HATE SPEECH AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper interrogated the nexus between hate speech and political violence and its implications for sustainable development and democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria’s amalgamation in 1914 brought people of varying cultures together and the struggle for survival on one hand and domination on the other hand had been the greatest bane for the country’s sustainable development and democracy. Since the re-emergence of democracy in 1999, hate speech resulting to hate crime and political violence have dominated the country’s political sphere. It has become a nightmare for individuals and groups to be apprehensive of their safety and wellbeing each election year for fear of criminal victimization. Election year has become a determinant factor in counting loss of lives and properties fueled by hate speech and political violence. The implication is that instead of Nigeria growing democratically and economically, the country is dwindling in terms of sustained development and democracy; to the extent of being declared one of the poorest nations in the world. This paper relied majorly on qualitative content analysis utilizing secondary sources of data collection through journal articles, books, periodicals, news prints and internet materials. The paper concludes that as long as political elites benefit from the outcome of hate speech with muted criminal justice system, political violence will continue to fester derailing sustainable development and democracy in Nigeria. The paper recommends among others that politicians who ride to electoral victory through hate speech and political violence must not harvest their gains; the criminal justice system must act to contain the dangers imposed by hate speech and violence on citizens cum sustainable development and democracy and the electoral umpire must be neutral and act proactively to safeguard democracy and ensure sustainable development.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Political Violence, Sustainable Development, Violence, Democracy.

Introduction
In spite of rising huge amount of government expenditure on perceived social infrastructures it has not translated to meaningful growth and development, as Nigeria ranks among the poorest countries in the world while many Nigerians have continued to wallow in abject poverty with more than 50 percent living on less than US$2 per day (Olulu, Erhieyovwe & Andrew, 2014). Politicians are still feeding fat exploiting on the sensibilities of ordinary citizens by sowing the seed of hatred through their speeches which fan the embers of political
violence, electoral violence and political tensions. This is very common when general election approaches in Nigeria. Election years in Nigeria are marked with sorrow, pain, suffering, destruction of lives and property orchestrated and engineered through hate speech. The reason being that Nigerian political elites see political context as do or die affairs; the winner takes it all. Accordingly, the Nigerian state has witnessed and still witnessing different acts of discrimination, corruption, pre- and post-election violence, democratic dictatorship, marginalization, segregation, and oppression in all levels of her national development strengthened by hate speech and primordial sentiments (Chinwokwu, 2015)

Keane (2002) argued that political violence is the greatest enemy of democracy and as well as sustainable development in Nigeria. Hate speech triggers hate crime cum political violence. The resultant effect is the rise of ethnic democracies whereby major ethnic groups oppress minority groups. Under this atmosphere sustainable development and democracy will become herculean task as parochial interests override collective democracy. Nigeria’s democracy is growing at the speed and level in which ethno-democratic maneuvering have manifested and sustained since the country’s independence.

At the peak of Boko Haram insurgency and massive attacks in 2014, the then Governor of Adamawa State, Mr. Murtala Nyako petitioned to the Northern governors accusing President Goodluck Jonathan of executing genocide against Northern states with impunity and that Boko Haram was a none existent group (Agada, 2014). This hate speech did not only slow down the fight against Boko Haram insurgency but also formed a rallying point for Northern governors and politicians to dump President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 general election. The statement demonized President Goodluck Jonathan, decreased his popularity and increased the demand for his removal from office. Of course, Boko Haram terrorists were opposed to a Christian president and Western influence. Yet, after gaining control of power from President Goodluck Jonathan; Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rustling and armed banditry have increased at large scale. In fact, Nigeria has witnessed pre and post elections violence since 1960, 1964, 1979, 1983, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 arising from hate speech and the struggle for political control (Orji & Uzodi, 2012, Saeze, 2011, Anifowose, 1982). Hate speech encourages or initiates political violence. Hate speech is inertia and detrimental to democratic growth.

There is no empirical statistics as to the number of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, but some scholars (Badejo, 1989; Otite, 1990) have suggested that there are about 300 – 450 ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, the major contending ethnic groups are Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, within them domicile most of the hate speeches in Nigeria. In the face of frustration and maneuvering to outwit the other to win support for political gain, hate speech appears a ready tool. Politicians and political elites have found hate speech and political violence ready vehicles to ride into political positions and power.

Scholars (Anthony & Anyanwu, 2019; Adibe, 2019; Ezeibe & Ikeanyiube, 2017; Opeibi, 2005; Ezeibe, 2015; Neisser, 1994) discussed about hate speech and its effect on the political sphere in Nigeria. Opeibi (2005) studied the negative effects of political campaigns on Nigerian politics and opined that politicians use smudge campaigns (hate speech) with the aim of discrediting, damaging and blackmailing their opponents. Nwolise (2007), Campbell (2010),
and Orji and Uzodi (2012) looked at the history of electoral violence and traced electoral violence in Nigeria to animosity, religious dichotomy, poverty, and weak institutional democratic structures. Ezeibe (2013) examined the relationship between hate speech and post election violence in Africa with specific reference to Nigeria and Kenya. He noted that the seed of hate speech has matured in Africa but the phenomenon is largely understudied and under-reported. In another study, Ezeibe (2015) interrogated the effect of hate speech on electoral violence in Nigeria from 2010-2015 and observed that political leaders in Nigeria neglect the provocative tendencies of hate speech so long as it enables them to gain advantage over their opponents and retain their political power. More so, he noted that hate speech has been elevated to the status of political campaign strategy and it accounts for the escalation of pre – during and post election violence in Nigeria. However, none of these studies interrogated the nexus between hate speech and political violence and how it impacts on sustainable development and democracy in Nigeria. They did not also discuss why hate speech violators remain unpunished despite legal framework proscribing it. Therefore, this study differs from extant literature on political democracy in Nigeria because it focuses on hate speech and political violence and how it impacts on sustainable development and also examined the position of the criminal justice system in relation to hate speech violation.

**Conceptual Explanation of Terms**

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2013 p. 4) outlined what may constitute hate speech to include:

(a) all dissemination of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, by whatever means (b) incitement to hatred, contempt or discrimination against members of a group on grounds of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin (c) threat or incitement to violence against persons or groups on the grounds in (b) above (d) expression of insults, ridicule or slander of persons or groups or justification of hatred, contempt or discrimination on the grounds in (b) above, when it clearly amounts to incitement to hatred or discrimination and (e) participation in organizations and activities which promote and incite racial discrimination.

A critical analysis of this definition shows some basic words that define the direction of hate speech in any society particularly in Nigeria, and these words include ethnic superiority, threat to violence, incitement to hatred, ridicule, discrimination, and insult. Each of this word is capable of igniting violence at a very high level especially in any election year. For example “We are born to rule Nigeria” and “Igbo people cannot rule Nigeria”. Hate speech is deeply thought out speech callously used to induce hate, discrimination and violence with political motive. Hate speech is ingrained in the struggle for political superiority, dominance and control in Nigeria and has become adopted political strategy to undermine political opponents and their influence. The problem of hate speech goes beyond electoral violence to build up political tension and political violence and a defining line in future political narratives of alliances and opponents.

Violence can be described as any form of behaviour exhibited by an individual or group of individuals that intentionally threatens to or does cause physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves (Stanko, 2001). It can also be seen as any behaviour that is intentional, unwanted, nonessential and harmful (Hamby, 2017). Violence is generally used...
to describe any actions that inflict, threaten or cause injury (Jackman, 2002) or physical aggression (Felson, 2009) or use of physical force (Olweus, 1999). The critical elements of violence here are threat of force, actual application of force, intimidation, or coercion resulting to harmful consequences. Harm, Killing and destruction of properties accompany most violence. Hate speech whenever it is present projects a narrative that goes with the air of threat of violence, intimidation and violence; which makes hate speech generally unacceptable and condemnable in the society.

On the other hand, political violence is referred to as a “repertoires of collective action that involves great physical force and cause damage to an adversary in order to impose political aims” (Della-Porta, 1995 p.2). This implies that political violence involves use of collective action to cause physical damage or harm on political opponents in order to achieve a political objective. Moser and Clark (2001 p.36) are of the view that political violence is the “commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, consciously or unconsciously to obtain or maintain political power”. It is all collective attacks within a political community against the political regimes, its actors including competing political groups as well as incumbents or its policies (Gurr, 1970). Similarly, Nwobashi (2015) argued that political violence is the use of illegitimate force of any kind prohibited by the state to achieve political end. These definitions are instructive and relevant to this study in the sense that hate speech and political violence are illegitimate mechanisms utilized by political elites to achieve and maintain their political power. Hate speech is politically, religiously, ethnically, economically and socially motivated to arouse political violence among people of different political affiliations. In contemporary Nigeria, hate speech and political violence are the highest threat to election processes and sustainable development and democracy. Political violence is expressed through destruction of properties, killings, protests, riots, disruption of elections processes, coups and radical revolutions.

Sustainable development according to United Nations General Assembly Resolution, 1987 connotes development which meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. In other words, sustainable development has to do with enduring, consistent and lasting development that is capable of sustaining present and future needs of the people. Hate speech and political violence breed chaos and definitely has no future for sustainable development because economic development is sustained under peaceful environment. On the other hand, sustainable development can also be viewed as a “means of improving the quality of human life while living with the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystem” (Ajai, 1995 p.41). The survival of the country’s democracy depends on the amount of peace sustained during and after electoral process which provides the leverage for sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework
This paper will explore the frustration-aggression theory as postulated by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939 as theoretical framework for analysis. Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears (1939) believe that the foundation of frustration-aggression theory is based on the supposition that certain frustration activate aggression against the root cause of the frustration and also against individuals or objects who are somewhat connected to a large degree to the source of the frustration. The theorists argued
that aggression is not a natural reaction or a biological instinct but the outcome of frustration. This means that individual’s expression is not intrinsic but reactions from situations and conditions arising from their milieu. Thus political elites who feel that their desires and aspirations for political power are blocked or denied directly or indirectly in the society are subject to frustration and may resort to the use of hate speech to instigate violence for their advantage. This means that the fear of losing control of political power can led to frustration and some level of aggression turned into violent actions. It is pertinent to put this in proper perspective by citing the case of the 2015 election when the Oba of Lagos threatened the Igbo people living in Lagos against voting Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governorship candidates after seeing the massive support for President Goodluck Jonathan. The fear and frustration of losing Lagos State to PDP and the expected personal gain if All Progressive Congress (APC) wins aggravated an outburst of hate speech by the Oba of Lagos. In Nigeria, issues of ethnicity, religion, discrimination, inequality, poverty, relative deprivation, marginalization, oppression, and exploitation can act as triggers of frustration and also provide the motive for hate speech and political violence. Abdulkabir (2017 p.3) has argued that “…the problem of unemployment in Nigeria is one of the major syndromes that upturned youths to become atrocious actors”. The unemployed, uneducated and poverty ridden masses are handy tools for political elites to use to foist political violence generated from hate speech. Government actions rather than cushioning the effects of frustration-aggression are exacerbating the tension in the polity by tolerating hate speeches which result into political violence as parties struggle for supremacy and control of government power.

A Historical Brief of Some Instances of Hate Speech and Political Violence
Hate speech is a precursor to hatred which metamorphosis into political violence resulting to grave consequences of death and wanton destruction of properties. The actual origin of hate speech and its manifestations into hate crime and political violence may not be accurate, but probably emerged with the founding fathers of Nigerian nation. The Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello is alleged to have declared “The Igbo are too dominating, if you employ an Igbo man as a labourer, he will like to take over as foreman within a short while”. According to Chief Obafemi Awolowo “Nnamdi Azikiwe’s policy was to corrode the self respect of the Yoruba people as a group to build up the Igbos as a master race”. On his part Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe averred that “The God of Africa has created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from bondage of ages” (Seng & Hunt, 1986 as cited in Ezeibe, 2015 p.14). All the hate speeches are directed at the Igbo people. The notion created by these statements perhaps is the suspicion and fear of the North and West over Igbo people and the political conspiracy of both ethnic groups to obliterate the political status of the Igbo race and prevent them from ruling the country. More importantly, and very critical to this discourse is the fact that these statements may have triggered some of the sentiments against Igbo people. Igbo people have suffered severely everywhere in the country in every political or religious violence than any other ethnic group in Nigeria, yet they have remained steadfast in building Nigerian nation more than any ethnic group in Nigeria.

Orji and Uzordi (2012) equate elections in Nigeria with violence. It is remarkable to observe that since 1960 till date, all the elections so far conducted in Nigeria have been typified by pre and post election violence spurred by hate speech. This is because “election campaigns provide particularly fertile ground for hate speech and incitement to hatred” (Denton, 2000
p.79). However, the momentum for hate speech and political violence became very prominent and devastating in the second republic and worsened during the 2011 cum 2015 elections. Despite the massive destruction of lives and property triggered by politically motivated hate speeches in 2011 and 2015, no single individual was held responsible by law officers for those heinous acts. Table 1 is a typical example of some of the hate speeches and their makers.

Table 1: Some cases of Statements described as Hate Speech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Hate Speech</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Dr. Junaid Mohammed</td>
<td>The National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern politicians Dr. Junaid Mohammed is alleged to have said that it must be a Northerner or no Nigeria. If Goodluck Jonathan wins the PDP’s endorsement to contest the 2011 Presidential election, there would be violence (Chedotum, Cheserek, Kiptui &amp; Arusei, 2013).</td>
<td>President Goodluck Jonathan won the Peoples Democratic Party’s (PDP’s) ticket to contest 2011 general election. There was violence in line with this statement attributed to Dr. Junaid Mohammed. Over 943 persons were killed in Nigeria in post election violence in 2011 while over #40 Billion Naira was lost.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Shehu Sani</td>
<td>Senator Shehu Sani said that any attempt by President Goodluck Jonathan to contest 2011 election amounts to incitement and a recipe for political instability (Bobo, 2015).</td>
<td>Over 943 persons died in post election violence in 2011.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Alhaji Lawan Kaita</td>
<td>The former governor of old Kaduna state Alhaji Lawan Kaita was alleged to said that the North would make the country ungovernable if President Goodluck Jonathan wins the 2011 polls. Anything short of a Northern President is tantamount to stealing our presidency (Ezeibe &amp; Ikekanye, 2017).</td>
<td>After 2011 election, over 950 persons were reported to have been killed across the country in post election violence to protest against President Jonathan’s election; Northern politicians acted in line with this statement. The activities of Boko Haram became pronounced as they were used to blackmail the government of Goodluck Jonathan. Attempt by the military to tame Boko Haram was considered genocide against the North because an Igbo man was the Army Chief of Staff.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Alhaji Atiku Abubakar</td>
<td>On December 14, 2010 Alhaji Atiku Abubakar at the National Stakeholder Conference organized by the Northern Political Leaders Forum (NPLF), Igbo Political Forum, South-South Unity Forum and the Yoruba Redemption Group stated that those who make</td>
<td>This provided the avenue for massive pre-election and post election violence in which hundreds of people lost their lives in 2011 elections. It is also important to note that the statement was a call for regime change through radical means.</td>
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<td><strong>5. 2012</strong></td>
<td>Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari</td>
<td>On May 15, 2012 Muhammadu Buhari said that if what happened in 2011 should happen again in 2015, the dog and baboon would all be soaked in blood (Binneyiat, 2012).</td>
<td>This statement was the mindset that propelled international communities to predict that there will be no Nigeria after 2015 election. Despite the efforts of President Goodluck Jonathan to avoid bloodshed in 2015 general elections by publicly declaring that his political ambition is not worth the life of any Nigerian and congratulating President Buhari before the announcement of final election results, there were still killings in 2015 post election violence especially in the North.</td>
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<td><strong>6. 2013</strong></td>
<td>Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari</td>
<td>On June 2, 2013 during a radio programme in Hausa in Kaduna State Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, a former Military Head of State was alleged to have said that the military offensives against the Boko Haram insurgents are anti-north (Chiklam, 2013).</td>
<td>This attack against President Goodluck Jonathan affected the clampdown on Boko Haram and provided the leverage for anti-Jonathan campaign that gave President Buhari victory in 2015 general election. Can this statement be made against President Buhari on his attack against Boko Haram by any Northern element?</td>
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<td><strong>7. 2013</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Junaid Mohammed</td>
<td>On March, 16 2013, the National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern politicians Dr. Junaid Mohammed stated that unless efforts are made to ensure that the 2015 general election are free and fair, it may turn out to be the last election in the history of the nation (Raphael, 2013).</td>
<td>Over 58 persons were killed in pre-election violence in 2015 due to hate speeches (National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2015). Kaduna state was one of the areas worst hit in pre-election violence. Despite the efforts of President Goodluck Jonathan to calm the nerves of those who wanted to burnt down the country, in post election violence in 2015 over 50 people were killed.</td>
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<td><strong>8. 2013</strong></td>
<td>Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo Asari</td>
<td>The Commander of the Niger Delta Peoples Salvation Force (NDPSF) was claimed to have stated that there will be no peace, not only in the Niger Delta, but everywhere if Goodluck Jonathan is not president by 2015 (Soniyi, 2013).</td>
<td>There has been no serious security threat by Niger Delta militants in line with this statement after 2015 election. Perhaps, Goodluck Jonathan statement that his political ambition does not worth the life of any Nigerian, may have been the tonic that changed the</td>
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<td><strong>9.</strong></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Femi Fani Kayode</td>
<td>In response to Orji Uzor claimed that Lagos is no man’s land. Femi Fani Kayode wrote in his article titled “The Igbo race and their unrestrained quest for dominance that the Igbos are collectively unlettered, uncouth, uncultured, unrestrained and crude in all their ways. Money and the acquisition of wealth is their sole objective and purpose in life (Vanguard, (2013).</td>
<td>No violence recorded in reaction to the statement. But the statement is not only insulting but also reckless.</td>
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<td><strong>10.</strong></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Dr. Junaid Mohammed</td>
<td>The National Coordinator of the Coalition of Northern politicians Dr. Junaid Mohammed is allegedly said that there will be bloodshed. Those who feel shortchanged may take the war path and the country may not be the same again’ (Omipidan, 2015).</td>
<td>Kaduna state was one of the areas worst hit in pre-election violence in spite of President Goodluck Jonathan effort to calm the situation, post election violence in 2015 claimed over 50 lives.</td>
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<td><strong>11.</strong></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Abu King Shuluwa</td>
<td>Abu King Shuluwa was alleged to have said that Nigeria will disintegrate if President Goodluck Jonathan contests in 2015 general election (Isiaq, Adebisi, &amp; Bakare, 2018).</td>
<td>President Goodluck Jonathan contested 2015 general election, Nigeria did not disintegrate as envisaged by doom mongers because he acted sportsmanly by congratulating his opponent even before final result was announced yet over 50 people were murdered in post election violence in 2015.</td>
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<td><strong>12.</strong></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Vice Admiral Murtala Nyaka (Rtd.),</td>
<td>On April 16, 2014, Vice Admiral Murtala Nyaka (Rtd), former Governor of Adamawa State said that Jonathan’s administration counter-terror operation against Boko Haram insurgents is tantamount to a “full-fledged genocide” against the North (Odunsi, 2014).</td>
<td>This weakened the fight against Boko Haram terrorism and provided the narrative for Northern elements to rally round against President Goodluck Jonathan. The Boko Haram insurgency became an issue for campaign.</td>
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<td><strong>13.</strong></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Dr. Junaid Mohammed</td>
<td>Dr. Chukwuemeka Ezeife alleged that President Muhammadu Buhari had not treated Igbo people well in his appointment. In response Dr. Junaid Mohammed, one time Minister in the second republic replied “I don’t believe Buhari or Nigeria owes any Igbo anything.</td>
<td>Though there was no immediate manifest effect in terms of violence, but subsequent actions of President Buhari tends to ascertain the allegation of Dr, Chukwuemeka Ezeife. The appointment of all security and para-military heads and key national positions, the</td>
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I don’t care what Ezeife says. If they (Igbo) had seceded, there would have been no Nigeria today. As people who acted outside the interest of Nigeria as a country, to expect compensation is a very old logic. “If the Igbo don’t like it, they can attempt secession again. If they do, they must be prepared to live with the consequences. Nobody owes them anything and nobody is out to compensate them for anything” (Vanguard, 2015).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Appointment of 12 Commissioners of Police from North West while South East has only 1, the sitting of Air Force, Army and Transport University in disregard to Federal Character speak volumes of nepotism, ethno-religious bias, corruption and why the country has not fared better since independence.</th>
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<tr>
<td>14. 2014</td>
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<td>The PDP lost the state in the 2015 election in Katsina State and Nigeria to APC. Post election violence left over 50 people dead. This kind of statement encourages violent action as human beings are seen as ordinary cockroaches that should be killed.</td>
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<td>15. 2014</td>
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<td>Rivers state was one of the areas worst hit in pre-election violence and over 58 died in post 2015 election country wide.</td>
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<td>16. 2014</td>
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<td>He spoke as the Secretary of the Northern Elders Forum (NEF). This statement is the collective consciousness of the NEF. This reflected the way and outcome of the 2015 election. It manifests fully</td>
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<td>17.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
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On March 28, 2015 the Oba of Lagos, Oba Akiolu was alleged to have said “On Saturday, April 2, 2015, if anyone of you, I swear in the name of God, goes against my wish that Ambode will not be the next governor of Lagos State, the person is going to die inside the water” (Godwin, 2015).

This threat was directed against Igbo people in Lagos whom he claimed voted for President Goodluck Jonathan during the presidential election and that they should not repeat the same during the gubernatorial election. The aftermath of the threat was that Igbo people in Lagos avoided the polling areas during the election.

This claim is ridiculous, does it mean that only Northern Fulani Muslims have the quality, experience, skill, education and merit to serve in President Buhari’s government. This is an unfortunate statement and display of insensitivity to the feeling of other nations in Nigeria and executive lawlessness and disregard to the Federal Constitution and Federal Character. He also forgot that both the quota system and federal character were concessions made to allow the North meet up with the South. One wonders, how the North have become better in terms of education to take the highest positions in Nigeria where merit is key.

It is evident from Table 1 that hate speech is a precursor to hatred which metamorphosis into political and electoral violence, killings and wanton destruction of properties. Table 1, shows clearly that there is no political party that does not employ hate speech to gain support from the electorates and most of the statements amount to treasonable offences. It also shows that over 77.3% of the hate speeches were made by Northern political elites. It manifests the frustration of political elites and ploy to appeal on primordial sentiments to retain power and political control. Ethnic democracy indeed is the pendulum hate speech swings. Ethnic democracy in which the majority exploit and subjugate minority population provide the impetus for hate speech and political violence to thrive. The implication is that some political elites use hate speeches not only to incite political violence but to intimidate others especially the South East to abdicate their political rights. Since the inception of the Second Republic, hate speech has played key role in political violence and in determining which direction the pendulum swings. But hate speech became very prominent and also an instrument of latent or covert oppression from 2011 general election. Hate speech manifests during electoral campaigns and shapes the outcome of political violence before and after elections. Hate speech creates, insecurity, fear of violence and fear of criminal victimization in the minds of
both the electorate and politicians. Hate speech is the fuel that is required to ignite the engine of political violence in any general election in Nigeria.

### Table 2: Incidents of Electoral/Political Violence Between January - June 2011 by Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Geographical Zones in Nigeria</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North East</td>
<td>North West</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>106</td>
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Table 2 shows that North West had the highest number (25%) of political violent cases in 2011, North East and South West had 22% of incidents of political violence in 2011 respectively while the South East had the least (7%) cases. The implication is that hate speech instigates political violence in Northern Nigeria than any other part of the country. It also demonstrates or measures the level of intolerance that can be accommodated by various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Furthermore, it exposes the level of literacy among the youths in Northern Nigeria. This shows that the less educated the people the more fanatical they are to hate speech and prone to violence. So hate speech is an instrument of manipulation for acquisition of political power by majority of political elites in Nigeria. Intimidation or threat of use of force has become an asset and aspect of our political culture, perhaps part of our democratic experience for political maturity. Unfortunately, Hausa/Fulani seems to have mastered this art and the use of hate speech to demoralize or demonize other ethnic groups in order to reduce their chances in the poll and provide easy access for them to gain political control. The role of hate speech in political violence is not only specific to Nigeria but also rampant in Africa.

### Legislative Framework on Hate Speech and Political Violence

In Nigeria, section 95 of the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) stipulated ways to regulate political campaigns. Specifically Sub Sections 1 and 2 of Section 95 states inter alia that (1) A political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly and indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings and (2) Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or insinuations or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reactions or emotions shall not be employed or used in political campaigns. However, this is flagrantly violated by political elites who deploy these unethical strategies to demoralize their opponents to gain political relevance. Hate speech is rooted on the freedom of expression which Section 39(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (with 2011 amendment) states inter alia “Every person be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impact ideas and information without interference”. But this was interrupted by Section 45 of 1999 Constitution which expressly implies that all the freedoms promised and envisaged in sections 33 to 44 are not absolute. Thus, hate speeches could be criminalized as hate crimes.
The Criminal Code (CC) Sections 59-60 and 373 – 381 categorize hate crimes (of which hate speech is inclusive) to include criminal defamation, inciting statements, breach of the peace, criminal intimidation, and publication of statement, rumour or report which may disturb public peace, false publication and so on with specific punishment ranging from payment of fines and imprisonment. Section 417 of the Penal Code (PC) stipulates that “Whoever seeks to excite hatred or contempt against any class of persons in such a way as to endanger the public peace shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine or both” Section 418 of the Penal Code (PC) also spoke of publication and circulation of any statement, report of rumour which the offender knows or has reason to believe is false with intent to cause fear or alarm to the public or cause disruption of public peace. The offender will be imprisoned or fined or both. As Nigeria practices plural legalism, the Criminal Code is applicable in Southern Nigeria while the Penal Code is in the Northern Nigeria. Despite the criminalization of hate speech and its auxiliaries, the criminal justice system is still hamstring to arrest and prosecute offenders. It is this weakened capacity and failure of the police to act against offenders of hate speech or hate crimes that have provided the leeway for elite politicians to embrace this strategy for their political campaigns. It is also the singular reason that has exacerbated electoral and political violence in Nigeria.

Section 150 (1) and (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) stipulates that “an offence under the Act shall be triable in a magistrate or high courts of the state” (Okoye, 2013 p.1). The police mandatorily responsible to arrest, investigate, charge and prosecute offenders of hate speech and political violence, but operationally they do not. Thus, those who engage in hate speech cum political violence do so with impunity; this impunity is recycled with greater intensity and pattern in subsequent elections because offenders are allowed freedom of arrest. Okoye (2013) argued that people committed these offences recklessly, with impunity, because they believed that they could do it and get away with it. The institutions of state are weak and powerless to deal with the problem of hate speech and its outcome.

The 9th Session of the National Assembly wanted to formerly give hate speech a legislative backing with severity of punishment which included death sentence. However, public outcry and condemnation by civil societies, human rights activists and the general public put the issue on hold. The argument was that the act had been criminalized under the Criminal Code and Penal Code and that the current status was enough to tame the menace of hate speech. There was also condemnation against the introduction of the death sentence in the bill which was vehemently opposed by the public. It is important to state categorically that laws criminalizing hate speech and hate crime have been made, further national assembly act does not change the status quo, what would change the narrative and bring the expected sanctions is the response of the criminal justice system. The moment the police awakes from their slumber and act according to the Penal Code and Criminal Code, the trend, the intensity and dynamism of the use of hate speech to arouse electoral or political violence will be abated. At the moment, the ruling party determines the functionality of the criminal justice system in respect to acts committed against hate speech.

**Implications on Sustainable Development and Democracy**

Hate speech brings about persistent increase in criminality and insecurity with overwhelming consequences on electoral process, sustainable development and democracy. Hate speech in
most cases starts by riotous behaviours, vandalization and destruction of property to killing of innocent citizens. Hate speech is a criminal act which has remained under-reported or unreported at all because it is an elite crime. It is detrimental to healthy political process and democratic growth with severe impact on sustainable development.

Hate speech and political violence breed lack of mutual trusts, destroys political culture with intense hatred and division that are unhealthy for political growth. The effect is that many people will abandon the electoral process in other to safeguard their lives. For example, when in 2015 the Oba of Lagos, Oba Akiolu threatened that any Igbo man that vote for Mr. Jimi Agbaje (PDP Governorship candidate for Lagos state), that he will cast the person in the Lagoon, many Igbo people avoided the elections for fear of their safety. It also resulted in some skirmishes of political violence between the Igbo and Yoruba in some parts of Lagos state dominated by Igbo electorates. Thus hate speech and violence are geared toward winning political competition and gaining control through intimidation, disempowerment of political opponents, violence, subverting the ends of the electoral and democratic process (Aver, Nnorem & Targba, 2013). Hate speech constructively and manifestly can modify the behaviour of people and alter any prevalent political arrangement especially when strengthened by violence.

The effect of hate speech and political violence could lead to capital flight and loss of foreign investment. Prior to the 2015 election, the American security agencies predicted the end of Nigeria due to the political tensions and violence resulting mainly from hates speech (Egwunyenga, 2014). Most foreigners especially America evacuated their citizens while many Nigerians and other foreign businesses relocated to other countries like Ghana, Togo, South Africa and Liberia. The World Investment report indicated that Nigeria lost about #1.33 trillion in foreign direct investment due to fear of insecurity in the country in post 2011 election (Oyedepo, 2012).

The aftermath of the 2011 election was the death of over 950 people and massive destruction of properties worth over #40 Billion Naira (Ezeibe & Ikeanyibe, 2017; Chedotum, Cheserek, Kiptui & Arusei, 2013). In 2015, over 108 people were killed in pre and post election violence and massive destruction of properties (Isiaq, Adebeye, & Bakare, 2018; Omipidan, 2013). The loss of human capital and material resources are detrimental to sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Though, hate speech and political violence are fanned or instigated by political elites, it is the unemployed or underemployed youths that act as foot soldiers while the common man bears the burden of pain and suffering. The threats and actual violence which occurred in 2011 pre and post election violence and 2015 post election violence led many Igbo people to relocate the North to the South. Aside from that educational activities were brought to a halt as some schools are destroyed while school calendar is interrupted.

**Challenges Combating Hate Speech and Political Violence**

Combating hate speech and political violence faces serious challenges which are mainly legal-political and ethno-religious. In Nigeria, politics and power are determined by religion and ethnicity. In this case one of the greatest challenges facing the fight against hate speech and political violence is ethno-religious bias. The questions are “Who makes the hate speech?” Who benefits from the hate speech and the violence that follows thereafter? The moment our
mouths are tightened in responding to these questions honestly and patriotically, combating the negative effects of hate speech and political violence will not be possible. The issue is that in as much as the use of hate speech and political violence are beneficial to some ruling political elites, it doesn’t matter whether they are at the majority or not, nothing will be done to stop it.

Lack of political will to take the necessary initiatives or make policies to combat hate speech and political violence is an obstacle to sustainable development and democracy. The political will and capacity of government institutions of criminal justice system are incapacitated in tackling the problem of hate speech and its associate political violence, especially when the ruling party is the beneficiary. The weakened capacity of governance to tame this menace is a great challenge to credible and peaceful electoral process in Nigeria. In Nigeria, in cases of this nature, operators of the administration of justice unwittingly act in line with the dictates of the ruling party and in our present political dispensation – the body language of President Buhari.

The political elites lack of patriotism and nationalistic spirit to play by the rule of the game mainly because they see themselves as lords instead of servant leaders. They have no interests of the people they govern. The interest of the ruling elites is their personnel enrichment and control of power; so they will do all they can to get the political power including violating the rule of the game. Over the years, the political elites have maintained their hold on governance recycling power within them and eliminating intruders who want to change the status quo using legal or illegal means.

Political struggle for dominance challenges the fight against hate speech and political violence. The game of politics in Nigeria is that the winner takes all. The struggle for the control of the heart of the state (state or federal) is intense. Therefore, there is no commitment of the political gladiators adhering to laid down rules of the game. This situation produces a state of anomie that provides opportunities for modes of adaptation to achieve political goal. One of those modes of adaptation mode will be hate speech and violence. Thus, since 1999 there has been no election that was devoid of political violence orchestrated by hate speech.

Powerlessness of the law to hold culprits accountable poses great challenge containing the issue of hate speech and political violence. The sponsors of the bill on hate speech at the 9th assembly may have observed the weakness in the existing extant laws on hate speech necessitating comprehensive legal framework to be enacted to strengthen the penal, criminal, and electoral laws. Unfortunately, this attempt did not sail through the law making process. The fear was that political elites may capitalize on the law to weaken opponents through suppression of genuine voices. The currents laws on hate speech as stipulated in the penal and the criminal codes are brazenly ignored by politicians due to the power of incumbent because the institution of the criminal justice system is a tool in the hands of the ruling class. The state agencies of social control hardly institute inquiry about individuals alleged of making inflammatory, inciting and discriminatory provocative remarks.

Combating hate speech in a global world, where freedom of speech is sine quo non to democracy and democratic processes demand some measures of guided policy. The world is
a global village as such what happens in Nigeria may affect other countries. Most especially, the challenge of the social media in the propagation of hate speech can hardly be traced when Nigeria do not have the legal control of the websites. In other words, digital technology and social media pose a great challenge to hate speech control in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It must be categorically understood that hate speech and political violence pose a devastating impact to sustainable development and democracy of any country. In as much as hate speech and political violence influence political debate and balance of power with catastrophic impact on sustainable democratic and economic development, the laws on terrorism should be applied to combat the twin menace. Hate speech activates socio-psychological sentiments that alienate, discriminate, and marginalize people thereby create political configurations that struggles with each units for state control and governance. In order to bequeath a legacy of political freedom, equality and fairness and build a strong sustainable economic development and democracy, citizens must be free from any kind of intimidation or threat to elect their political leaders. Following this conclusion, this study offers the following recommendations:

1. Politicians who ride to electoral victory through hate speech and political violence must not be allowed to harvest their gains. This is possible when the institutions of the criminal justice system are allowed to operate within the rule of law and without political interference. Offenders of hate crime go scot-free because of the criminal justice system incapacities to hold them culpable. Institutions of administration of justice should be strengthened to operate independently.

2. The criminal justice system must act independently to contain the dangers imposed by hate speech and violence on citizens cum sustainable development and democracy by acting neutral and enforcing the laws of the land. The police particularly must recognize that they are for the state and not for a political party or individual ruler. In this regard, violators of the law must be held accountable irrespective of political, religious or ethnic sentiments.

3. The electoral umpire must be neutral and act proactively to safeguard democracy and ensure sustainable development. This can be achieved by sanctioning any politician found to have made hate speech or any party found to have used hate speech to spur political tensions, threats or political violence. The offender should be promptly arrested and banned from participating in future electoral process.

4. There is need to strengthen the laws on hate speech and make it more severe in order to deter potential offenders. In this regard, any politician found culpable should be banned for life from contesting any political position in the country. Parties linked with the use of hate speech to induce violence should be banned from taking part in the election process. This will prevent political elites and political parties from making harmful and discriminatory or derogatory statements and maintain the decorum required for political process.

5. The criminal justice system must rise to its constitutional responsibilities of apprehension, detection, prosecution and maintenance of law in society. This must be done without bias. They must recognize that they have a pivotal role to play for the sustenance of development and democracy. Economic development and democratic dividends can only be sustained in the atmosphere of tranquility.
References


