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POLITICAL LEADERS' INFLAMMATORY UTTERANCES AND NIGERIANS' PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The study investigated the levels of anticipation of violence among Christians and Muslim adults in South West Nigeria after some Nigerian politicians issued threatening utterances of possible outbreak of violence for the 2015 election to be free and fair. Thus, from the population of adults in the geo-political zone, 410 respondents that were sampled using Cluster Sampling Technique were stratified on the basis of educational status and religion. The Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using percentages and chi-square statistics. Findings revealed that 79.5% of educated adults, 76.6% of illiterate adults, 87% of Christians and 85.5% of Muslim adults expressed fear (anticipation) of possible outbreak of violence as predicted in the utterances of some specific politicians. In addition to this, 73.4% of the samples believe the present insecurity pervading the nation can result in situation of anomie and 57.1% said the situation can result in escalated war. More importantly, there were no significant differences in the levels of anticipation of violence expressed by the sampled adults on the basis of their educational status and religion. It was therefore concluded that both Nigerian Christians and Muslims are apprehensive of imminent escalated violence and crisis in the country's future. Thus, it was recommended that Nigerian government should intensify all national and international efforts towards achieving fairness and justice in all its endeavours to avert outbreak of lawlessness.

Key Terms: Views, National Security, Implications, Leaders and Utterances

Introduction

The world politics is becoming more complex. Almost across all nations of the world, there is one form of insecurity or the other. Most importantly, as the world advances in political maneuvering, critics of political moves keep expressing their views on national security. They utter their support or sometimes their displeasure of the policies of their nation's government. Though many of these utterances may not actually hold water, sometimes, government may even push them aside as mere rattling (Denrele, 2009). In state governance, there are political personalities whose statements, utterances and actions cannot be ignored or pushed aside as mere rattling. Many of the utterances of some of these political figures can go a long way in reflecting the level of progress, threat to and fear in the political circles. Of course, it is characteristic of modern societies to take into consideration the utterances of some political personalities. Because of their status in the political affairs, national and international bodies listen, analyze and project the possible impacts of what they say, mostly in public, on the socio-economic development of their nations.

On November 24, 2011, the Nigerian President was in France to declare open the International Investors Council Meeting. While declaring the meeting open, the President stated that the security challenges currently posed by the Boko Haram insurgency Nigeria will be stemmed. He also assured the international community at the programme that his administration was on top of the security situation back in his country. He particularly confirmed that arrest had been made which he claimed had led to the wiping out of Boko Haram in Nigeria (The Punch

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December 29, 2011). Ordinarily, there should be no reason for the President's statement not taken as a profound assurance for a secured Nigeria. But experts in the study of *Perceptual Process and National Security (PPNS)* have claimed that persuading people to believe beyond the lineal process of speaking and hearing. They claim that credibility is the most variable affecting the ability to persuade. Horowitz and Bordens (1995) explained that credibility has two components namely: expertise and trustworthiness.

Expertise refers to a communicator's credentials and it stems from the persons' Trust and Knowledge. Trustworthiness on the other hand refers to the audience's assessment of the communicator's character as well as his/her motive for delivering the message. No doubt, on the issue of knowledge, the President is highly knowledgeable about Nigerian governance. As President of the country, he is an insider and perhaps, the first source of all political principles and practices on which his administration operates. On the issue of motive, the President will be said to be credible. Logic allows us to believe and conclude that being the President will not have the intention to derail his own administration or allow insecurity to pervade his tenure. Thus, his motive at the point of making the referred utterance can be good.

However, despite the President's utterance, the country has not really enjoyed peace. Boko Haram activities he claimed was under control has become so complex so much so that almost on daily basis, Nigeria seems to be plunging into state of anomie. On December 25, barely a month after the President promised wiping out Boko Haram at the France conference, the sect detonated deadly explosive on Christmas Day at St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Minna, Niger State. The explosion killed 35 Christians that came among the worshippers (The Punch, December 29, 2011). Subsequently, between January 6th and 22nd, 2012, series of crimes credited to Boko Haram insurgent that claimed several lives in various parts of Nigeria of the country (Olosun, 2012). In the earlier part of September 2012, the Sect was also reported to have been involved in killing people and damaging masts belonging to Global system for mobile communications [GSM] services providers in Yobe State (The Nation, September 2012). These series of insecurity have been classified by top political figures in Nigeria as emanating from internal rather than external threats. Speaking on behalf of the Federal Government, the Minister of State Defense was quoted as saying:

Fortunately for us in Nigeria, we do not have any security threats from outside; we are at peace with all our neighbours. The problems we have are those of the internal security in the country (The Punch, September 4, 2011).

Utterance such as that of the Minister no doubt, further reaffirms what some analysts of insecurity in Nigeria have said. Many believe that the utterances of some politicians and/or leaders in the country emphasize Nigerian state of insecurity and that the utterances are incisive enough to encourage people to be violent and make the country insecure and possibly ungovernable. Many utterances in this category are negative and are what Sociologists termed "attack campaigns" (Jamieson 1992).

Attack campaign or not, many of such utterances have dominated the political discourse in developed and developing nations in recent decades. When Thomas Jefferson first ran for United State presidency, certain political utterances were made about him in a way to put forward unlikely political approaches to issues. One of such utterances was that of the then president of Yale University, Reverend Timothy Dwight, who was a major voice in the United States American politics of the late 80s. The Reverend declared publicly that:

If Jefferson won the election, Bible would be burned, church goers would be committing the French national anthem, and men might see their wives and daughters

of legal prostitution, soberly dishonored, and speciously polluted (Horowitz & Bordens, 1995.p 301).

For many past decades, this utterance was not ignored in the political analysis of the United State of America. The utterance steered series of pre and post election bickering among Americans and their government. Thee phenomenon of 'attack campaign' has also gained prominence in Nigerian politics. While some of the utterances hinged on personal relationships among the leaders, some hinged on the country's security and politics.

However, for security and political reasons, some utterances cannot be ignored. One of such utterances is the one made by the pesdential flag bearer of the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) respectively in the 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections. Ever since, he has been a major voice of political oppositions in Nigeria. In one of his political utterances, he was quoted in the national dailies as saying:

God willing, by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 (referring to alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood (The Punch, May 20, 2012; pp. 9-10).

Many of these kinds of utterances have earned the country some period of insecurity. For example, the post-2011 general election violence that erupted and destroyed lives and properties in six northern states could be attributed in part to the provocative utterances made by the presidential aspirant who is also one of the past presidents of the country. More specifically, the report of the Sheik Lemu Federal Government Investigation Panel on the 2011 Election Violence and Civil Disturbances indicted some prominent Nigerian politicians, blaming the violence on their unguided utterances (The Punch, July 31, 2012). However, the questions are: Can utterance of some politicians really instigate violence and disorderliness in the affairs of the state? Or can utterances make people become apprehensive of possible outbreak of violence? Do Nigerians really need to fear possible negative circumstances that the utterances of these politicians make? And is taking these utterances as important one way of projecting the trend of Nigerian security?

Social researches are actually meant to solve societal problems. They are designed to pick even rare phenomenon such as utterances, study it and see how they impact the society and how the entire society can be made better from subsequent findings. It is on this premise that this study is designed. The study seek to find out the perceptions of Nigerians on the implications of negative utterances made by prominent Nigerian politicians on the socio-economic situations of the country. By socio-economic situation, the study is interested in knowing how such utterances can influence security and economic situations of the country. Specifically, thee study is aimed at finding out whether Nigerians in South-West believe that utterances in the category of 'attack campaign' are capable of making people anticipate violence.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Social Judgment Theory. The theory was propounded by Muzafer Sherif (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). The theory provides guides on understanding the process through which audience differentiate between communicator's position and their own attitude on an issue. *Social Judgment Theory* opines that the degree of personal involvement in an issue determines how the audience (for example, hearer of political utterances) will evaluate an attempt at persuasion. According to Horowitz and Bordens (1995), Sherif suggested that an individual's perception of an utterance falls into one of the three judgment categories or latitudes, namely: the latitude of acceptance which is the latitude of positions the audience would find acceptable; the latitude of rejection which is the set of argument the audience would not

accept and the latitude of non-commitment which Sherif called a *neutral zone* falling between the other two and including positions the audience does not accept or reject but will consider.

Social Judgment Theory asserts that the breadth of the latitudes is determined or influenced by how strongly the audience feels about the issue, how 'ego-involved' he/she is. Horowitz & Bordens (1995) explain this theory:

As involvement increases, the latitude of acceptance and non-commitment narrow, but the latitude of rejection increases... In other words, the more important an issue is the less likely you are to accept persuasive utterances unless it is similar to your position. Only messages that fall within your latitude of acceptance, or perhaps in your latitude of non-commitment, will have a chance of persuading you (p. 434)

Applicably, whether Nigerians will believe some of the attack campaign utterances of some prominent politicians, see the utterances as capable of altering people's attitude towards achieving a peaceful nation and even see the utterances as capable of steering anticipation of violence among Nigerians depend on the perceptions of Nigerian (their own positions) on the issue of whether Nigerian leadership as an entity is actually sincere and capable in making Nigeria peaceful and safe for all. Thus, if Nigerians do not believe that their leaders are sincere and not capable of achieving peace, the attack-campaign utterances made by some Nigerian politicians will fall within Nigerians' latitude of acceptance or latitude of non-commitment - meaning Nigerians will believe such utterances can steer violence in the country.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guide the direction of the study.

1. What are the perceived implications of the political utterances made by some prominent Nigerians on Nigerian national security?
2. Do educated and illiterate people in South-West Nigeria anticipate more political violence in Nigeria, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians?
3. Do Muslim and Christians in South-West Nigeria believe there may be more political violence in Nigeria, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians?
4. Does South-West Nigeria people's anticipation of possible political violence come 2015 as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians vary on the basis of educational status?
5. Does South-West Nigeria people's anticipation of possible political violence come 2015 as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians vary on the basis of religion?

Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were raised and tested in this study:

- H01 South-West Nigeria people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians will not significantly vary on the basis of educational status
- H02 South-West Nigeria people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians will not significantly vary on the basis of religion

Methodology

The study is adopted a survey research design. The design involves sampling a large number of respondents from the population of adults in South-West Nigeria. Therefore, the population for the study comprised all the adult male and female resident of South-West Nigeria. Cluster Sampling Technique was used to sample a total number of 410 respondents comprising 200 educated adults and 210 illiterate adults. Also, the sample is made up of 200 Christians and 200 Muslims. Cluster Sampling Technique was used because the sampling procedure involves contacting respondent at religious centres and within academic environment.

Data was collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled Political Utterances Questionnaire (PUQ). The instrument has two sections. Section A elicited information such as age, educational status, religion and residence. Section B has items testing the adults' perceived implications of specific political utterance made by some prominent Nigerian politicians. The extract of the statement goes thus: "God willing, by 2015, something will happen. They either conduct a free and fair election or they go a very disgraceful way. If what happened in 2011 (referring to alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood (Quoted from *The Punch*, May 20, 2012; pp. 9-10)".

Respondents were asked to read and respond to the statement by asking some questions presented thereafter. The questions were actually open-ended questions. That is respondents were asked to write down their views without giving them any guided answer. For example, they were asked to state whether the statement scared them or not, and to state at least two implications of such statement on national security. However, focus was on answers or implications relating to peace or violence in the years ahead. Since the items were open-ended, there was no need to give response options.

The instrument was validated with the assistance of some selected Sociologists of Education lecturers at the University of Ibadan and the reliability of the instrument was determined using Test-re-test approach. The collected data were analyzed using Percentages and Chi-square Statistics.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the perceived implications of the political utterances made by some prominent Nigerian on Nigerian national security?

Table 1: Perceived Implications of Political Utterances

Implications of Political utterances	Possible		Not Possible	
	n	%	n	%
1. Instigate secession	183	44.6	227	55.3
2. Instigate civil war	234	57.1	176	42.9
3. Encourage religious crisis	89	21.7	321	78.2
4. Instigate situation of anomie	301	73.4	109	26.5
5. Encourage political instability	159	38.7	251	61.2

As indicated on Table 1, 44.6% of sampled adults in South-West Nigeria believed the political utterances in the category of 'attack campaign' made by some prominent Nigerian politicians can instigate secession, 57.1% said it could instigate civil war, 21.7% believed the utterance can lead to religious crisis, 73.4% said it could instigate a situation of anomie in the country and 38.7% believed such utterance can encourage political instability.

Research Question 2: Do educated and illiterate people in South-West Nigeria anticipate more political violence in Nigeria, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians?

Table 2: Anticipation of Imminent Crisis Come 2015

Anticipation of Imminent crisis in 2015	Educated Adults		Illiterate Adults	
	n	%	n	%
Anticipating Crisis	159	79.5	161	76.6
Not Anticipating Crisis	41	20.5	49	23.3

As indicated on Table 2, 79.5% of sampled educated adults and 76.6% of sampled illiterate adults in South-West Nigeria believed Nigeria may experience crisis as predicted by some politicians if the 2015 election is not conducted properly. However, 20.5% of the sampled educated adults and 23.3% of the sampled illiterates did not anticipate such crisis.

Research Questions 3: Do Muslim and Christians in South-West Nigeria believe there may be more political violence in Nigeria, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent Nigerian politicians?

Table 3: Anticipation of Imminent Crisis Come 2015

Anticipation of Imminent crisis in 2015	Christians		Muslims	
	n	%	n	%
Anticipating Crisis	174	87	171	81.42
Not Anticipating Crisis	26	13	39	18.57

The data on Table 3 show that a high percentage of Christians (87%) and Muslims (81.42%) are anticipating political crisis should the coming 2015 general election fails to be conducted freely and fairly. On the other hand, 13% of Christian adults and 18.57% of Muslim adults did not believe such failure can lead to crisis, come 2015.

H0₁ South-West Nigerian people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians did not significantly vary on the basis of educational status

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Anticipation of Violence Comes 2015 Among Educated and Illiterate Adults in South-West Nigeria

Patterns of anticipation						
Educational Status	ANTPC	NANTPC	total	df	X ² cal. val	X ² tab. val
Educated adults	159 (154)	41(46)	200(200)	1	4.41	5.99
Illiterate adults	161 (160)	49(48)	210(210)			

KEY

ANTPC= Anticipation of crisis

NANTPC= Not anticipating crisis

The chi-square analysis of South-West people's anticipation of crisis come 2015, as shown on Table 5 above indicate that the calculated value (4.41) is less than the table value (5.99), thus, hypothesis 1 was accepted and it was concluded that South-West Nigerian people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians did not significantly vary on the basis of educational status.

H0₂ South-West Nigeria people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians do not significantly vary on the basis of religion

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Anticipation of Imminent Crisis, Come 2015, Among Christians and Muslim Adults in South-West Nigeria

Religion	Pattern of anticipation			df	X ² cal. val	X ² tab. val
	ANTPC	NANTPC	total			
Christians	174 (174)	26(26)	200(200)	1	3.58	5.99
Muslims	171 (166)	39(44)	210(210)			

The data on Table 5 above indicate that the calculated value (3.58) is less than the table value (5.99), thus, hypothesis 2 was accepted and it was concluded that South-West Nigerian people's anticipation of possible political violence, come 2015, as predicted by the utterances of some prominent politicians did not significantly vary on the basis of religion.

Discussion

The Nigerian general election conducted in January 2011 was said to be the starting point of complex political crisis in the nation. As predicted way before the election by international bodies such as the Council on Foreign Relation (CFR), the election was expected to bring some violence as it was thought to be a first major contest between the Sothern Nigeria Christians and the Northern Nigerian Muslims (Council on Foreign Relation Press/ CFRP, September. 2010). And just as predicted, the aftermath of the election was huge violence that almost consumed the entire nation.

The election was keenly contested by two prominent politicians. The winner of the election, President Ebele Goodluck Jonathan, was not new in Nigerian politics; he was the serving Civilian President when the election was conducted. His major opponent, General Mahmud Buhari, was also not new; he was once the Military Head of State of the country and a several-time contender for the Presidency seat of the nation. However, the latter believed the election was not conducted under free and fair circumstances. Thus, ever since the election, he has been a major critic of the present administration.

However, one of his criticisms hinges on the future of the country's security. One of his utterances quoted above is predicting possible violence come 2015 if the election becomes rigged. No doubt, his utterance will definitely have impact on individual Nigerians. For example, findings of this study show that large percentages of Nigerians in the South-West Nigeria believed such utterance can hamper the nation's security efforts in many ways. Specifically, 73.4% of the sampled adults in the region believed the utterance can instigate situation of anomie in the country. Another 57.1% of the people believed the utterance can instigate civil war, 44.6% said the consequences can include secession. However, only 21.7% of the sample believed the utterance can rouse religious crisis.

Nigeria is presently experiencing series of religious crisis; though, the crisis cannot be linked to political utterances yet, since there is a sect, Boko Harram, who almost always claims responsibility for some of the violence. In January 2012 for example, Kano State experienced multiple bomb attacks which killed about 162 people. In February 2012 at Minna, Niger State, 11 Christians were killed at St. Fin Barr's Catholic Church, Rayfield, Jos, and in April 2012, gun men attacked and killed about 15 people worshipping at a church within the premises of Bayero University Kano. The gruesome killings of 29 pupils and a teacher of Government Secondary School Mamudo, Potiskum Yobe state on 7TH July 2013 and also the killing of 10 traders in

Bodija market on June 28TH 2013. These series of killings can portray the nation as an unsecured territory for political, economic and religious activities.

It is unfortunate however, that despite the present state of insecurity in the country, there is no respite yet- not even in the near future. As discovered in this study, many Nigerians in the South-West geo-political zone are still apprehensive of some imminent crises in 2015. As revealed in this study, 79.5% of sampled educated adults and 76.6% of sampled illiterate adults believed the statement made by some politicians about such imminent crisis coming true. Similar to this is another aspect of the findings that also confirmed that Muslims and Christians irrespective of their level of education are also apprehensive of such crises if the election is not conducted freely and fairly.

Being scared of possible violence can have serious implication on people's personal life. People's private life and pattern of welfare acquisition and utilization can be negatively influenced by violence. Writing on the prize of violence, Benjamin and Halliton (2009) maintain that violence can render a whole nation ungovernable and make its economic sector a non-productive sector. When nations experience escalated violence, achieving unity and progress in national efforts will become almost impossible. The sect waged war against individuals and institutions through association, selective kidnapping, suicide bombing and emotional threats. Their activities have resulted to death of thousands of people in the country as well as loss of quite a number of economic investment interest (Okafor 2012).

No doubt, insecurity leads to economic adversities and unemployment. Nigeria is a fragile nation. Standing on its three-tribe prongs, there have not been serious efforts to unite the major ethnic segments of the nation and judging from the World Bank's assessment of the country, Nigeria is critically a failing state. As documented in the Punch Newspaper of August 2, 2012, Nigeria is ranked 14th in the latest Failed State Index co-ordinated by the Fund for Peace. With this assessment, it will be illogical to push aside the utterance made by General Buhari as mere ranting. Rather, such utterance should be seen as a pointer of possibility and warning.

Conclusion

The assumption that the political utterances of some powerful Nigerian are capable of stimulating violence in 2015 is tenable. More specifically, this stance was ascertained through this study. The study established further that anticipation of violence is not restricted to Christians alone. Muslims in the South-West zone, either educated or illiterate, also have the belief that violence may erupt in 2015 if the coming general elections are not handled judiciously.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Stakeholders in the conduct of general election in Nigeria should be conscious of possible negative consequences of inability to conduct free and fair election in the future.
2. Adequate security measures should be taken now to avert or ameliorate possible outbreak of law and order in the nation.

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