

**Ethnicity and the Voting Pattern in Nigeria's 2015 General Elections: The  
Case of Lagos State.**

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# **Ethnicity and the Voting Pattern in Nigeria's 2015 General Elections: The Case of Lagos State.**

## **Abstract**

The 2015 general elections in Nigeria had come and gone but the indelible features it left in our memories will linger for some time to come. Apart from the fact that the election resulted in the defeat of a ruling government, it also exposed the unflinching role of ethnicity in the voting pattern of the people. Although, one may argue that ethnicity has always been a factor in Nigeria's politics, the 2015 general elections was different in some forms. In Lagos State, a cosmopolitan city and commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, is known as the constituency of the Yorubas, even though it houses people from other tribes in the country in their numbers. Since 1999, elections at the state and Local Government levels in the state have been dominated absolutely by one party. From Alliance for Democracy (AD) to Action Congress (AC) to Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) to All Progressives Congress (APC), the party has continued to dominate the politics of the state. However, the 2015 general elections saw a departure from the old past in which case, the party lost some of its stronghold to the opposition in Lagos State with people from other tribes, apart from Yoruba, infiltrating the rank and file of the APC in the state. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand what causes the infiltration in the rank and file of the ruling party in Lagos State. What is the implication of this for the party and democracy in Nigeria? What does this portend for the future of elections in Lagos State and Nigeria in general? Should this be encouraged or discouraged? These and other questions are what this paper intend to find answers to.

Key words: Ethnicity, Voting Pattern, General Elections, Lagos State.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria as a nation is an aggregation of several nationalities. In real terms, it is a pluralistic and multi-faceted society, both in terms of religion, culture and composition. It has about 450 different ethnic groupings. According to 2006 officially certified census by Nigeria Population Commission, it has a population of 140 million with a growth rate of 6.3% per annum. This makes it the most populous country in Africa and the largest concentration of black race in the world. An estimated 37.7% of the populations are urban dwellers while 62.3% are rural based. The life expectancy rate is 52 years, literacy rate is 45% and the fertility rate is 5.7% while infant and maternal mortality remain high. According to African Development Report of 2009, Nigeria “had a robust GDP growth rate of 6.3%, particularly in the non-oil sector”<sup>1</sup>. This fact is also validated by the CIA world fact book which confirms the GDP growth rate at 6.2% in 2008 .Yet “54% of the people in Nigeria live in poverty”<sup>2</sup>. These indicators place it in the list of developing

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<sup>1</sup> Uduma, DO. 2009. “Ethnic Identity Politics: The Case of Nigeria” M.Sc Thesis at the Aalborg University, Denmark.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

economies. Despite the fact that Nigeria is composed of over 450 ethnic groupings, the three dominating ethnic groups are Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba with the Hausa dominating the northern part of the country; the Ibo in the eastern part and the Yoruba in the western part of the country. The 1996 state creation and reorganization of the state structure in Nigeria saw these ethnic groupings being reorganized into six geo-political zones with the Hausa-Fulani comprising the north east, north west and north central; the Ibo concentrated in the south east and south south while the Yorubas taking the south west. The 1996 re-organisation was the last effort by the Abacha regime in ensuring relative distribution of power and resources within the country. However, agitation for state creation has not ceased.

The resultant effect of this ineffectual reorganization has continued to have tumultuous effect on the politics of the land. Every ethnic group has continued to vie for political office in order to enrich both individual and group interest. Political party formation is not left out in this ethnic chauvinism and configuration, hence party campaign also follow ethnic sentiments. Therefore, the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was no exception in terms of ethnic colouration.

Since 1999, governorship and house of assembly elections in Lagos State have always been known to follow a particular pattern in favour of the ruling party, the Action Congress of Nigeria, (now the All Progressives Congress) as a result of the merger between CPC, ACN, ANPP and a faction of the APGA. There has never been a time when the party allows for opposition intrusion in the composition of the membership of the house of assembly unlike what obtains in some other states which are stronghold of the ruling party as the case may be. In Lagos state, the 2015 governorship election was acknowledged tough and daisy by politicians and residents of the state. From the period of the campaigns and rallies for 2015 governorship and house of assembly elections in the state, it was obvious that the ruling party was not going to have it easy as before. As observed by Jideofor Adibe<sup>3</sup>,

a very interesting state at the Governorship election was Lagos state. The State demonstrated the tension between citizenship rights and indignity (or expectations of the 'indigenes' of a cosmopolitan state). While by law Nigerian citizens are free to

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<sup>3</sup> Adibe, Jideofor. 2015. Reflections of the 2015 elections. <http://www.gamji.com/adibe/adibe38.htm>

live, own property and vote or be voted for in any part of the country, the indigenes of a particular cosmopolitan area will often see citizenship rights as intruding on their ancestral rights or their ‘ownership’ of the state”.

While the observation of Adibe was in a way correct, it is important to note that the issue of ownership of Lagos has been in contention from time immemorial. For instance while the Constitution of the country protects Nigerians through their citizenship rights, the ‘indigenes’ of a state are likely to have a dim view of changes in the demographics of their state (or town) that dilutes their ‘ownership’ of the town. This is the tension between citizenship rights and indignity, which is likely to be an issue in many urban areas in the future – given the rate of urbanization and changing demographics in several major towns across the country.

Given the above, several issues accounted for the outcome of the governorship and house of assembly elections in Lagos State in which the opposition did not only win 20 percent of the total number of seats in the house of assembly, but also came very close in the governorship election results. It is interesting to note that the general elections at the national level also saw the People’s Democratic Party winning some constituencies in Lagos State in the House of Representatives elections. Very interesting in this is the declaration of an Igbo man from the People’s Democratic Party as the winner of the election in one of the constituencies in Lagos State. This has been attributed to the concentration of Igbo people in the constituency, a clear indication of ethnic cleavages.

## **Methodology**

This paper exploits the qualitative research method in its analysis. The paper attempts an empirical analysis of the outcome of the 2015 governorship and house of assembly elections in Lagos State. In doing so, the paper examines the ethnic colouration in the voting pattern of the people of Lagos State during the 2015 general elections thereby understanding the factors responsible for the loss of eight seats out of forty seats in the house of assembly to the People’s Democratic Party and Accord Party. The paper considers very important the opinions of party members of the All Progressives Congress and People’s Democratic Party in order to achieve its objectives. Also, the paper takes into consideration account of certain stakeholders who did not

only participate in the elections but took keen interest in how the people voted during the 2015 general elections in Lagos State, including the participatory observational activities of the author. As a result of this, the paper considers the use of convenience sampling method to arrive at the selected respondents for the paper.

### **Study Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following questions are germane to the overall outcome of the findings:

1. To what extent did ethnicity permeates the voting pattern of the people of Lagos State in the 2015 governorship and house of assembly elections?
2. What is responsible for the loss of eight seats by the APC to the PDP and Accord Party out of the forty seats in the house of assembly?
3. How did the events of the pre-election period affect the outcome of the governorship and house of assembly elections in Lagos State?

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Ethnicity constitutes the foundations of the African society, for it shapes communities, cultures, economies and the political structures of the peoples. More importantly, it shapes the perceptions of the African, defines his universe, and provides him with meaning, understanding and the power to interpret the world around him. It is therefore an integral part of every African, despite the deepening influences of westernization and increasing cultural adulteration, since colonial times.

Ethnicity is important to Africans in many ways. First, it provides security both to the group, as a whole, as well as to the individuals constituting the group. The sense of belonging to an ethnic group means the members are safe together as one people, and ready to defend themselves against any external attacks on their existence and sovereignty. This notion of security also provides the groups with a sense of direction in their lives.

Second, ethnicity provides each group with a common ancestry and history, which is an important aspect of the African peoples: they desire to know who or what gave birth to their

ancestors and where they are destined, following their departure from this earth. This knowledge of a common ancestry creates a strong bond within members of the group, for they realize that without the ability to support each other the entire group is doomed to die off or conquered by other groups around them. They are therefore ready to support their representatives in government at any cost- including a civil war.

Third, ethnicity also identifies each group by providing its members with a common language. Language defines a people giving them the power to think and reason logically based on their created world. Through language communication is possible among members, making it easier to share ideas and make any necessary changes required to benefit the people. It is through the distinct ethnic language that the knowledge, skills, values, taboos and other cultural beliefs and customs are passed onto the succeeding generations, in attempts to keep the group from dying off. Language also assists the groups in keeping their secrets from each other, for it is through language that they derive their power to rule and to exist.

Finally, ethnicity serves as an organizing force, which assists in bringing the people together to fight or seek a common goal (Nnoli, 1998). This creates a sense of communalism, family, and togetherness, which also deepens the sense of belonging.

Thus an entire community could belong to one major ethnic group, providing them with the opportunity to do things together as one family. In short, without ethnicity life is meaningless to the African. It is important to note that members of the same ethnic group not only have a lot in common and share things that are unique to them, but they also live together in a specific region of the country involved. Thus it is common to find that the Ashantis of Ghana, the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Kpelle of Liberia are congregated in a specific region of those countries. They claim to own that region hence fight to keep “intruders” from taking over their land. Thus ethnicity has created the notion of regionalism, which is also counter to nation building in the modern world. Regional boundaries also dictate ethnic cultural practices, shape their belief systems and customs, and their perceptions of the world around them.

Apart from the above, it is important to stress that ethnicity affects the voting pattern of a group. As earlier pointed out, ethnicity is an important factor of mobilisation during elections. The building of strong affiliation to a group help in this direction. Therefore, it is important to understand the approaches to voting pattern of people and situate the role of ethnicity could play in this.

One most striking issue about the voting behaviour literature is that it groups neatly according to three paradigms — the sociological approach, party identification models and rational choice theory. Although there have been some attempts to integrate party identification within a rational choice framework (see, for example, Fiorina, 1981; Achen, 1992; Gerber and Green, 1998), for the most part researchers have tried to explain voting behaviour using only one of the approaches and have decidedly ignored the others. In fact, these approaches are almost universally treated as incompatible. We suggest that all of the approaches have merit and limitations, and that they should be seen as complementary rather than as opposing. We argue that each approach is applicable under different conditions of political context (e.g., different party competition structures and strengths of social cleavages). The best way to understand general patterns of voting is to integrate these approaches, and apply them in comparative analysis, paying careful attention to varying political contexts.

The sociological approach to voting behaviour emphasizes the impact of social structure, suggesting that social group memberships influence voting choices (see for example, Lazarsfeld et al., 1944; Alford 1967, Rose and Urwin 1969, 1970, Lijphart 1979, 1980).

Voters are considered to be instrumental — i.e., they vote for parties that best reflect the interests of their groups.

The origins of this approach can be traced to the Columbia school which carried out the first systematic surveys of the American electorate (see Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). These early studies stated the conditions for persistent group voting as the following:

In sum, the conditions underlying persistent voting cleavages seem to be (1) initial social differentiation such that the consequences of political policy are materially or symbolically different for different groups; (2) conditions of transmissibility from generation to generation; and (3) conditions of physical and social proximity for continued in-group contact in succeeding generations (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee 1954:75).

Another influential work fitting under the sociological paradigm is that of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) who argued that not only do group identities influence voting behaviour, but that cleavage structures determine the number of political parties in a given polity. In other words, political parties evolve in response to the interests of social cleavages. The sociological approach, then, holds that group identities affect attitudes and interests. These attitudes in turn affect how people

vote. By implication in any given society the effects of group membership should be the same on attitudes as they are on vote. It is difficult to deny the existence of social cleavages and their potential effects on attitudes and voting. However, this approach is unable to explain why cleavages such as social class have stronger relationships to attitudes and vote in some countries than others (see an edited volume by Evans, 1999).

Unlike the sociological model, the party identification model assumes voters to be expressive rather than instrumental, and attitudes and issue preferences are considered to be endogenous to vote. This approach holds that voters have long-standing psychological ties to specific political parties, and seldom waver from voting for them (Belknap and Campbell 1952, Campbell et al., 1960, Converse 1964). These party attachments are largely due to early socialization, reflecting mostly family influences. Simply put, people are influenced by the partisanship of their parents. The party identification model can be seen as similar to the sociological approach in that partisans “come to see themselves as members of social groups (e.g., Democrats, Republicans), in much the same way that certain people incorporate religious, regional, or ethnic groups into their self-conceptions” (Gerber and Green, 1998:794). On the other hand, unlike the sociological model, it holds that causation runs in both directions between attitudes and vote. As Campbell et al. (1960:128) state, “In the competition of voices reaching the individual the political party is an opinion-forming agency of great importance. The strength of relationship between party identification and the dimensions of partisan attitude suggests that responses to each element of national politics are deeply affected by the individual’s enduring party attachments.” This implies that the relationship between group membership and attitudes should be similar to that between group membership and vote. We could expect, however, that different political contexts would induce different relationships between groups and attitudes than expected by the sociological approach.

The party identification approach has been quite successful when applied to the two-party system of the US for which it was developed and where recent research has reaffirmed that partisanship is highly stable over time for the adult population (Green and Palmquist, 1990, 1994). It has been less successful elsewhere, in particular in Britain, where voters are less likely to make distinctions between their vote choice and partisan dispositions (Butler and Stokes, 1974).

Although instrumental like the sociological model, the rational choice approach is much more individualistic, suggesting that voting decisions are based on cost-benefit analyses where voters

match their individual issue preferences with party platforms. As Olson (1965:51) states, “only a separate and ‘selective’ incentive will stimulate a rational individual in a latent group to act in a group-oriented way.” According to Downs (1958:39), if the voter “is rational, he knows that no party will be able to do everything that it says it will do. Hence he cannot merely compare platforms; instead he must estimate in his own mind what the parties would actually do were they in power.”

According to the rational choice approach, then, policy preferences are exogenous, but vote choices depend on the interplay between voters’ preferences and parties’ policy positions. Despite its individualist emphasis, the rational choice approach is not necessarily incompatible with either the sociological and party identification approaches. Although not explicit, rational choice theory allows for the possibility that social identities play a role in voting decisions since individual preferences can be determined by one’s position in society. Moreover, not all rational choice theorists discount party attachments. Rather than see them as influencing attitudes, however, these attachments are considered to represent ongoing tallies of assessments of party performances (see Fiorina, 1981).

Although social groups may affect attitudes, this does not mean that voting decisions are made solely on the basis of these group-determined attitudes. Accordingly, the rational choice model implies that the relationship between preferences and vote will vary across different political contexts: if voters are given different political options from which to choose, then the relationship between attitudes and vote may also vary.

### **Politics in Lagos State: An Overview**

Lagos has grown to become a political barometer of Nigeria and its economic life line; a status which like its cosmopolitan nature is decidedly historical rather than accidental (Lawal, 1995). It is an acknowledged fact about Nigeria that Lagos played a prominent role in the development of Nigeria and the eventual attainment of independence in 1960. Apart from serving as the melting pots for all ethnic nationalities in pre-colonial and postcolonial Nigeria, the birth of what we now refer to as the Nigeria today was laid in the city of Lagos in 1914, when the Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated with the Lagos Colony. This decision was made possible following the formal introduction of colonial rule into Nigerian territories in 1900 and

particularly the cession of Lagos to the Queen's empire in London in 1861 (Oyefara, 2013). Politically, Lagos stood out the annals of Nigeria's independence. The role of Lagos in the unification of African people against colonial and postcolonial imperialism has remained an indelible memory for many African people up-till today but the gains of political independence have not in any way favoured Lagos State. Lagos also served as the patrimony of political struggles and resistance in Nigeria in the form of social movement struggles, decolonization and nationalism (Momoh, 2011). The urban character and commercial role of Lagos further positioned it to play a pivotal role in the evolution of an emergent African elite that constituted the core of the development of capitalism and statecraft in Nigeria (Ibid.). Politics of post-independence, which was supposed to engender equity, fairness and equality in the sharing of national incomes, was marred by military rule, corruption, mis-management of public offices, foreign policy misdirection, economic quagmire, inflation, debt overhang, decayed infrastructures and violence. Because of the virtual collapse of democratic institutions, fundamental state policies were negligent of the sporadic growth of major cities in the country, including the city of Lagos (Oyefara, 2013).

Despite all these, Lagos has continued to thrive on its own based on its internal logic and characteristics. The development envisioned in Lagos attracted migration from many parts of Nigeria and West Africa, which increased the size and cultural heterogeneity of the city, a process that continues. Although, the official inauguration of Lagos as a component part of Nigeria started with the creation of Lagos State in 1976, it has nevertheless been in existence before the official pronouncement of the country, Nigeria.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, Lagos was the federal capital, which made the city the gateway to political and economic opportunity within the nation of Nigeria – especially after the 1970s development of the oil industry. Political and social pressures then relocated the seat of national government inland to the created federal capital territory of Abuja in 1991, but Lagos continues as the region's main port and Nigeria's commercial, financial and industrial capital.

Lagos also served as the hub of anti-military struggles, and in particular in the struggle for the de-annulment of the results of the June 12, 1993, Presidential elections, which was adjudged even by its very Chief Umpire, Humphrey Nwosu, as 'free and fair ... quite credible and valid'

(Momoh, 2011). It is not out of place to stress that the acclaimed winner of the election, Late Bashorun MKO Abiola, considered the importance of Lagos as a cosmopolitan city in Nigeria therefore chose the city to unilaterally declare himself the winner of the election.

Since the return of the country to civilian rule in May 1999, Lagos has continued to be in the opposition; from the Alliance for Democracy (AD) to Action Congress (AC), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and now All Progressives Congress (APC) as opposed to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) at the federal level. Despite the continuous change in nomenclature, the ruling party in Lagos State has continued to be influenced, dominated and controlled by an individual, Bola Ahmed Tinubu. It is important to stress that AD, which eventually became ACN and the ruling party in the state has always been a regional party dominating the South-west states of Nigeria, having lost at the national level during the 2003 and 2007 general elections, even with its merger with ANPP. The party's structure and machineries at both the state and local government levels continued to be controlled by Tinubu which has continued to generate serious controversy at all levels of the party.

Bola Tinubu became the flagbearer of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) during the 1999 governorship election in Lagos State. His election was perceived as a compensation for his sacrifices and struggle against the Sani Abacha junta in the campaign to de-annul the results of the June 12 Presidential election (Momoh, 2011). His ascension to power in Lagos State provided him the opportunity to enrich himself and cornered the entire party structures throughout his eight years tenure as governor of the state. Not only this, he was able to factionalise the party structure and this led to the breakaway of his group from the AD to become the Action Congress and later Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

Between 1999 and 2007, the Action Congress dominated the house of assembly and the national assembly representatives at the national level in the state. Also, the local government elections were visibly won by the ACN with Bola Tinubu dictating who gets what, when and how. At the end of his 2 term tenure as governor of the state, he anointed Babatunde Raji Fashola as the party flagbearer for the position of governor. At this material time, nine members of his cabinet wanted to vie for the Governorship of the State. They include Muiz Banire, Tola Kasali, Remi Adiukwu Bakare, Kunle Lawal, Lanre Balogun, Ganiyu Olanrewaju Solomon and Femi Pedro (Momoh, 2011). While Tinubu supported the ambition of these former political aides, he,

however, did not show his reservation until towards the closing of the nomination form by INEC that he announced Babatunde Raji Fashola as the anointed candidate of the party. This led to animosity within the party and eventual defection of ACN members to other political parties, including Senator Tokunboh Afikuyomi, Jimi Agbaje and Remi Adiukwu-Bakare. Funso Williams who had declared his intention to run for the election under the platform of the PDP was gruesomely murdered. This led to the emergence of his wife into the race, on account of the loyalty, followership and sympathy her husband commanded (Momoh, 2011).

The 2007 general elections in Nigeria was described as the worst election in the annals of Nigeria due to the irregularity, impropriety and utter disregard for rules and regulation of the games by both the election management body and the participants. The elections, in the view of Nigerians and the many international observers alike, were the most poorly organized and massively rigged in the country's history. In a bitterly contentious environment, outgoing President Olusegun Obasanjo and his People's Democratic Party (PDP) acted with unbridled desperation to ensure sweeping, winner-take-all victories, not only in the presidency and federal legislature but also in state governorships and assemblies. Characterized as a "do or die" battle by Obasanjo, the campaigns and elections also witnessed extensive violence, including over 200 people killed (International Crisis Group, 2007).

Not minding the anomalies that characterized the 2007 elections, Bola Tinubu had his way while his critics had their say. With Babatunde Raji Fashola as the Governor of the state, Bola Tinubu continued in Momoh (2011) described or termed as Primitive Accumulation of Power (PAP) which was necessitated by Primitive Accumulation of Votes (PAV) engineered by Direct Capturing (DC). Ibeanu (cited in Momoh 2011) defined Direct Capturing as using the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), State intelligence agencies and apparatuses to undermine the electoral process. According to Momoh (2011), "the use of PAV through the mechanism of DC had meant that there is Primitive Accumulation of Power (PAP). PAP in turn results in Primitive Accumulation of Capital (PAC)". He therefore put the summation as  $PAV+PAP=PAC$ .

Raji Fashola's eight years in power as Governor of Lagos State was an elongation of Tinubu's tenure as the latter held the state by the jugular acting as revenue consultant for the state using one of his established organizations, Alpha Beta Consulting. Apart from this, most important

political appointments in the state, including the appointment of Commissioners, were done based on the recommendation of Bola Tinubu. This is not without the appointment of Councillors at the Ward levels. It is important to note that nominations during the party primaries were unilaterally done by Bola Tinubu while using the Ward Leaders as camouflage.

### **Prelude to the 2015 General Elections in Lagos State**

Prior to the release of the election time table for the 2015 general elections by INEC, different permutations and connotations about who becomes the successor to Babatunde Raji Fashola started as early as the 2011 general elections were concluded. While this may be said of other states in the country, the case of Lagos State was particularly interesting. This is because, the state has the vastest economic potentials and the strongest visibility in national politics. Lagos is the only state in Nigeria, where Lagosians alone cannot determine who becomes the governor. Everybody in Nigeria has a stake in Lagos. Invariably, the Governor of Lagos State is like the president of a mini-Nigeria.

Except one wants to be sentimental, religion or indigenes ship are not basic requirements of a leader. Only in the church, mosque or shrine can a leader be chosen on the basis of religiosity. In the recent time, agitation of who succeeds Fashola started before the blowing of the whistle. The agitation was not particularly to clamour for a competent hand, but rather, it was more of “where was he born?” “What is his/her religion?” and the rest. For some time now, religious leaders, especially of the Christian faith have been drumming it on political leaders the need to have “their own” at the saddle of affairs in Lagos State.

Beyond the clamour for Christian candidate, the issue of indigene was another one that some people harped upon. To this set of people, the preferred candidate should be a Lagosian. But the pertinent question that most political watchers were asking on the issue of indigene is who are actually Lagosians? In the collective estimation of this group of people, “it is high time we put away sentiment and do what is right”. For the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos, residents were unmindful of where one comes from as long as their needs are being met. However, indigenes were clamouring for one of them to become the governor. Nevertheless, most people were looking up to the Jaganban of Borgu (Bola Tinubu) to declare the anointed candidate.

On the part of the opposition, the PDP had one big dream in the 2015 general election and that was to take over the reins of power in Lagos State. The state had always eluded the party since 1999. It is needless to say that four times the party had contested for the governorship seat, four times, it had lost. In fact, in the 2011 general election, the party had a very disappointing outing in the state. Apart from polling a paltry 300,450 votes against 1, 507,113 garnered by the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in the governorship poll, the PDP lost out in all the 40 seats in the Lagos House of Assembly, 20 federal constituencies and the three senatorial seats (The Sun Newspaper, October 27, 2014).

Surprisingly, few months after the party recorded a dismal performance in the 2011 general election, the PDP made a strong showing in the October 21 local government election in the state. Apart from winning some councillorship seats, the party claimed to have won the chairmanship seats in about five local government areas, including Ikoyi/ Obalende Local Government Development Area (LCDA), the council area of APC national leader, Senator Bola Tinubu. However, the Lagos State Independent Electoral Commission (LASIEC) declared candidates of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), victorious in all the 57 council areas (Ibid).

The PDP chairmanship candidate in Ikoyi/Obalade, Mr Jide Obanikoro, was later declared winner of the election in the council by the Election Petition Tribunal, before the High Court overturned the tribunal's verdict (Ibid).

Consequently, few months to the 2015 general elections, PDP thought 2015 was its year in Lagos. Three factors were responsible for this optimism. First was the perceived disaffection between the ruling APC in the state and a large number of the populace, on account of alleged anti-people policies and the neglect of several parts of the state, especially in the suburbs. Second, there was discontentment among parties member over the lack of internal democracy within the party, particularly in terms of who represents what constituency.

Third, the recent trouncing of the APC in Ekiti State by the PDP, gave the Lagos chapter of the party the belief that the state is ripe for plucking if only it worked hard enough. Therefore, the PDP capitalized on some policies, considered anti- masses to market itself to the populace. Two

of the policies the party used to woo the electorate was the hike in school fees at the state owned Lagos State University (LASU), and the restriction on commercial motorcycle riders in the state. It could be recalled that shortly after the 2011 general election, the state government restricted the operations of commercial motor cyclists in the state from some roads in the state. Incidentally, prior to the election, the government provided helmets to most of the motorcyclists popularly called okada. Similarly, the government announced an astronomical increase in the school fees of students of the state owned Lagos State University (LASU) (Ibid).

The APC leadership in the state did not find this funny. The APC realised that there was threat to its continuous reign in Lagos. Consequently, the government, did all within its power to warm its ways back into the heart of Lagosians through policy reversal. The state government reversed itself on the increase of LASU school fees from over N250, 000 to its original N25,000. Apart from this, the State government became quite insensitive to the activities of the Okada riders turning its face the other way to most of the excesses of the Okada riders in the state.

Apart from the above, another important issue that played out in the prelude to the 2015 gubernatorial elections in Lagos State was the party primaries in both the APC and the PDP. It should be noted that the two political parties were alleged to have foisted anointed candidates on the people. In the PDP, most of the aspirants were not comfortable with the eventual foistering of Agbaje on the party as its governorship candidate. The former DPA governorship candidate in the 2007 election had the backing of some powerful forces in the party and therefore got the PDP ticket. One major contender in the primaries, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro became furious at the outcome of the primaries of the party and decided to go to court. However, this was settled in-house and he conceded to Agbaje.

Similarly, in the APC, aspirants decided to undermine the speculation of an anointed candidate in the party but decided to go ahead with their campaigns. There were three major contenders in the APC for the governorship position. There was the candidacy of a former Commissioner in the Fashola's cabinet; Mr. Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, a former Commissioner for works and Infrastructure; Senator Ganiyu Olanrewaju Solomon and Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode. While Ganiyu Olanrewaju Solomon was considered an independent candidate in his own right (that is, without any known sponsor within the party), Mr. Hamzat was regarded as the anointed

candidate of the incumbent governor, Raji Fashola, and Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode was generally known to be the anointed candidate of the Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. In spite of the alleged adoption of Ambode prior to the primary election of the party, other aspirants continued with their campaigns, an indication that it did not go down well with them.

Another major issue that played out in the gubernatorial election in Lagos State was the statement credited to the Oba of Lagos against the Igbo tribe prior to the 2015 general elections. Oba Rilwan Akiolu, the Oba of Lagos was reported to have threatened the Igbos in Lagos that they will be drowned in the Lagos Lagoon if they fail to vote for the APC candidate during the gubernatorial election. This statement was reportedly made during the courtesy call of the Eze Ndigbos in Lagos on the Oba at his palace. The audio and video recordings of Akiolu's hate speech to Igbo leaders who had met with him at his palace Sunday had gone viral, resulting in a social media backlash against the Oba, his candidate, and the APC (Thisday Newspaper, April 7, 2015). The PDP took very good advantage of this by drawing the Igbos in Lagos State to its side. Despite the refutation and clarification of the matter by the Oba of Lagos, there was also renewed campaign by the APC to assure the Igbos of their security and sustainable co-habitation in Lagos under the APC.

### **Lagos and the 2015 Elections**

The race towards the 2015 elections started early, shortly after the 2011 general elections which saw Dr. Goodluck Jonathan becoming the President of the country. While the ruling party at the centre was contending with the legality of the incumbent president to contest the 2015 Presidential elections, the opposition political parties were planning merger to form a mega political party to combat the ruling PDP. In the merger, the ACN and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) were the principal partners with other political parties such as the ANPP and a faction of the APGA. In what looked impossible, the parties surpassed the challenges of the 2011 elections when the first attempt to bring the opposition parties together failed. The leaders of the opposition parties met and agreed concretely on the need to vote the ruling PDP out of power.

At this time, the civil society, the media and other important associations within the country have continued to decry the failure of the ruling PDP to chart a path of development and growth for the country. Corruption was on the increase with little or no effort to tame this from the President. Therefore, it was obvious that the middle class and the elite social classes had been able to come to terms to foresee the danger in keeping Nigeria for another four year term under the reigns of the PDP. This agreement was a major contributory factor to the possibility of the merger. While this was going on at the centre, Bola Tinubu did not lose sight of protecting his interest at the state level. Apart from ensuring the success of General Muhammadu Buhari as the Presidential flagbearer of the All Progressives Congress (APC) at the party's primary election against the big fish like Alhaji Abubakar Atiku, he again anointed Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode as the governorship candidate of the party in Lagos State. In the same manner, he anointed the Senatorial candidates and House of Representative candidates for the state. The candidates of the house of assembly in Lagos State were not left out in the anointing. This created furore among party members in different constituencies as party primaries were not properly conducted and this led to serious discontent among party members.

While APC may be criticised for lack of internal democracy, PDP did not fare better in this circumstance. The only difference is that in PDP, there is no particular individual who controls the machinery of the party as was witnessed in ACN and APC. Although, it was obvious that part of the crises faced by the PDP was attributed to the insistence of the PDP Governors to control the party machinery and structure at the State level. Bola Tinubu ensured that all elective posts in Lagos State were cornered and distributed to his allies and faithful.

The success of the APC in Lagos State has been attributed to the effect of the Presidential election which was held before the Governorship elections. According to one Oluwa, the success of APC at the polls in Lagos State was because the APC won at the centre. If the PDP had won at the centre, certainly APC would have lost Lagos and Tinubu would have been made to swallow his pride (Author's Field work, 2015).

Though the APC won the Governorship election, it however, did not win all the seats in the house of assembly as it used to. Out of the forty seats in the house of assembly, the PDP won seven and Accord Party won one. The striking effect of the outcome of the 2015 general

elections was that the APC lost the elections in areas where the Igbos were mostly populated. The constituencies lost by APC include Ajeromi Ifelodun I&II, Oshodi Isolo 1&II, Amuwo Odofin 1&II, Surulere II and Ojo I. There is no doubt that all these areas are Igbo populated areas of Lagos State. Although, some interested individuals believed that the APC lost the elections in those not because the Igbos did not vote for them, but people there was low turn out of people. Ostensibly, low turn out of voters is not new in the Nigerian context, this should have affected both the candidates of the two or more parties. In the views of Seteolu, the lack of internal democracy which generated discontent among party members and the so called Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, was responsible for the sympathy votes for the opposition parties in the state. Although he did not rule out the possibility of ethnicity, particularly, because of what transpired in the runner up to the election where the Oba of Lagos was, Oba Rilwan Akiolu., was reported to have caused the Igbos (Author's Field work, 2015) in Lagos State that they will be drown in the Lagoon if they fail to vote for APC. Sonoiki seemed to defer in his argument on the basis for the lost of those eight seats by APC, he argues that the PDP and Accord Parties won in those constituencies because the APC members in those areas were afraid to come out and vote for fear of crisis (Author's Field work, 2015). As tenable as this argument may seem, one particular question one may seem to ask is why did it all happened in Igbo dominated areas? This is despite the fact that the government of Bola Tinubu and that of Raji Fashola had an Igbo man in their cabinet at different times.

An inescapable reality is that when a minority group legally settles in a locality band achieves significant numbers, they cannot be ignored and must be allowed full political participation in the overall interest of the society (Egbujo, 2015). This is the right moral and democratic position. Whether it is in Jos north or Sabon Gari Kano, every human being must be treated with equal moral concern and should be accorded human dignity. However, the argument in some quarters has been that the privilege being accorded the Igbos in Lagos cannot be reciprocated in the East, the traditional home of the Igbos.

Surprisingly, the same effect was recorded in the National Assembly elections where the APC lost six seats to the PDP in Igbo populated areas in Lagos State. Although people have continued to argue that the outcome of the National Assembly elections was responsible for the state house

of assembly election results. Either way, what is sacrosanct is the recognition of the Igbo ethnic group and their significant number in terms mobilisation for election. The APC lost the Federal Constituencies in Amuwo Odofin, Ojo, Oshodi/Isolo, Surulere I and Ajeromi Ifelodun to the PDP and that of Mushin Constituency to Accord Party. According to Rabi (2015), a staunch member of the APC in Lagos State, “the 2015 is a bad signal for the party, particularly with the composition of the House of Assembly”. He further lamented that the event will be a big lesson for the party representatives at all levels and the party Executives. In the case of the party representatives, he accused them of operating without recourse to the constituencies. The principle of representation, according to him, is to have recourse to the people and let them feel the dividend of democracy. His argument against the party stalwarts stem from the fact that they have outrightly undermined internal democracy which he described as very cardinal to party cohesion.

Of great importance is the sickening pronouncement made by the Oba of Lagos. He exuded scorn, contempt and hate. Although this was later refuted, but the fact must be stressed that the PDP took advantage of this by making several promises to the Igbos and the candidate of the PDP was reported as saying that he will accord the head of the Igbo Community in Lagos the same ranking with the Oba of Lagos.

The aftermath of the 2015 general elections in Lagos State may not augur well for the APC in the state, it however portends good omen for democracy in Nigeria. As rightly observed by Oluwa (2015), it will checkmate the excesses of the APC and send the signal to the Party “Emperor” that it is not going to be business as usual. The composition of the house of assembly would provide avenue for healthy rivalry and competition for service delivery. It is an indication that people’s votes have begun to count in Nigeria. Therefore, it would spur the elected members to prove their worth in preparation for votes during the subsequent elections. In order to make this work, the effort of the judiciary in ensuring that cross carpeting is discouraged should be emphasized and advocated.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to examine the role of ethnicity in the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria with emphasis on Lagos State. The Paper analyzed the activities of party stalwarts in which votes were cornered through primitive accumulation and direct capturing. It exposes the shoddy attitudes of the party big wigs, particularly as it relates to Bola Tinubu, by substituting party's internal democracy for unilateral anointing and selection which has constituted serious animosity and discontentment among party members leading to loss of assembly seats to opposition at both the state and national levels.

Although the argument can be made that if it were to be considered an Igbo party such as APGA that won elections in Lagos, in Igbo dominated areas, it will give sufficient credence to the factor of ethnicity. However, the paper has been able to establish that the failure of the APC to convince the Igbo people after the scornful declaration of the Oba of Lagos and the lack of internal democracy in the APC spelt the doom for the party at the national and state house of assembly elections. It should be stressed that the calibre of the Oba of Lagos should be seen as a father to all and not a promoter of hate campaign as was done during the last election.

The point should be stressed that party politics in Nigeria is awkward and unmeasured. Apart from the fact that the parties in existence lack any identifiable ideology, the operators of the political parties have embraced impunity and lawlessness in their activities. Most of the so called representatives do not go back to their constituencies to report back to the electorates. A good number of the representatives vacate their original residence after the elections in order to run away for the responsibilities of people in their constituencies.

In the same manner, people should be educated and sensitized to always demand accountability from their representatives. However, what obtains is that people take their personal responsibilities to these politicians and when these becomes too much a burden to the politicians to bear, they change their residence and move out of sight until another election period. When people learn to know their onions, things will work better for the society.

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