

## A Comparative Analysis: The 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Africa

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### Abstract

**The study answered four questions on propaganda and electioneering campaign in Nigeria: a case of 2015 and 2019 election in Ondo State. Results on research question 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that the 5 items they responded to are some of the various propaganda measures used by political parties in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria these measures are names calling, hate speech, fake new to discredit an opponent, slogans or glittering, bandwagon and so on. Once these measures are used in a political environment, the problems they have on electoral outcome are numerous which was the basis of research two that this study examined.**

### Keywords:

**Democracy, Electioneering Campaign, Electorate Political Parties and Propaganda.**

### Introduction

Democracy is today regarded as the best form of government in most parts of the world. It is a system in which the government is controlled by the people and is considered equal when the people exercise that control. In this system of

government, people have the right to choose leaders who will control them. According to Adelegan (2009), the dominance of people in democratic societies is determined by voting, which is reflected in the majority vote. Similarly, Odeyemi and Mosumola (2015) assume that democracy is the most recognized form of politics in the world, regardless of its history or socio-economic system. According to Abraham Lincoln, the sixth President of the United States, democracy is perceived as "government of people, by people, and for people." There was no specific privilege, as it was in the military era due to the fact that everything is coordinated by military leaders and there is no such thing as an election (Orji, 2015). Oni (2017) states that democracy is a form of government firmly rooted in the belief that people in any society should be free to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems. In similar vein, democracy is primarily used to describe a political system aimed at increasing public participation in governments where power is clearly defined and restricted. Therefore, democracy is considered perfect when guided by legitimacy; separation of powers; public participation; checks and balance; the rule of law; basic human rights and regular elections. Elections around the world have been regarded as one of the most important factors that guarantee true democracy. Elections can simply be seen as the most important and visible means by which all political leaders can be peacefully elected or dismissed from political offices to ensure freedom and justice. In any democratic society, elections are seen as one of the essential elements of the transition from one government to another. Election is considered as the means and process by which voters decide who and which group will control the country's operations based on their perceived beliefs about the agenda and program presented by the group (Oni, 2017). According to Franca (2015), elections

are understood as a struggle for legitimate power in the political arena. The effectiveness and efficiency of the actual elections required for democracy depends on a number of stakeholders who play an important and decisive role. Among these stakeholders are the institutions responsible for conducting elections depending on the country, the political parties whose main purpose is to gain political power, and who they want at the forefront. Also, the voters are equally strong stakeholders when it comes to election in a country because they decide the choice of candidates to rule for a specific period of time.

Political parties are defined or considered as a group of people who unite and organize themselves to gain and exercise political power. According to Ogunnoiki (2018), political parties primarily recruit, train, and nominate candidates with subgenus labels and perhaps acronyms into an elected public office by voters during the electioneering period. The political party is also considered as an organized group of people who educate the masses through elections, political and socio-economic issues, clarifying and bundling the interests of the people. Political parties support national democracy and also act as guardians/watchdogs of opposition to the ruling party. They are majorly involved in campaigning and making their manifestos known to electorate during election.

Election campaigns run when candidates through their respective parties (or in the case of independent non-party candidates) continuously announce voters through manifests, ideologies, welfare plans, and community development. All of these activities are needed in today's globally evolving world, and these candidates rely on the power of publicity to achieve their aims within the political environment. The publicity of political parties is done in a variety of ways, but most political parties rely on the use of mass media, and more recently government-owned media

stations or private media house to contact citizens (Egunjobi, 2014, Orji, 2015). Colouring political campaigns in Nigeria takes another dimension which is evident in the process whereby political campaigns is considered as a way for political applicants to market themselves to voters during elections. The period of election campaign is the time for election candidates to test their popularity (Orji, 2015). During this time, various gimmicks will be deployed to effectively package the campaign message in order to convince voters to win. The trend in political campaigns in Nigeria is very harsh, with defamation and character assassination campaign themes in full swing, which is unhealthy for democracy.

Election propaganda is mostly synonymous with election advertising which its main purpose is to appeal to viewers to get votes for a particular candidate. In essence, political propaganda is no different from advertising. According to Corona (2011), the word advertising is premised on informing, promoting, and disseminating something in order to stimulate demand for goods and services. Election propaganda can also be said to be primarily aimed at promoting specific candidates or recently formed political parties just as the case of APC which was a conglomeration of political parties.

## **Election**

Elections are the central body of a representative government of democracy this is because the authority of the government in democracy can only be obtained with the consent of the citizens. The main mechanism for translating this agreement into state authorities is the conduct of free and fair elections. Okolie, Enyinnu and Nnamani (2021) defines elections as "the process of selecting officers or representatives of an organization or group through voting by qualified members."

A study by Ayanleye (2013) claims that all modern democracies hold elections, but not all elections are democratic. Governments are chosen by citizens who enjoy a wide range of freedoms to criticize the government; publish criticisms and propose alternatives. According to Ujo (2002), "selection is the process of aggregating certain types of preferences, the process of choosing from choices." This definition specifically points out that in practice elections were held only through procedural forms recognized as binding within the political community. Elections can also be described as elections for candidates representing people of a particular country in parliament, government agencies, and in some cases other governmental fields, as stipulated in the Constitution of that country (Taiwo 2016).

### **Political and Election Campaigns**

Ezegwu, Enem and Ndife (2017) stated that political campaigns are a systematic effort aimed at influencing the decision-making process of specific groups or people. Titus and Abayomi (2011) found that a campaign refers to a systematic effort to coordinate all relevant activities over time to achieve a specific comprehensive goal. Orji (2015), defined a political campaign as "the mobilization of forces by an organization or individual to influence others to bring about identified and desirable political changes." Joe (2016) argued that the political campaign was a systematic effort aimed at influencing the decision-making process within a particular group. In a political or election campaign, a representative is elected or a referendum is passed. In modern politics, the hottest political campaigns focus on heads of state or government candidates, usually presidents or prime ministers. Ginsberg (2009) cited in Owolabi, Ajijola and Wonuola (2017), sees political campaigns as a systematic effort by political party or public office candidates to win election support. They believed that political

campaign includes five basic elements which includes professional public relations, polling, broadcast media, direct mail and internet.

### **Propaganda**

Propaganda is an expression of an opinion or action that is intentionally performed by an individual or group in order to influence the opinion or action of another individual or group through psychological manipulation for a given purpose (Aduradola and Ojukwu, 2013). They further confirmed that this is usually repeated and broadcast in a wide range of media to help stimulate and raise voters' awareness and ultimately slander their enemies. McQuail (2010) conceptualized propaganda as "manipulation of symbols to control controversial attitudes." Scholars have characterized the political nature of the Nigerian political class in the form of party programs and agendas. Historically, what literally adorned our newspaper pages during the campaign and filled the airtime of radio and online media, especially social media, was deliberately forged falsehoods, explicit lies, and perceived. Aduradola and Ojukwu (2013) opined that this often applies to political and religious propaganda. They argued that, basically, in any society, it was the intention of the political class to manipulate people's minds and thoughts, which was symbolically expressed through printed matter and broadcast media. Especially during political movements and when they finally take office. "Human as a political animal engages in politics as a social and noble activity to express his political agenda positively or negatively," they said. World politics propaganda means is one of the true means of politics as old as the game itself.

### Types of propaganda

Taking into account the work of Baran and Davis (2012), they identified three major types of propaganda commonly used which include the white propaganda



which is the intentional suppression of potentially harmful information and ideas, combined with deliberate promotion of positive information or ideas to distract attention from problematic events. The second one is the black propaganda which is considered to be deliberate and strategic transmission of lies and the third which is gray propaganda which deals with the transmission of information or ideas that might or might not be false without making any effort to determine their validity. They argued that the secret of propaganda is to simplify a complex issue and repeat that simplification over and over again.

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

A descriptive research method was used in this study. The questionnaire was used to collect responses from selected respondents in Ondo. The questionnaire was created on the Likert scale format.

### **Research participants**

According to the 2006 census, the population surveyed included all residents of Ondo, which was three million, four hundred and sixty thousand, eight hundred and seventy-seven citizens. (3,460,877) (National Population Commission, 2006). Samples were taken from the population for manageability and empirical information.

### **Sampling procedure**

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The method used to select the respondents for the research study was a convenience sampling method due to its large size. Therefore, research participants are drawn based on their closeness to the researcher.

### **Sample Size**

The sample size used in the survey was 150, conveniently selected from the three senatorial district within the state.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The study made use of structured questionnaire in line with the study work which was distributed to respondents within the area. Also the use of face to face technique to distribute the questionnaires for easy retrieval after completion was adopted by the researcher.

### **Analysis Mode**

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, and the decision rule of acceptance level is anything from 1.50 and above, while the rejection level is anything below 1.50.

## **RESULTS**

### 7.1 Research Question 1: What different propaganda

methods were used by political parties in the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria's general elections?



Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the different propaganda methods used by political parties in the 2015 and 2019 Nigeria’s general elections

S/	What different propaganda methods were used by political parties in	N	X	SD	Decisi
1	Political parties resulted into	150	2.3	1.721	Agree
2	Hate speech is a major instrument	150	1.9	1.313	Agree
3	There was the use of fake new to discredit an opponent in the	150	2.1	1.450	Agree

2015 and 2019

general election in Nigeria.					
4	The use of	150	2.03	1.383	Agree
slogans or					
<u>glittering</u>					
5	Most of the	150	2.44	1.468	Agree
political parties					
<u>made use of</u>					
Cumulative		2.2			

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 1 shows that all the sampled respondents agreed that the listed various propaganda measures were used by political parties in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria, since the mean values obtained were above 1.50 which is the acceptance level. This table also shows that the cumulative average mean of academic staff responses is 2.2.

7.2 Research Question 2: What is the issues/problems of political propaganda regarding Nigeria’s election results?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the issues/problems of political propaganda regarding Nigeria’s election results

S/N What is the issues/problems of political propaganda regarding Nigeria’s election results in Ondo State?

- 1    Electorate are 150    3.14    1.331    Agree  
     manipulated on  
  
     how they think, speak and act in the general  
     election in Nigeria.
  
- 2    Empty            150    1.67    0.909    Agree  
     words/Vague  
  
     terms occupied the conducts of the 2015 and  
     2019 general election in Nigeria.
  
- 3    Social media    150    3.21    1.292    Agree  
     was influenced  
  
     to    carry  
  
     discredited information leading to fake new in  
     the 2015 and 2019 general election in Nigeria
  
- 4    Propagandist    150    3.37    1.245    Agree  
     discredit  
  
     government of the day to achieve their goals
  
- 5    Propagandist    150    1.65    1.256    Agree  
     portray the

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enemy as purely evil, murderous and aggressive

in order to achieve their aims

Cumulative            2.6

Average

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 indicates that problem of political propaganda on electoral outcome are numerous since the respondents agreed that the above listed problem have a large impact on electoral outcome, hence if this problem keep existing, election cannot be free and fair. This table also indicated that the cumulative total mean average of the problems of political propaganda on electoral outcome is 2.6.

Research Question 3: What efforts has the government made to curb the overuse of propaganda by Nigeria's political parties?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the efforts government has made to curb the overuse of propaganda by Nigeria’s political parties

S/ What efforts has the government made to curb the overuse of propaganda by				
	N	X	SD	Decis
1 Social media bill is enacted to reduce the excessive use	150	2.15	1.47	Agree
2 Formulation of hate speech	150	2.39	1.45	Agree
3 Fostering among ethnic and religious groups within the country	150	2.73	1.78	Agree
4 Information stations and media houses	150	2.72	1.564	Agree
Cumulative		2.5		

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 indicates that so many efforts are put in place by government to curb the excessive use of propaganda by political parties in Nigeria since it was agreed upon by respondents. This table also indicated that the cumulative total mean average of the efforts to curb the excessive use of propaganda by political parties is 2.5.

Research Question 4: How can we improve the propaganda usage in our electioneering campaign for future elections in Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on how the use of propaganda in electioneering campaign can be improved upon in Nigeria's future election.



		N	X	SD	Decisi
1	Politicians should see	150	1.88	1.356	Agree
2	Political campaign geared of the	150	1.94	1.307	Agree
3	Social media usage should be regulated	150	2.37	1.430	Agree
4	Laws should be enacted to	150	2.46	1.500	Agree
5	Every electorates should be	150	2.26	1.363	Agree
Cumulative		2.2			

Table 4  
 for propaganda  
 upon in  
 campaign in

indicates that  
 to be improved  
 electioneering  
 Nigeria in

future elections, the agreed strategies should be implemented and many more within the country this will enable all stakeholders to be actively carried along in the process of election. This table also indicates that the cumulative total mean average of how the use of propaganda in electioneering campaign can be improved upon in Nigeria is 2.2.

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**Discussion**

The study answered four questions on propaganda and electioneering campaign in Nigeria: a case of 2015 and 2019 election in Ondo State. Results on research question 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that the 5 items they responded to are some of the various propaganda measures used by political parties in the 2015 and 2019 general elections in Nigeria these measures are names calling, hate speech, fake new to discredit an opponent, slogans or glittering, bandwagon and so on. Once these measures are used in a political environment, the problems they have on electoral outcome are numerous which was the basis of research two that this study examined. Based on the outcome of the research it was discovered that the electorate are likely to be manipulated on how they think, speak and act which is a major problem propaganda tends to bring to the system. Similarly, it was also observed from the result that due to the use of propaganda in the election under study, empty words occupied the conduct of the election from different political parties just to ensure that they gain the maximum support from the electorates most especially in the 2015 election in Nigeria. Moreover, the use of propaganda was greatly utilized by social media usage even though it was observed that the information moving up and down was to discredit a particular party or opponent there making the information to become fake even though the motive is to ensure that they gain the most perception of people. The result of table three reveals that despite the positive aspect of propaganda, there is still an iota of negativity that is why efforts are put in place to curb the excessive use of propaganda by political parties. Some of the efforts as agreed to by the respondents are the establishment of social

media bill which is to control the way citizens abuse the of media also the formulation of hate speech law against political parties but the major efforts is the fostering of unity among ethnic and religious groups within the country and also the independent of media houses to control the use of fabricated words to suit a particular political party. The research question four examined the numerous ways to which propaganda can be used in electioneering campaign in order to improve future election in which the respondents agreed that politicians should see themselves as one and that political campaign should be geared towards the betterment of the citizens. They also agreed that the use of social media should be regulated to curb the excessive use by the political parties for their selfish interest by enacting laws that will prohibit the use of hate speech before, during and after elections.

This finding lends credence to the findings of Dunu (2018) which identified eight various propaganda techniques that was deployed in the conduct of the election. In most of this propaganda, many have resulted into the use of social media or mass media to generate and to make their voices known to the general populace. Similarly, Agbaje (2015) in his work on the untold story of social media and the 2015 Nigerian election he perceived that social media has become an avenue and a powerful tool used by political parties to make them achieve their mains and goals. And Ogaraku (2015), in his own view, perceived that the campaign propaganda of the then opposition party (APC) before the 2015 general election was not designed for the Nigerian electorate to compulsorily accept the dispenser of the propaganda (the APC), but to deepen their hatred against the then ruling party (PDP) who they believed to have controlled the machinery of governance for sixteen (16) years

without considerable positive impact. According to Onafunwa (2017), many people believed that propaganda has both negative and positive effects on the citizens. Those who believed in the positive opined that every action the government takes, is subject to scrutiny by all and sundry, therefore there must be transparency. It has helped, to further put the new administration in check. “It has created an awareness that nothing will remain hidden from the public for too long.

### **Conclusion**

This study has been an attempt to bring to the limelight the historical role of campaign propaganda in influencing the electoral choices of voters in the 2015 and 2019 presidential election in Nigeria with particular reference to Ondo State. It argued that voters in Nigeria do not necessarily make independent electoral choices rather they rely on the decisions of ethno-religious leaders who equally double as the representatives of various political parties to make political decisions. Presidential election in Nigeria is usually a heated contest between various ethnic nationalities struggling to acquire state power to advance sectional interest. Access to state power enables the occupant to share political positions and juicy contracts to people of same religion and ethnicity. It also allows political leaders to concentrate key development projects in those regions that overwhelmingly voted for them. As such, hate speeches, ethno-religious campaign messages and questionable campaign promises are used to elicit the support of voters who are incapable of thinking outside the realm of ethnicity and religion. These realities are largely seen as the proximate determinant of voting behaviour in Nigeria, no doubt, played out, and ultimately determined the outcome of the 2015 and 2019 presidential election in Nigeria. It can be concluded that the extent to which

propaganda plays significant roles in the election goes beyond the comprehension of citizen within then country and if proper measures are not taken to curb the issue it will keep agitating and tends to destroy the political development of the country at large.

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