

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VOTING PATTERN AND GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS IN NIGERIA: A FOCUS ON 2011,2015 AND 2019 POST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Three presidential election cycles in Nigeria's recent history of power transition were respectively replete with interesting trends and dynamics. One of the remarkable was the euphoria of identity consciousness shared in these polls. This discourse therefore examines outcome of 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections with the aim to establish the illusion or reality of ethno-religious voting pattern in government appointments. The methodology of the study is qualitative exploratory design which underscored the import of documentary source and Key Informant Interview (KII) or Process Tracing PT which involves conducting personal interviews and Focus Group Discussion, FGD with knowledgeable person as procedures for data collection. The data collected were textually analyzed and showed a significant correlation between ethno-religious voting pattern of Nigerians and lopsided government appointments after 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections although in different scale. From the findings,

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the discourse recommend for national rebirth advocacy, vote for pan-Nigerian presidential candidate, making violation of federal character an impeachable offence, civil society alertness etc as among the measures to mitigate ethno-religious voting and lopsided government appointments.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent of diverse ethnic-religious nationalities that were in perpetual struggle over power and resources. For more than five decades of pseudo-freedom from euro-imperialism, Africa countries have been grappling with challenges of governance and national cohesion. The vehemence of these scum have in the recent years created vicious circle of poverty, social disarticulation and rebellion against the state. This unpleasant situation has inextricably created more intense tussle for power especially the executive office of the president among most Africa states under presidential democracy and governance.

A cursory look at the presidential election in a multi-cleavage country like Nigeria, often reveals a fascinating process replete with identity consciousness and euphoria. Nigeria as African largest democracy has had ten presidential elections in 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 to the most recent 2023 poll in democratic transition to political power. These elections provided insight on nature and dynamics of Nigeria's voting behaviour. Hence, the dynamics of voting orientation of Nigerians is inextricably a reflection of its cleavage background. Nigeria is a plural nation-state and is divided along regional, ethnic and religious lines (Madubuegwu & Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2023).

Furthermore, scholars have argued that consciousness of ethno-religious identity is susceptible to conflicts in plural societies and, its implications undermine stability of a state (Williams, 2009, and, Itodo and Ife, 2014). In addition, Nnabuihe, *e tal*, (2014), opined that identity consciousness in Nigeria's power contestation often create climate of fear and tensions after elections where lives and properties were lost as seen in post-presidential election violence of 2011 in the North (Madunagu, 2011, Paden, 2012 and Thurston, 2015). Beyond restiveness, there seem to be a trend of violation of precedence in national governance which many observed as effects of a presidential election. Hence, it is often argued that there have been persistent public outcry of regional exclusion and marginalization (Report of Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, 2022 ; Atanda, *e tal*, 2018, Auge, 2015, and Mbah, *e tal*, 2019) which have created vehemence of resentment and insurrectional activities across the country (Nwagbo, *e tal*, 2016: 236; Koko, 2018:131; and Ayo, 2018:44) and, constituted post-election tendencies of intractable crises of national unity. Thus, regional agitations for national governance inclusion have remained

consistent, unabated and entrenched. Then, the fundamental question is, were these realities occasioned with centrifugal tendencies a function of ethno-religious voting behaviour of Nigerians (if established) after 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections? What really happened and how?

2.0 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Ethno-religious identification refers to an individual's processes of social categorization, identification and contra-identification with certain groups, as well as how they situate themselves in the comparison between groups. On the other hand, it refers to how individuals recognize their reference group and externalize their knowledge on inter-group relations (Berger 1967; Durkheim 1993). In other words, ethno-religious represent a sense of people's identity and inclination to a tribe and religion.

Furthermore, theoretical propositions mention that ethno-religious identification in most cases is more likely to induce some exclusionary attitudes. Weber (1978), Vertigans (2007), claims that certain ethno-religious groups exclude other groups by making use of ethno-religious identities to maintain and enhance their position in intergroup relations. Another explanation given by Turner (1999) is that a group employs their identities in an exclusionary manner when individuals categorize themselves related to membership in a relevant group, the group identity is salient in relation to comparative judgment, and both the in-group and out-group are interrelated in a field of competition.

Invariably, ethno-religious therefore implied feelings and sentiments expressed by people of identifiable tribe and religion. This peculiar feeling is a mixture of ethnic and religious fidelity visibly displayed in association, interaction and conflict with people of varied ethnic-religious background. For instance, the Ndi-igbo tribe of Christian faith in Nigeria, the Fulani tribe of Islamic faith in Senegal, etc. On the other hand, ethno-religious identity is therefore the ethnic and religious background of a people in relation with other people known for their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Also, ethnic-religious identity is how a homogeneous people define themselves along ethnic and religious lines. It is also how a people are differentiated from other people on the bases of ethnic and religious attributes which define their peculiar roles, plights and expectations. Ethno-religious identity is also used to explain how societies are known and divided between people known for a particular ethnic background and religious inclination (Madubuegwu, and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2023).

Ethno-religious sentiments is visibly manifest in elections of most African states. Voting is a behaviour contextualized as voting behaviour. In the analysis of voting behaviour, the choice of the voter or voting choice or vote is fundamental to ascertain why and how the voter voted in a particular manner. In this regard, Madubuegwu (2022) remarked that in voter preference or candidate choice, a question that is often asked is, "*which candidate or political party does a voter vote for*"? In other words, the number of votes polled by a candidate or political party in an election represents the voting choices or voter preference. The statistics of votes is further enunciated in parliamentary seats and, states and regions won or lost by candidates or political parties which evince and define voting choice or candidate choice. To this end, voting choice or candidate choice underscore the statistical imperatives and measurability of voting behaviour among scholars and practitioners of election. Significantly, spatial distribution of votes won or lost by candidate or political party or manner or peculiar way of how parliamentary seats and

regions are won or lost by candidates or political parties is obviously described as *voting pattern* or *geography of electoral preference*. Thus, voting pattern is a reflection of voting choice or candidate choice of the electorate.

Invariably, ethno-religious voting pattern is the way and manner people of ethno-religious inclination voted for candidates or political parties in an election. It is also described a pattern which reflect ethno-religious orientation and preference for a candidate's victory or failure in an election. Ethno-religious voting pattern is influenced by issues and narratives, candidate charisma, personality traits, ideologies and party's symbols and philosophy that promote or undermine ethno-religious imperatives. Ethno-religious voting is defined and instrumental to determine voting pattern of a people (differentiated on premise of ethnicity and faith) in an election.

To this end, what is the correlation between ethno-religious voting pattern and government with exclusive reference to appointments of persons by the elected president across the divide into statutory offices and political positions for state responsibilities after 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections? This fundamental question underscore the purpose of this discourse.

Table 1: Nigeria: Location of Ethnic Groups

States by Zones	Dominant Ethnic Groups	No. of Minority Ethnic Groups
Northwest		54
Sokoto, Kebbi + Zamfara	Hausa	12
Katsina	Hausa	1
Kano + Jigawa	Hausa	9
Kaduna	Hausa	32
Northeast		205
Borno + Yobe	Kanuri	29
Adamawa + Taraba	Fulani, Hausa	112
Bauchi + Gombe	Hausa	64
North-central		123
Old Kwara (+ some parts of Kogi)	Yoruba, Ebira, Igala	20
Old Niger	Hausa, Gwari	19
Old Benue (+ some parts of Kogi)	Tiv, Idoma, Igala	12
Plateau + Nassarawa	Biom, Angas, Yergam, Hausa	72
Southwest		4
Oyo + Osun	Yoruba	–
Ekiti + Ondo	Yoruba	2
Ogun	Yoruba	–
Lagos	Yoruba	2
Southeast		1

Anambra, Enugu + Ebonyi	Igbo	1
Imo + Abia	Igbo	–
South-south		59
Edo + Delta	Bini, Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Igbo	13
Rivers + Bayelsa	Ijaw, Ogoni, Andoni, Igbo	10
Akwa Ibom	Ibibio	7
Cross River	Efik	29

Source: Adapted from Otite (1990:44–57) cited in Mustapha, (2006: 11).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this discourse is qualitative exploratory design with emphasis on the six geopolitical zones of the federation as the study area. The six regions illuminate the ethno-religious character of Nigeria state. The study also relied on documentary source of data collection with reference to textbooks, journal articles, documentary field reports) and interview source (with emphasis on Key Informant Interview (KII) or Process Tracing PT which involves conducting personal interviews with knowledgeable persons. A total of 37 personal Key Informant Interview and 2 Focus Group Discussion, FGD (of three persons each) interview was held within a period of 12 weeks (January to March, 2023). A validated interview guide/questionnaire was used to elicit data from these knowledgeable participants. The interview guide/questionnaire was administered through the following medium of interview and documentation:

- (i) Face-to-Face interaction while responses were recorded and noted.
- (ii) Telephone communication with Key Informants outside the study area where responses were recorded and noted.
- (iii) Social Media -WhatsApp chats/emails where responses were noted.
- (v) Emails where questions were sent, note of responses retrieved and documented.
- (iv) Focus Group Discussion (of three participants) where responses were recorded and noted.

NB: It is important to note that these medium of interview were the choices of the Key Informants on the basis of their connivence and time.

In addition, the researchers re-contacted some of the Key Informants for clarification on certain issues and additional knowledge input. The conversation with these interviewees enabled the researchers obtain depth knowledge of information, valid opinions of rationality and advocacy on post-presidential election tendencies. NB: For purpose of confidentiality, the researchers did not reveal names of these KI interviewees. In other words, the bio-data of these interviewees remained anonymous.

The researchers adopted non-statistical descriptive tool, the textual method of analysis. The researchers therefore textually analyzed secondary data gathered from documentary and interview responses to establish reality or illusion of the influence of ethno-religious voting pattern in the appointment of Nigerians to serve in federal public service after 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. Furthermore, the tabulation method was also used to lend more precision in the presentation and analysis of data gathered.

Ethno-Religious Voting Pattern and Government Appointments After 2011, 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections

A. 2011 Presidential Election

It is pertinent to note that 2011 presidential election was held on 16th April. The election was contested by twenty candidates on the platform of political parties. The following is the regional electoral result of frontline candidates (Goodluck, Buhari, Rabidu and Shekaru) of the election.

Table 2: REGIONAL RESULTS OF FRONTLINE CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2011 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's 2011 Presidential Election Result in Geo-Political Zones and FCT by Frontline Candidates and Political Parties				
Geo-Political Zone	Jonathan (PDP)	Buhari (CPC)	Ribadu (ACN)	Shekaru (ANPP)
South-West	2, 786, 417	321, 609	1,369, 943	30, 906
South-East	4, 985, 246	20, 335	25, 517	20, 357
South-South	6, 118, 608	49, 978	144, 141	11, 026
North-West	3, 395, 724	6, 453,437	146,216	612,541
North-East	1, 832, 622	3,624,919	84, 273	198, 837
North-Central	3, 376, 570	1,744,575	309, 011	8, 35, 20

Source: Report of Nigeria's 2011 Presidential Election (April 16) by States and Geo-Political Zones cited in Madubuegwu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu,(2023).

A close observation of voting choices of Nigerians in the three geo-political zones in the North indicated that regional and ethno-religious sentiments amid other factors enormously influenced voter preference seen in the electoral victory CPC Candidate, Muhammadu Buhari in North-West which is predominantly *Muslim* inclined *Hausa-Fulani* ethnic nationality and *Muslim* inclined North-East of *Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri* and ethnic nationalities while Goodluck Jonathan of PDP won North-Central in mixed religious ethnic minorities and FCT on the influence of religion, party identification and personality traits (with reference to humble background, human nature and education status). In other words, the candidate of PDP won 7 states in the North and FCT while the candidate of CPC, Buhari won 12 states in the North and other two frontline candidates, Nuhu Ribadu and Mallam Ibrahim Shekaru failed to win any state in the North of the Federation. Emphatically, the failure of Muhammadu Buhari to win any state beyond the North ostensibly showed the imperatives of regional and ethno-religious sentiments in the voting choices of many Nigeria voters of mixed religious inclined *Yoruba*, and *Christian* inclined *Ndigbo* and *Christian*-inclined South-South ethnic minorities (*Ibibio, Isoko, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo* in the South. Furthermore, it is established that sense of regional inclination, ethno-religious sentiment and party identification played prominent roles in the regional voting choices of the electorate in Southern Nigeria for the overwhelming electoral victory of Goodluck Jonathan of PDP and failure of other candidates. In other words, the candidate of PDP won 16 states while Nuhu Ribadu of ACN won one state in the Southern regions of Nigeria federation as presented. In reference to the overview of regional electoral performance, Goodluck Jonathan, PDP candidate won four geo-political zones (mixed religious inclined ethnic minorities of north-central, *Christian* inclined ethnic minorities of south-south, *Christian* inclined *Ndigbo* ethnic nationality of south-east and mixed religious inclined *Yoruba* ethnic nationality of south-west) while Buhari, CPC candidate won two geo-political zones (*Hausa-Fulani* north-west of *Islamic* inclination and north-east region of *Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri* and other tribes of *Islamic* inclination) as illustrated. In all, the PDP

candidate, Goodluck Jonathan won 23 states (16 in the south and 7 in the north) and FCT while CPC candidate, Gen Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd) won only 12 states (all in the North) and the ACN candidate, Nuhu Ribadu won only one state (Osun) in the South-West (Madubuegwu,2023).

Subsequently, there were trends of regional voting pattern which to an extent showed the reasonable scale of ethno-religious orientation and voting in this presidential election. The first impact of ethno-religious voting was witnessed in post-election violence of 2011 after the declaration of President Jonathan as Paden (2012), alleged that CPC's rejection of the April 2011 presidential election result may have caused the post-election violence. In this vein, Madunagu, (2011) embellished the event of the post- presidential election violence:

The post-presidential elections killing and destruction in parts of the Northern Nigeria started before the dark on the day of the elections: Saturday, April 16th 2011 voting and announcement of the results had ended in most polling center but collation of these results to determine the winner of the contest was still going on nation-wide. The winner was officially announced about 48 hours after the start of the slaughter which went on for three more days. Just before the announcement of the result some senior military officers visited the headquarters of the electoral body. This indicates, at least, the level of the perceived threat to national security. Estimates of the total number of victims ranged from 500 to 800 dead including at least 10 National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members who were on election assignment.

Again, the attack took ethnic and religious dimension which was indicted in a reaction by the pro-Buhari's supporters mostly in the North. The 2011 post-election violence was tragic. In summary as reported earlier less than 800 people were believed to have died, the then Inspector General of Police, Hatiz Regim claimed that 512 civilians and 6 police officers lost their lives in Kaduna. In terms of property, reports say that 157 churches, 43 mosques as well as 1,435 houses were burnt. Similarly 437 vehicles, 219 most cycles and 45 police property burnt, 65,000 people were reportedly displaced (Human Right Watch 2011) cited in Kwon – Ndung, *e tal* (2015:229).

Obviously as earlier noted, the ethno-religious voting and post-election violence stemmed from prejudiced identity sentiment Paden (2012) cited in Ibrahim (2012) stressed that Northern anger is not likely to be assuaged by presidential panels, election tribunals, or statement by traditional rulers. Indeed, the election violence may prove to have been the precursor to an existential national crisis. The Jonathan government is widely seen as walking on the Christian side of the political street. According to Charles Dickson, a well-known commentator and neither a Muslim or a northern once said, *“Today, whether we like or not, the president is Christian, SGF is Christian, National Security Adviser is also one, the Chief of Army, the DSS Director, in fact welcome to a Federal Republic of Christians. I was privy to a recent heated discussions in which one of the participants blurted out, ‘If we leave it to “them” the next Sultan will be a Christian!’”*

These statements curiously elicit the need to find out whether there is a correlation between ethno-religious voting behaviour of Nigerians and government appointments? In this regard, observation and scholarly research to a significant extent underscored the reality of this correlation as analyzed. In this sense, Paden (2012), Ahmed (2017) Bello and Ojo (2020) have respectively argued that

the voting pattern witnessed in these presidential elections has directly or indirectly created positive and negative effects on regional relevance in the share of 'national cake'. In the sense that some ethnic nationalities and geo-political zones have been carried along while some have been left behind in political appointments and other benefits of the federal government.

In a more explicit sense, Umar (2013), Kaze (2013) and Aliyu (2014) stressed that the reality of lopsided allocation of federal government appointments is one of the causes of Northern anger against Goodluck Jonathan administration. It was also argued that the South particularly the president's region and people of South-East are the direct beneficiaries of Jonathan's administration. Beside the regional gains, Auye (2015) documents that Ijaw ethnic nationality of the president took a prominent place in the decision-making apparatus of Goodluck Jonathan administration. The oil industry, which represents 90% of Nigeria's exports, has been run entirely since 2010 by the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison Madueke, an Ijaw from Bayelsa. Goodluck Jonathan appointed another Ijaw, Andrew Azazi, to the position of National Security Adviser (responsible for intelligence and co-ordinator of the national defence forces) between 2010 and 2012. Due to Andrew Azazi's lack of results, particularly on the Boko Haram issue in the North-East of Nigeria, and mainly because of the pressure from Northerners who considered that strategic positions were too concentrated in the hands of Ijaw individuals, Goodluck Jonathan decided to replace Andrew Azazi with a retired Colonel originally from Sokoto (North-West), Sambo Dasuki. The other group which benefited from the generosity of public money is made up of militants from the Niger Delta. A group of them (around 30,000) accepted an amnesty in 2009 and they were awarded contracts for the security of oil installations –land oil and gas pipelines – or in Nigerian territorial waters. Since 1958 local private companies which were partners of the Western majors on the blocks, were held by businessmen from the North, from the Middle Belt (all the Northern regions of the country), or from the Lagos region but never by men from the Niger Delta oil region which however includes the nine oil-producing states in Nigeria. Yet the Ijaw, who are the majority in the oil-producing states of Bayelsa and Rivers, have largely benefited from Goodluck Jonathan coming to office by obtaining large allocations of crude oil that they could sell. The income generated enabled them to acquire stakes in the blocks. Benedict Peters (Aiteo), Igho Sanomi (Taleveras) and Timi Aladetimi (Tempo Energy), who bought back the block called OML 29 for \$2.58 billion from Shell, Total and ENI,¹⁰ can be included. The traders and businessmen, belonging to the Ijaw ethnicity and close to the Minister of Petroleum Resources, considered that it was completely legitimate to get rich quick. They considered this money, which had previously been denied them, as their due. A number of Ijaw businessmen regarded the fact of having a President from their community as an opportunity for revenge against the relative economic deprivation that they had been subjected to since Independence; a more than limited access to the oil wealth and to government contracts; as well as low development of their region, while almost all of the country's oil is concentrated there. This discourse on "economic revenge" resulted in real organised plundering of state resources concomitant to the five years of Goodluck Jonathan's presidential term. Goodluck Jonathan allowed his entourage to do this resource capture either through resentment against the other dominant ethnicities that have run the country since independence, or through weakness of character. However, this phenomenon is not new or unique to Nigeria.

At this stage, it becomes imperative to examine the first appointments made by Goodluck Jonathan after 2011 presidential election as presented below:

TABLE 3. THE EARLY APPOINTMENTS MADE BY PRESIDENT GOODLUCK JONATHAN AFTER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN APRIL 2011

	Appointment	Name	Geo-Political Zone
1	Director General: Nigerian Meteorological Agency	Dr. Anthony, Anuforom	South-South /Christian
2	Group Managing Director: Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation	Eng. Andrew Yakubu	North-West/Muslim
3	Director General: National Pension Commission	Chinelo Anohu Amazu	South-East /Christian
4	Director General: Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency	Ziakede Patrick Akpobolokemi	South-South/Christian
5	Director General: Federal Road Maintenance Agency	Eng. Gabriel Chukwu Amuchi	South-East/Christian
6	Director: Department of Petroleum Resources	George Abiodun Osahon	South-South/Christian
7	Director General: Bank of Industry	Evelyn Oputu	South-East/Christian
8	Executive Secretary: Nigerian Content Development Agency	Eng. Ernest Nwanpa	South-East/Christian
9	Director General: Consumer Protection Council	Catherine Dupe Atoki	North-Central /Christian
10	Vice Chairman: National Communication Commission	Dr. Eugene Ikemefuna Juwa	South-East/Christian
11	Chief Executive Officer: Nigerian Airspace Management Agency	Nnamdi Udoh	South-East/Christian
12	Executive Secretary: Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority	Eng. Akikuotu	South-West/Christian
13	Managing Director: Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria	Mr. George Uriesi	South-East/Christian
14	Rector of Nigerian College of Aviation Zaria	Chinyere Kalu	South-East/Christian
15	Director General: Security and Exchange Commission	Arunah Oteh	South-East/Christian
16	Chief Executive Officer: Sovereign Wealth Fund	Uche Orji	South-East/Christian
17	Director General: National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control	Paul Orhil	South-East/Christian
18	Director General: Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi	Dr. Mrs. G. N. Elemo	South-West/Christian

	Appointment	Name	Geo-Political Zone
19	Rector: Maritime Academy	Joshua Okpo	South-South/Christian
20	Director General: Railway Corporation	Seyi Sijuwade	South-West/Muslim
21	Director General: Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation	Sally Mbanefoh	South-East/Christian
22	Director General: Budget Office of the Federation	Dr. Bright Okogwu	South-East/Christian

23	Executive Secretary: Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council	Prof. Godswill Obioma	South-East/Christian
24	Director General: Nigerian Export Import Bank	Mr. R. R. Orya	South-West/ Christian
25	Director General: Standard Organization of Nigeria	Dr. Joseph Odumadu	South-West/Christian
26	Director General: Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation	Emeka- Nkem Mba	South-East/Christian
27	Director General: Industrial Training Fund	Prof. Longmas Wapmuk	North-Central/Muslim
28	Executive Secretary: National University Commission	Prof. Julius Okojie	South-East/Christian
29	Director General: Millennium Development Goals	Precious Gbenio	South-South/Christian
30	Surveyor General of the Federal	Peter Chigozie	South-East/Christian
31	Statistician General of the Federation	Dr. Yemi Kale	South-West/Muslim
32	Accountant General of the Federation	Mr. Jonah Otunla	South-West/Christian
33	Auditor General of the Federation	Samuel Yonongo Ukuto	North-Central/Christian
34	Director General: National Orientation Agency	Mike Omieri	South-East/Christian
35	Director General: News Agency of Nigeria	Ima Niboro	South-South/Christian
36	Director General: Bureau of Public Procurement	Emeka Ezeh	South-East/Christian
37	Managing Director: Nigeria Export Processing Zone Authority	Olugbenga Kuye	South-West/Muslim

Source: Obadahun, *e tal*, (2016:82).

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL/STATE REPRESENTATION AT FEDERAL LEVEL UNDER GOODLUCK JONATHAN'S ADMINISTRATION, 2011-2015

Zone	State	Legal/Judicial	Ministers	Ministers of State	Other Top Positions	Total
South-East		(3)	(4)	(1)	(3+2)	(13)
	1.Abia				2	3
	2.Anambra		1			1
	3.Ebonyi	1	1			2
	4.Enugu	1	1			3
5.Imo	1	1	1	1	2	
South-South		(1)	(7)	(1)	(7)	(16)
	6.Akwa Ibom		1			1
	7.Bayelsa		1		1	2
	8.Cross River	1	1		1	3
	9. Delta		2		3	4
	10.Edo		1		1	2
11.Rivers		1	1	1	3	
South-West		(1)	(5)	(2)	(4)	(12)
	12.Ekiti		1			1
	13.Lagos		1			1
	14.Ogun		2		2	3
	15.Ondo		1			1
	16.Osun			1	2	3
	17.Oyo	1		1		2
North-Central		(2)	(5)	(2)	(5)	(14)
	18.Benue	1	1	1	2	5
	19.Kogi				1	1
	20.Kwara		1		2	3

	21.Nasarawa	1				1
	22.Niger	1		1		3
	23.Plateau	1				1
North-East	(0)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(2)	(8)
	24.Adamawa	1			1	2
	25.Bauchi	1		1	1	3
	26.Borno			1		1
	27.Gombe	1				1
	28.Taraba					0
	29.Yobe					1
North-West	(2)	(6)	(2)	(6)		(16)
	30.Jigawa	1		1		4
	31.Kaduna					1
	32.Kano		1		3	4
	33.Katsina				1	2
	34.Kebbi				1	2
	35.Sokoto	1				2
	36.Zamfara			1		1
	*President Jonathan (Bayelsa) and Vice President Sambo (Kaduna) are not included because they were not appointed by the executive branch, even though they are intended to reflect a federal character balance between the north and the south.					
	** Taraba is the only state not represented. The northeast as a whole has the smallest number of federal character appointees. Borno has only one appointee and Yobe has only one.					

Source: Paden, (2012:166).

The data presented in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 displayed statistics of regional representation (appointments) in national public service under the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan administration after the 2011 presidential election. In other words, these were the summary of appointments made by President Goodluck Jonathan before the 2015 national election. Thus, the statistics of regional representation in federal public service is important to assess the extent of lopsidedness or regional exclusion in the dividends of national governance.

Beside the documentary data presented it is instructive to examine the primary data as embellished in the responses of the Key Informant interview.

K1 Question

Would you relate ethno-religious voting to Government appointments after 2011 presidential election?

A Summary of KI Responses

To a significant extent with reference to the national appointments made after the presidential election.

KI Question

How was ethno-religious voting behaviour of Nigerians a crucial factor in the government appointments after 2011 presidential election?

A Summary of KI Responses

a. After the presidential election, PDP Governors and Chieftains from regions (north-central, south-south, south-east and south-west) where the president Goodluck Jonathan won were sighted at the presidential villa jostling and lobbying for political appointments.

b. The Goodluck Jonathan's offer for Government of National Unity, GNU was rejected by the opponent political parties and leaders, Bola Tinubu's Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN, and Muhammadu Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change, CPC.

c. Many indigenes of South-South and South-East regions were appointed in political and statutory positions of Goodluck Jonathan's Administration.

d. There were complaints by a section of *Yoruba* political elite that Goodluck Jonathan marginalized South-West from his government.

Key Informant respondents opined that after the tension of post-election violence in the North, many PDP Governors and Chieftains flooded the presidential villa to lobby for appointments as reward for good electoral performance of their states. Most of these party lobbyists were from *Christian-inclined Ndigbo* of South-East region and ethnic minorities of South-South including *Muslim-Christian* religiously mixed ethnic minorities of North-Central and *Yoruba* ethnic nationality of South-West where Goodluck won overwhelmingly as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Interestingly, Goodluck Jonathan looked beyond his party, PDP and seek for inter-party alliance in national governance through the offer of Government of National Unity, GNU. Expectedly, the offer was rejected by the opponent political parties, ACN and CPC as noted by Key Informant respondents. For the Action Congress of Nigeria which party identification influence and popularity rose rapidly after the election with reference to National Assembly seats won across states of *Muslim-Christian* inclined region of *Yoruba*, it was a deliberate rejection to further plummet the relevance of Peoples Democratic Party, PDP and fertile *the narrative seed of exclusion of the region in national governance* before the 2015 presidential election. For the Congress of Progressive Change, CPC, the development boasted the popularity and followership of President Muhammadu Buhari among millions of *Fulani, Hausa, Kanuri* across *Islamic-inclined* regions of North-West and North-East where Goodluck Jonathan lost election as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Subsequently, it was also discovered that many indigenes of South-South and South-East served in Goodluck Jonathan's government. A Key Informant opined, *This is not strange.....remember that the president is from Bayelsa state in the South-South region. And, the two regions (South-South and South-East) share a lot in common. So this sentiment will always be there.* However, some other Key Informants thought otherwise. An Informant respondent argued, *no....Goodluck Jonathan's government also accommodated people from other regions, tribes and religion. For instance, Hassan Tukur, a Muslim-Northerner was once Jonathan's Principal Secretary.* Although, Goodluck Jonathan appointed persons across states and regions to serve in his government however many Key Informants observed that there were many indigenes of South-South and South-East regions in his government.

In a more explicit sense, Table 4.2. showed early appointments made by Goodluck Jonathan after he was sworn in as the fourth Executive President of the Federal Republic. The index of the table indicates that 37 persons across the geo-political zones and religious divides were appointed to serve as heads of parastatals and agencies of the Federal government. A closer look at the table

also showed that South-East region of predominantly *Christian-Igbo* leads with 19 persons followed by *Islamic-Christian* inclined *Yoruba* region of South-West with 8 persons and South-South region of predominantly *Christian*-inclined ethnic minorities with 6 persons. Also, the *Islamic-Christian* Middle Belt region of ethnic minorities and *Islamic-Hausa-Fulani* region of North-West trailed behind with 3 persons and 1 person respectively. Hence, North-East had no representation in the top management of parastatals and agencies of the Federal government in the early administration of Goodluck Jonathan. Furthermore, the persons of *Christian* inclination were 33 while persons of *Islamic* inclination were 4 persons which underline the dominance of persons of *Christian* faith in Federal public service during the early administration of Goodluck Jonathan. Ironically, persons from the President's region and ethnic nationality were not seen in high number as expected rather persons from *Yoruba* region was high in the early administration of Jonathan as seen in the Table contrary to views conserved that South-West was marginalized. In other words, the data of Table 4.2 display a very significant lopsidedness with reference to the appointment of persons from regions where the president won and shared religious identity, *Christianity* as illustrated in Table 4.1. Perhaps the dynamics changed as the administration advances towards 2015 presidential election.

Subsequently, Table 4.3 in explicit manner summarized regional and state representation in leadership structure of judicial organ, civil service and statutory institutions. In the 79 positions presented, *Christian* inclined South-South of ethnic minorities and *Islamic* inclined North-West of *Hausa-Fulani* lead with 16 positions each while the remaining 47 positions were shared between the four regions where *Muslim*-inclined North-Central region of ethnic minorities had 14, *Christian*-inclined South-East region of *Ndigbo* nationality got 13, South-West region of *Muslim-Christian* inclined *Yoruba* ethnic nationality also got 12 while the number of *Islamic* inclined North-East region of *Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri* was grossly insignificant with 8. To evince the reality of lopsidedness in the allocation of juicy federal government positions, Southern Nigeria got 41 while Northern Nigeria got 38 from the 79 top appointments presented. Again, as earlier noted, Taraba state in the North-East was grossly excluded from national relevance. However, this absurdity may have been reversed in subsequent appointment and replacement towards 2015 presidential poll in credence to the electoral victory of PDP candidate in 2011 presidential election in Taraba state. Consequently, the reality of lopsided allocation of federal government appointments is undoubtedly one of the fundamentals for the dysphoria of the North against Goodluck Jonathan's administration occasioned with entrenched regional narrative that "*power must return to the north*" in stout resistance of the Southern ethnic minorities and *Ndigbo*. Hence, the next election in 2015 was an explicit demonstration of intense ethno-religious voting in dialectical struggle for national resources and relevance.

As earlier indicated, Key Informant respondents also held the view that *Yoruba* people were marginalized in Goodluck Jonathan's administration. *The narrative emerged after the election of the leaders of the 7th National Assembly. Before the election of the leaders of the National Assembly in June 2011, the PDP party leadership acted in consultation with the President Goodluck to zone the Offices of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives to South-West and North-East. For the Office of Speaker, the party hierarchy nominated a House member, Mulikat Akande-Adeola a law-maker representing Ogbomosho North/Ogbomosho South/Orire Federal Constituency. Unfortunately, the House rather elected Aminu Waziri Tambuwal representing the Kebbe/Tambuwal Federal Constituency of Sokoto state as Speaker*

and Emeka Ihedioha representing Aboh Imbaise/Ngor Okpala Federal Constituency in Imo state as Deputy Speaker explained a Key Informant. The development as observed by Key Informant respondents was necessitated by poor electoral performance of Peoples Democratic Party in the religiously mixed Yoruba region where the Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN swept the majority seats of the National Assembly across the six states of the zone. Sadly, only five PDP House of Representative members were elected where only two were eligible to contest for the office of the speaker. Hence, it was this unpleasant situation that made some House members from other zones to argue that South-West don't deserve the position of speakership on the ground of poor performance of PDP as revealed by Key Informants. Also, many also blamed the development on Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN for allowing their House members from the region to vote for Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, a Fulani Muslim as speaker against Akande-Adeola which was viewed as act of betrayal against the interest of the South-West disclosed by Key Informants. Baba, Chief Ayo Adebajo, one of the respected leaders of Afenifere condemned the failure of ACN members from the South-West to vote for Adeola rather preferred a Fulani-Northerner as speaker of House of Representatives. On the other hand, many other persons shifted the blame on Goodluck Jonathan saying that he should have acted fast and swiftly to maintain the zoning balance and protect the interest of the Yoruba region at least for voting for him overwhelmingly in the 2011 presidential election revealed a Key Informant. This development and prejudices occasioned with the poor performance of PDP in the region and rapidly growing regional euphoria and acceptance of Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN then the narrative of marginalization of the South-West was fully entrenched. In efforts to correct this narrative as 2015 election approaches, Goodluck Jonathan made key appointments. A popular Lagos PDP chieftain, Musilui Obanikoro was appointed as a Minister, Senator Femi Okunroumu was appointed as Chairman of Presidential Advisory Committee on National Dialogue in 2013 and Brigadier-General Jones Arogbofa (retired) younger brother to Chief Seinde Arogbofa, General-Secretary of Afenifere was appointed in 2014 as the Chief of Staff to President Goodluck Jonathan as embellished by Key Informant respondents. Sadly, these efforts did not make any meaningful impact on the psyche of millions of Yoruba voters who felt that Goodluck Jonathan administration has not really demonstrated enough drive to ensure full integration of the region in the national governance. Hence, Tinubu-Buhari alliance was overwhelmingly embraced as a vehicle for regional assertiveness and reclamation.

B. 2015 Presidential Election

It is pertinent to note that 2015 presidential election was held on 28th March. The election was contested by fourteen candidates on the platform of political parties. The following is the regional electoral result of frontline candidates (Goodluck and Buhari) of the election.

Table 5: REGIONAL RESULTS OF FRONTLINE CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN 2015 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election Result in Geo-Political Zones by Frontline Candidates and Political Parties		
Geo-Political Zone	Muhammadu Buhari (APC)	Goodluck Jonathan (PDP)
South-West	2, 433, 201	1, 821, 416
South-East	198, 248	2, 464, 906
South-South	418, 590	4, 714, 725

North-West	7, 115, 199	1, 339, 709
North-East	2, 848, 678	796, 588
North-Central	2, 411, 031	1, 715, 818

Source: Report of Nigeria’s 2015 Presidential Election (March 28) Results by States and Geo-Political Zones cited in Madubuegwu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2023).

A cursory view of the voting choices of Nigerians in the three geo-political zones in the North indicated that regional and ethno-religious sentiments and party-identification enormously influenced voter preference in the electoral victory of Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidate of APC and failure of Goodluck Jonathan, the candidate of PDP. The APC candidate won 16 states while PDP candidate won 3 states in the North and FCT. Furthermore, the *Yoruba*, *Ndigbo* and South-South ethnic nationalities in the three geo-political zones in the South in different scale and dimensions presented interesting scenarios. The decisive electoral victory of APC candidate, Buhari in the mixed religious inclined South-West of *Yoruba* ethnic nationality was unprecedented and remarkably historic from 2003 when he began to contest for the office of the president. To this extent, APC party identification, and, sense of regionalism and ethnic consciousness which resonate from the identity background of APC presidential running mate were decisive in Buhari’s electoral performance in *Egbe Omo Odudawa* region. Again, the superlative electoral performance of Muhammadu Buhari in the South-West region is an indication of two critical factors. First, the alliance between political elite of *Yoruba* ethnic nationality and political elite of *Hausa-Fulani* nationality to wrestle power from the *Christian* inclined Southern minorities and *Igbo* ethnic group. Secondly, the partisan inter-regional alliance between the mixed religious inclined *Yoruba* and *Muslim* inclined *Hausa-Fulani* was further reinforced and facilitated through the platform of All Progressive Congress, APC in ensuring the historic electoral victory of an opponent candidate first ever in Nigeria history of presidential elections. Interestingly, regional and ethno-religious sentiments, and party identification sustained voting pattern of South-South and South-East in the electoral victory of Goodluck Jonathan of PDP. In other words, the candidate of PDP won 12 states and lost 5 states to the candidate of APC in the South. In reference to the regional electoral performance, Muhammadu Buhari, won four geo-political zones (*Muslim-Christian* inclined ethnic minorities of north-central, *Islamic* inclined *Hausa-Fulani* of north-west, *Islamic* inclined *Fulani*, *Hausa*, *Kanuri* of north-east and mixed religious inclined *Yoruba* of south-west) while Goodluck Jonathan won two geo-political zones (*Christian* inclined ethnic minorities of south-south and *Christian* inclined *Ndigbo* of south-east). In all, the APC candidate, Buhari won 21 states (16 states in the North and 5 states in the South while PDP candidate, Goodluck Jonathan won 15 states and FCT (12 states in the South and 3 states in the North) (Madubuegwu, 2023).

In 2015 presidential election, against expectations in many quarters, the APC defeated the PDP in the presidential poll by 15.4 million to 12.8 million votes. The APC’s victory cut short the PDP’s dream of remaining at the helm of affairs for 60 years. It also marked the first time in Nigeria’s political history that an incumbent president will lose an election (Eme, *et al*, 2015). In more explicit sense to underscore the implications of cleavage voting in the 2015 presidential election, Onwuanabile (2015) argued that it is established fact that Nigeria is a plural state divided along ethnic and religious lines. It is also an undisputed fact that a federal state thrives more when there is a sense of national cohesion, where the federating units think less about their sub-national

identities then they think of the nation state. But what played out during the 2015 presidential election leaves much to be desired about state-building and national cohesion in the country. The re-incarnation of ethnic and religious bigotry (a phenomenon that marred the first and second Republics, and shook the very foundation of Nigeria's existence) in the 2015 presidential election if left unchecked, will exacerbate the polarized nature of the country. The insistence of the North to produce the president and the insistence of the South (South-South and South-East) to ensure that Jonathan was re-elected overshadowed the critical question of what these candidates had as their policy framework. There is therefore apprehension that subsequent elections may spring up agitations from other ethnic and religious groups to produce the next president. Issues bordering on economy, security, social welfare, job creation etc, may no longer matter to the people, as long as they share the same group identity with the president.

At this stage, it becomes imperative to examine the first appointments made by Muhammadu Buhari after 2015 presidential election as presented below:

TABLE 6: THE FIRST APPOINTMENTS OF PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI IN NATIONAL SECURITY LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTRY

Office	Name	Region/State	Religion
Chief of Army Staff	Lt. Gen Tukur Buratai	North-East, Borno	Muslim
Chief of Air Staff	Air Vice Marshal Sadique Abubakar	North-East, Bauchi	Muslim
Chief of Naval Staff	Real Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	South-South, Cross River	Christian
Chief of Defense Staff	Major-Gen. Gabriel Abayomi Olonishakin	South-West, Ekiti	Christian
Minister of Defense	Brigadier Gen. Mansur Mohammed Dan Ali (Rtd)	North-West, Zamfara	Muslim
National Security Adviser	Major-Gen Babagana Monguno (Rtd)	North-East, Borno	Muslim
Director of DSS	Lawal Daura	North-West, Katsina	Muslim
Chief of Defence Intelligence	Air Vice Marshal Monday Riku Morgan	North-Central, Benue	Christian
Inspector General of Police	Ibrahim Idris	North-Central, Niger	Muslim
Comptroller of Immigration	Kure Martin Abeshi	North-Central, Nasarawa	Christian
Comptroller of Customs	Col. Hameed Ibrahim (Rtd)	North-West, Kaduna	Muslim
Civil Defence	Commadant Abdullahi Muhammadu	North-Central, Niger	Muslim

Minister of Interior	Maj Gen. Abdulrahman Dambazau	North-West, Kano	Muslim
Minister of Police Affairs	Alhaji Oyewele Adesiyon	South-West, Osun	Muslim

Source: Compiled from Eme and *Onuigbo (2015: 4)*, *Nwagbo, e tal (2016:239)* and *Ndukwe, e tal, (2019: 87)*.

TABLE 7: REGIONAL IDENTITY OF PERSONS APPOINTED BY MUHAMMADU BUHARI TO SERVE AS AIDES AND EXECUTIVE POSITIONS OF FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Office	Name	Region/State
Special Adviser, Media and Publicity to the president	Femi Adesina	South-West Osun State
Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity	Garba Shehu	North-West Kano State
State Chief of Protocol/Special Assistant (Presidential Matters)	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	North-West Jigawa State
Accountant-General of the Federation	Ahmed Idris	North-West Kano State
Director-General, State Security Services, SSS	Lawal Daura	North-West Katsina State
Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Communication Commission	Umaru Dambatta	North-West Kano State
Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS	Babatunde Fowler	South-West Lagos State
Secretary to Government of the Federation	Babachir David Lawal	North-East Adamawa State
Chief of Staff to the President	Abba Kyari	North-East Borno State
Director, Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR	Modecai Baba Ladan	North-West, Kano State
Commissioner for Insurance and Chief Executive of the National Insurance Commission	Mohammed Kari	North-West Kaduna

Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC	Yakubu Mahmood	North-East Bauchi State
Ag. Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission(EFCC	Ibrahim Magu	North-East Borno State

Source: Compiled from Mbah, *e tal* (2019:27) and Ndukwe, *e tal*, (2019: 88).

Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 showed the appointments made by President Muhammadu Buhari after 2015 presidential election. The appointments cut-across various leadership positions (military, advisory, police, paramilitary, intelligence and ministerial) of the national security structure and federal public service of the country. Hence, it provided insight on the identity background of persons appointed for interpretation and analysis to underscore the significant or insignificant correlation between ethno-religious voting pattern of Nigerians and national political appointments.

KI Question

Would you relate ethno-religious voting to Government appointments after 2015 and 2019 presidential elections?

A Summary of KI Responses

To a very significant extent with reference to the national appointments made after these presidential elections.

KI Question

How was ethno-religious voting behaviour of Nigerians a crucial factor in the government appointments after 2015 and 2019 presidential election?

A Summary of KI Responses

- a. President Muhammadu Buhari’s press comments.
- b. The President appointed most of his close aides from the North.
- c. The complaints by political elite of South-South and *Ohaneze Ndigbo* that Buhari’s government marginalized the regions.
- d. The uproar created by the appointments of persons from North and South-West in deliberate exclusion of South-South and South-East to serve in the leadership positions of national security architecture of Nigeria.
- e. The IPOB ‘s call for referendum in South-East in protest against marginalization of *Ndigbo* by Buhari’s government.

KI Question

What were the effects of these lopsided political appointments among ethno-religious identities in Nigeria?

A Summary of KI Responses

- a. It violated the constitutional provision of Federal Character for equity and fairness.
- b. It created regional suspicion of dominance among people of ethno-religious identities.
- c. It makes mockery of national unity and national integration.
- d. It create image of a sectional leader.
- e. It ignites the explosion of insurrectional activities against the Nigeria state.

The 2015 presidential election was a watershed with reference to the electoral victory of an opponent presidential candidate first ever in the history of elections in Nigeria. However, it took the president Muhammadu Buhari several months after May 29th, 2015 to make appointments and form his cabinet. Most of the Key Informant respondents believed that there is a very significant correlation between ethno-religious voting and government appointments after 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. To this end, Key Informants revealed that Buhari's press comments at United States where he said that his government will first favour people or region that voted for him was indeed a divisive statement and underscores the imperative of ethno-religious voting pattern in government's appointments.

Similarly, President Muhammadu Buhari before the formation of his cabinet appointed close aides who were from the North and share the same ethno-religious inclinations with him as argued. *For instance, most of these close aides were from the North but reflect religious divides and diversity. Apart from few personal staff Buhari appointed Babachair Lawal a Christian-Northerner as a Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Abba Kayri, a Muslim-Northerner as the Chief of Staff etc in his early appointment as stated by a Key Informant.*

Also, Key Informants remarked that Chief Nnia Nwodo, president of *Ohaneze Ndigbo*, leadership of Ijaw National Congress and South-South Assembly decried what was described as deliberate exclusion of the two regions from key statutory and political positions of the Federal government. In protest, the South-East and South-South Professional Forum led by Emeka Ugwu Oju wrote to President Muhammadu Buhari on the need to ensure effective integration of South ethnic minorities and *Ndigbo* in his government.

In a more specific sense, the Table 4.5 presented 14 top leadership positions in national security structure of the country. Close observation revealed that 11 positions were allotted to the North while 3 positions were assigned to the South. In the North, the *Islamic* inclined North-West region of *Hausa, Fulani* and *Muslim-Christian* inclined Middle Belt region respectively got 4 positions each while the *Islamic* inclined North-East region of *Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri* trailed behind with 3 allotted positions. In the South, the South-West got only 2 positions (inspite of its electoral value in 2015 presidential election) while the *Christian* South-South region of ethnic minorities had only one while South-East region of *Christian-Ndigbo* was obviously excluded from national security leadership structure of the country. Although the situation is not novel as regards the identity background of the president but it demonstrate an extreme trend of lopsidedness not seen in

Goodluck Jonathan administration and in the recent time. In reference to religious representation, the Table showed high proportion of persons of *Islamic* inclination, 10 out of 14 while the remaining 4 persons were *Christians* in the administration of national security in a secular Nigeria state.

In the same vein, Table 4.6 also revealed the regional background of persons appointed to serve as the aides of the president and executive positions of federal public service. From the list of 13 appointed persons, 11 persons from the North predominantly from the regional origin of the president (north-west) while only two were from Southern Nigeria (south-west) where South-East and South-South were deliberately excluded.

Consequently, this lopsided trend also reflected enormously in public service and statutory appointments under the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari as embellished by Mbah, *e tal* (2019) and Eme and Onuigbo (2015). Expectedly, the unpleasant situation elicited strident remarks from the elite and concerned citizens particularly from Southern Nigeria. Instructive in the myriad of criticisms against the sectional dispositions of Buhari's administration in political appointments was the statement made by a serving PDP Senator from Eastern Nigeria. In this regard, Eme and Onuigbo (2015) writes that Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, stressed that no one should be surprised at the appointments because the President had allegedly pledged to give priority to those who voted for him. He said, *"no one should be surprised over what is happening or the shape of the political appointments made by President Muhammadu Buhari. To be fair to him, the President said during his recent state visit to the United States of America, that he will reward those who voted for him. Again, it could be the style of the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC). That is to say, that the party has chosen as a style, to run a government that encourages alienation of a sizeable portion of its people, as well as one that promotes exclusivity. Every political party has its style, like the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) that adopted its own style of running an inclusive national government, which reflected the true character and national outlook of the Nigerian people. PDP's style was inclusive not minding the voting pattern of any section of the country or where its support base was derived. For any party, there should not be any political barrier or alienation of any constituent part, because after elections the President is the President and father of all Nigerians irrespective of political leaning. My hunch is that the appointments so far, which has surreptitiously thrown up the prevailing circumstance, has failed to encourage our people's hunger and quest to build a nation state out of a heterogeneous Nigeria. The appointments as it were do not also support the effort to weave a more cohesive country that would metamorphose into a nation where unity and love will prevail. The founding fathers of our nation had this in mind when the notion of "Federal. Character" was inscribed in the constitution and a commission created for that purpose. That a President of elder statesman status would willfully breach this fiber that holds this country together is highly regrettable. My take is that, it is a 'Buhari country', it is the reality, so he can play around with his choice as his mind and conscience directs him. After all he did not win election in the South East and South-South and yet he became President, therefore, the South should be orphaned for not voting for him. Perhaps that is the stark reality that the people of the South in Nigeria should face. There is an idiom in Igbo language that says: "20 years or more is not eternity". The Buhari government will also come to an end one day. Nonetheless, it could have been good and politically expedient if President Buhari sees himself as President of Nigeria, which is the hallmark of a statesman and not that of President of a section of the country"*

The statement reflected views of many Nigerians particularly from the South which reinforced regional resentment against Buhari's administration. In this climate of widespread disillusionment and discontent, the Niger Delta militants return to the creeks and Indigenous People of Biafra intensified its secessionist campaign against the federal government of Nigeria. In attempt to further underline the correlation between the outcome of 2015 presidential election and resurgence of hostilities in Niger Delta creeks, Koko, (2018), remarked that the discriminative disposition of Buhari's administration against the Niger Delta region and Ndigbo because of the outcome of 2015 presidential election is not healthy for Nigeria's democracy and national unity. This is the reason for a new dimension of youth restiveness in the guise of the Niger Delta Avengers, a new militant group which emerged in 2016 in agitation against the discriminative disposition of this present government and caused great damage on crude oil installations in the region. Similarly, Nwagbo, *e tal* (2016) also noted that agitations and destruction of national assets in the Niger Delta region was prevalent. More so, Yar' Adua and Jonathan administrations had in the past respectively intervened through Amnesty Programme, appointment, award of contracts, etc. Tension was reduced and relative return of peace was experienced in the area during the period especially when one of their own has become President of Nigeria (Goodluck Jonathan). However, militancy resumed when Buhari government decided to suspend some of these projects with view of reviewing the processes of their establishment and execution. This led to destruction of oil facilities and companies in the area on daily basis. Nigeria as a mono-economy nation that depends majorly on oil for her foreign exchange is seriously being challenged by the activities of these militants. In recent time, Federal and some state governments have not being able to meet up with up with their social responsibilities due to low volume of oil production.

The uproar and tension created by this adverse development accelerated vehemence of regional resentment against Federal Government of Nigeria as seen in the insurrectional activities of Indigenous People of Biafra, (a dissident group campaigning for the secession of the South-East from the Federal Republic) and Niger Delta Avengers, a militant group. These centrifugal tendencies undermined national unity and nearly mar the 2019 presidential election in South-East when IPOB threatened regional boycott of the poll.

It is pertinent to note that 2019 presidential election was held on 23rd February. The election was contested by seventy-three candidates on the platform of political parties. The following is the regional electoral result of frontline candidates (Buhari and Atiku) of the election.

TABLE 8: REGIONAL RESULTS OF FRONTLINE CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN 2019 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election Result in Geo-Political Zones by Frontline Candidates and Political Parties		
Geo-Political Zone	Muhammadu Buhari (APC)	Atiku Abubakar (PDP)
South-West	2, 036, 450	1, 776, 670
South-East	501, 769	1, 693, 485
South-South	1, 051, 395	2, 233, 132
North-West	5, 995, 651	2, 580, 465
North-East	3, 238, 783	1, 255, 357
North-Central	2, 465, 599	2, 023, 769

Source: Report of Nigeria's 2019 Presidential Election (February, 23rd) Results by States and Geo-Political Zones cited in Madubuegwu and Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2023).

A close observation of the voting choices of Nigerians in the three geo-political zones in the North revealed that candidate personality trait, candidate charisma and party identification played enormous roles in the electoral performance of APC and PDP frontline candidates to the insignificance of identity considerations (regionalism and ethno-religious inclination). In reference to personality trait and political charisma, Buhari has two popular names in the North, *Mai Mutuchi* (integrity) and *Mai Gaskiya* (as it is...) symbolic to his personality. He is seen as honest and incorruptible, and still enjoyed impressive cult followership among millions of Nigerians of *Arewa* extraction, and failures of his administration were often blamed on persons around him. Again, the marginal dominance status (North-Central and North-East) and dominance status (North-West) of APC party identification as illustrated were among the edge to the incumbent president and APC candidate against Atiku, the candidate of PDP. In the North, Buhari won 15 states while Atiku won 4 states and FCT. Furthermore, the voting choices of the mixed religious *Yoruba*, *Christian* inclined *Ndigbo* and *Christian* inclined ethnic minorities of three geo-political zones in the South undoubtedly underscored the ethno-religious identity value of running mates in Nigeria presidential elections. Hence, the regional and ethno-religious identity value of Peter Obi, running mate of PDP presidential candidate was visibly significant to sustain regional voting pattern of the two regions, *Christian* ethnic minorities of South-South and *Christian* inclined *Ndigbo* of South-East. This is quite remarkable. However, the regional and ethno-religious identity value of APC running mate, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo failed to spring the same trend and pattern (as seen in South-South and South-East) in mixed religious inclined South-West region of *Yoruba* ethnic nationality. In the South, Atiku won 13 states and Buhari won 4 states. In reference to the regional electoral performance, Muhammadu Buhari won four geo-political zones (mixed religious inclined ethnic minorities of north-central, *Muslim* inclined *Hausa*, *Fulani*, *Kanuri* of north-east, *Muslim* inclined *Hausa-Fulani* of north-west and mixed religious *Yoruba* of south-west) while Atiku Abubakar won two geo-political zones (*Christian* inclined ethnic minorities of south-south and *Christian*-inclined *Ndigbo* of south-east) as presented. In all, the APC candidate, Buhari won 19 states (15 states in the North and 4 states in the South) while PDP candidate, Atiku Abubakar won 17 states and FCT (4 states in the North and 13 states in the South) (Madubuegwu, 2023).

Most of the Key Informant participants however stressed that after the 2019 presidential election, the same trend of lopsided appointments continued unabated as South-South and South-East remained inadequately included in the key statutory and political positions of the federal bureaucracy and presidency. A Key Informant said, *for the first time, since 1999, we have not seen where all positions were held by the North. It didn't happen in Obasanjo's time and, it was not seen during the era of Goodluck but unfortunately for the unity of this country, it is happening under Buhari's administration.* Again, another statement reads, *sothe people of South-East should be disowned in appointments because they exercise civic right of voting?* On the other hand, some Key Informants argued that Muhammadu Buhari administration adhered to the principle of federal character in the appointment of persons across states and regions of the federation but pointed out that there are incidences of lopsidedness of these appointments in MDAs of the federal government.

Consequently, this unpleasant scenario has violated federal character provision in the Federal Republic Constitution of 1999, created regional suspicion of dominance among ethno-religious

groups, undermines national unity, entrench narrative of a sectional leader and further worsen intractable crises of terrorism and insecurity in the country. A Key Informant concluded...*the country has become more and more divided along cleavage lines.....*

Expectedly, the South-East also demonstrated regional resentment against Buhari's led government through the insurrectional campaign and activities of IPOB. In this vein, Odogwu, (2019), opined that the marginalization of the Igbo nation in socio-economic and political scheme of things in Nigeria led to emergence of MASSOB, IPOB, etc. Today, the agitations of these groups have become overwhelming under Buhari's government. Thus, there is regional appeal to President Buhari to explain to Ndigbo why he has abandoned the zone in terms of appointment and project execution, and why business owned by Ndigbo are allegedly being frustrated by his administration. Other agitations are:

1. Nigeria is yet to have a president of Igbo extraction
2. Nigeria is yet to have Chief Justice of Nigeria, CJN of Igbo extraction
3. Ndigbo is yet to see strong federal government presence in the region as regards to key infrastructures such as roads, rail stations, industries, sea sports, power stations, refineries etc.
4. Ndigbo is yet to be fully integrated in Buhari's administration through federal appointment in compliance to federal character principle.

These enfolding situations are not strange especially in a nation-state that has failed to provide enabling and integrative avenue for its component units to thrive as Nwoye (2003) remarked that many crises in Nigeria have either been state engineered or emanated out of state polices, activities or inaction over issues that are of vital interest to one group or the other. In other words, state has been accused of being responsible for misunderstanding among ethnic and religious groups. This is in connection to act of marginalization, abuse of law, application of coercive instruments over democratic issues, injustice, and non-inclusive governance. Ironically, this is a total contrast of essence of state. In essence, state should be fair to all component parts. Inability of state to play these roles has led to struggle to control state institutions by various ethnic groups in Nigerian state. Relevance of any ethnic group is usually based on its connection to those in power. The undemocratic disposition of this practice inevitably prompts other neglected groups to articulate destructive approaches to first attract government attention over their needs. Secondly, to distract government from performing, ethno-religious crises have dominated Nigerian politics and political landscape since independence (cited in Nwagbo, *e tal* 2016). Nigeria today is at the brink of disintegration where the menace of Fulani herdsmen killings and abduction continue unabatedly to sack communities in various parts of the country raising apprehension of sudden outbreak of inter-ethnic war. In some occasions, these Fulani herders were often heard boasting and claiming "ownership of Nigeria" so far their brother remained as the "president of the federal republic". That is the miserable and frightening situation most Nigerians have find themselves today. From the Middle-Belt states to the rainforest regions of the South, it is the same tales of blood and tears (Ekpe, 2021).

The literature of the three research questions reviewed is extensive but replete with obvious gaps.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings revealed that there is a significant correlation between ethno-religious voting behaviour of Nigerians and lopsided government appointments after 2011, 2015 and 2019 presidential elections although in different scale as embellished in views of the interviewees and

Table illustrations. The data of these tables obviously illuminate deliberate marginalization and exclusion of some regions in government appointments as observed in successive administrations. This trend unfortunately has been endemic and exacerbated by the cleavage intrigues and politics during and after polls. The unpleasant development violates federal character policy, heightened regional suspicion and constituted serious threat to national unity. From these findings, the following recommendations were made:

- a. National Orientation Agency should be reformed to provide meaningful leadership on national rebirth advocacy.
- b. The Independent National Electoral Commission should also be reformed to ensure strict adherence to its presidential campaign guidelines against divisive statements and conduct that incite ethno-religious hatred and unrest.
- c. Political parties should ensure fair treatment and equity in the process of nominating candidates for presidential election to mitigate against identity tension towards power transition.
- d. Presidential candidates should make issues of national development and security the priorities of their campaign.
- e. The Nigeria electorate should search and vote for pan-Nigerian candidate irrespective of identity inclinations for the executive office of the president.
- f. The appointment of persons in the government and public service institutions of the federation should not be exclusively determined by identity consideration but also on good antecedents, character and credibility.
- g. The violation of federal character should be made an impeachable offence against erring president.
- h. Finally, the public through the civil society organizations should readily check and condemn deliberate act of regional exclusions in national government appointments.

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