that they are. This is because the mass media became not just the rallying point of garnering people's views but also the barometer with which political parties gauged their popularity.

Election is a necessity in any democratic set up. Therefore, aspirants or candidates vying for any post acquaint themselves with the people during election through various campaigns; a means through which a politician under a particular party rolls out his programme or projects which he wants to materialize for the betterment of the people.

One of the major constraints to the success of a political candidate during elections in Nigeria is that except with recent development, politicians rely more on campaigns through speeches than the mass media, resulting to less acceptability of such political candidates during elections in Nigeria. Therefore, the mass media being the tool through which candidates make known their aspiration during election becomes a source of information for the populace. In

the light of the above, the role mass media play in the acceptability of candidates during election and his or her subsequent voting into power becomes a necessary study.

### Concluding Remarks

As democracy becomes the preferred form of government in hitherto autocratic societies like Nigeria, the mass media would increasingly play indispensable role in the public sphere. As this study revealed, during elections who the people vote for and the voting pattern may be a direct consequence of mass media's role in the support it gives to the candidates during elections. However, other factors may intervene either to moderate or neutralize the influence of mass media's coverage of electioneering campaigns.

### Recommendations

In view of the critical role mass media play in democracy, the mass media workers should demonstrate greater commitment to fairness, balance and social responsibility in their support of candidates during election so as to be impartial. The mass media should also remember that as people become more politically enlightened, they become more demanding for diversity in the contents of mass media's coverage of electioneering campaigns. A nationwide study should be carried out for a richer data on the influence of mass media electioneering campaign on voting decision and the role the mass media play in supporting candidates during general elections in Nigeria.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA, POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE AND 2011 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

LUCKY IGOHOSA UGBUDIAN

### Introduction

Re-democratisation process began in Nigeria following the emergence of General Abdulsami Abubakar as the Head of State in June 1998 after the death of the maximum ruler, General Sani Abacha. By 29 May 1999, General Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as democratically elected President of the country following his electoral victory. This marks the onset of the Fourth Republic in the nation's political history. The country has experienced four general elections: 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. One of the major features that have defined the electoral process in the country in every republic is violence<sup>1</sup>

Violence as regards electoral process occurs in three periods. These are Pre- Election, Election Day and Post-Election<sup>2</sup> periods. The pre-election is the period of campaigns and selection of political party's candidates for the election as well as registration of voters coupled with setting of the legal framework guiding the electoral process. The second phase is the Election Day that covers casting and collating of votes as well as the provisions of electoral materials by the Election Management Body (EMB) agents for the electorates. This period also involved the provision of security to secure the polling booths for the protection of the EMB agents, the electoral materials and the electorates. The final and last phase is the announcement of results and declaration of winners. At the same time, covers the period of litigations arising from the declaration of winners. The foregoing phases in a democratic society usually creates unusual and healthy conflict situation that does not necessary

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