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### **Full Length Research Article**

## **2015 ELECTION: THE HURDLES BEFORE PRESIDENT GOODLUCK JONATHAN**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

With the retinue of endorsements and adoption that have so far heralded President Goodluck Jonathan's second term ambition within and outside the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) hierarchy, many believe the coast is clear for the President to ride on unhindered having being adopted as the sole candidate of the party in the 2015 presidential election. The national leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) finally cleared its elected officials to participate in events organized in support of President Goodluck Jonathan's candidacy ahead of the 2015 presidential election. This comes 48 hours to the grand finale of the mega rally by the Transformation Agenda of Nigeria's (TAN) scheduled to hold in Abuja. Before the sole endorsement of President Jonathan by the PDP National Executive Committee (NEC), the National Working Committee (NWC) had barred its elected officials from participating in any group activity that endorsed the president. But a statement by the PDP national publicity secretary, Olisa Metuh, yesterday read: Further to the endorsement of Dr Goodluck Jonathan by NEC as PDP's sole presidential candidate, the NWC has cleared all elected party officials at all levels to attend and fully participate in any event organised in support of his candidacy. By this, all elected party officials and party members are at liberty to fully be involved in events and activities organised by groups or individuals supporting President Jonathan for the 2015 general elections. The PDP presidential primaries, which has Jonathan as the sole candidate, is scheduled to hold on December 6. Certain developments since the rash of endorsements and adoption have shown that the coast is yet to be clear for President Jonathan and his party following the recent suits filed in court against them by some aggrieved members of the party. While Jonathan's re-election bid is on, political pundits have said the President should brace himself for tough times ahead, as there are several hurdles to cross as he approaches the poll. This paper seeks to identify and discuss these hurdles. To achieve this objective, following the introduction is the theoretical perspective. The next segment addresses the hurdles before the president. The third section explores the ways forward. The final section concludes the paper.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

When on February 19, 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan, who was running for his first term, said his "political ambition is not worth the blood of any Nigerian" that nobody should rig for him as every vote would be made to count, many observers, especially the opposition did not take him seriously. Many did not believe that an incumbent president would not rig his election.

They were yet to forget the 'do-or-die affair' comment of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who said the 2007 election was a do-or-die affair for the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). And indeed, the 2007 polls were one of the worst in the history of elections in the country with the main beneficiary of that exercise, late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, admitting that the election that brought him to power was flawed and set up the Justice Mohammed Uwais' Electoral Reforms Committee, to proffer solutions. Upon Yar'Adua's death, Dr Jonathan, who surmounted several hurdles before he was sworn-in as acting president and president and later winning the PDP presidential ticket, declared that he was

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out for peaceful, free and fair election. Leaders of the opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which have now merged to form the All Progressives Congress (APC) took Jonathan's comments with a pinch of salt. At every juncture, they enumerated Jonathan and PDP's plans to rig elections. Arguably, President Jonathan has managed to keep his promises. The 2011 presidential election was adjudged by local and international observers as free and fair and peaceful. Thereafter, a series of violence-free and credible governorship elections have been held in five states out of which opposition parties won four and the ruling PDP won one. It started with Edo, where Governor Adams Oshiomhole of the ACN now APC retained his seat. The baton went to Ondo where Governor Olusegun Mimiko of the Labour Party prevailed. Thereafter, it was the turn of Anambra State where Willie Obiano of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) triumphed. The only place the PDP had the upper hand was in Ekiti State, where Ayo Fayose defeated incumbent Kayode Fayemi of the APC. The last on the series was Osun and the contest was won by APC's Rauf Aregbesola amid avalanche of mudslinging and bitter exchanges between the APC and PDP.

Learning from the Ekiti episode, a wary APC leadership took its allegations to new heights as the Osun polls approached. It repeatedly accused the PDP, Independent National Electoral Commission, the police and security agencies of perfecting plans to manipulate the election in favour of the PDP. It deplored the deployment of heavily armed security agents to maintain peace. It had earlier decried the deployment of such forces for the Edo and Ekiti elections. Among the polls, the only ones the APC commended INEC for a job well-done are those of Edo and Osun, which incidentally, the party won. The party came third in Anambra and Ondo, behind the winning parties and the PDP. Leaders of the APC alleged foul play in the Ekiti election even though Fayemi, few hours after the polls, accepted defeat and congratulated Fayose on his victory. Before each of the five elections, the Special Adviser to the President on Inter-Party Affairs, Senator Ben Obi, organised sensitization programs for the candidates, INEC, party leaders and other stakeholders. At each of the workshops, the stakeholders promised to play by the rules and ensure peaceful and credible elections, a promise they have kept as the outcome of the various elections show.

In spite of the peaceful and credible nature of these elections, APC leaders are insisting that the presidency and PDP are perfecting plans to rig the 2015 election. Warning against such moves and militarisation of election, they have threatened to form a parallel government if the 2015 polls were rigged. After much anticipation, President Goodluck Jonathan, on Thursday, declared his interest to contest the 2015 presidential election. The declaration came after his party. Strong indications have emerged that some second term governors, especially those elected on the platform of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) who are eyeing the Senate in 2015, may have some hurdles to cross ahead of nomination. A meeting between the PDP national chairman, Dr Adamu Mu'azu, and governors elected on the platform of the party, which took place recently at his residence, failed to reach a consensus on the vexed issue of endorsement and automatic

tickets for first term governors, Senate-bound governors and their preferred successors. They are expected to reconvene soon, but a party source said 'acceptable conditions' are likely to be given to the outgoing governors who want the PDP ticket to go to the Senate. Put differently, since the emergence of the former lecturer in the nation's political landscape, he has cut different images in the minds of people. To his admirers and supporters, he is destined for greatness and nobody can stop him from reaching the mountaintop of his political career. But for critics and political opponents, the Acting President is an opportunist who has perennially reaped where he did not sow. Whatever the argument for or against President Jonathan, the truth is that there are hurdles before him ahead of 2015 presidential election. But what are they? The paper seeks to address these hurdles.

### Theoretical Perspective: Election

National elections are major events in the life of a nation. They are accompanied by greatly increased discussion and interest on the part of the population as a whole, by intense political activity and by massive coverage in the mass media. According to Momoh and Adejumo (1999:142), elections occupy a central place in the democratic process through the animating force they provide for representative government. On the one hand, they serve as an instrument of legitimization for the state and those who manage the reins of state power, while on the other; they ensure political accountability to the people. According to Anifowose (2003:21), election refers to the process of elite selection by the mass of the population in any given political system. Although controversy rages among political thinkers about the nature of representation, there is one point of universal agreement – the representation process is intrinsically linked to election and voting. Agbaje and Adejumo (2006:26) supported Anifowose's view as the best view but adding to it shows an appreciation of the people's participation and consent in choosing their representatives. For them election is a viable mechanism for consummating representative government.

Apart from facilitating leadership succession, it promotes political accountability, citizens' participation and gives voice and power to the people. This means that, elections are an expression of the people's sovereign will. An election may be defined as the process of choice agreed upon by a group of people. It enables them to select one or a few people out of many to occupy one or a number of authority positions. This process of choice usually involves rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. It is the most modern form of recruitment of person into office and is deemed to be a very crucial aspect of the democratic process irrespective of the type of democracy that is practiced. There is excitement at election time because politicians are on the campaign trail. In the villages, campaign meetings break the monotony of village life. New sources of entertainment and merriment become available to the villages. Such merriment is usually accompanied by high-fluting oratory of the politicians that take the dullness out of normal every day parlance. Elections in Nigeria have certain characteristics that make them peculiar, and which other African countries seem to have assiduously accepted. According to Jinadu (1997), the tortuous insertion of elections

and election management into the democratic process, and the struggle for the control of the Nigerian state, is something contentious, volatile, and divisive, requiring political mobilization, in ways that can engender, and more seriously institutionalize violent conflict, as a salient dimension of competitive electoral politics in the country. Jinadu's view is very close to that of Jega and Ibeanu (2007:9) and aligns with the style set earlier by Ibrahim (2007). Iyayi (2005:7-9) can also be put into this group when he argues that, elections in Nigeria have common features or characteristics, which includes:

1. massive fraud and rigging,
2. continuity in warfare and violence,
3. lack of continuity in the political platforms and ideological leanings,
4. resort to ethnicity as the primary credential for qualifying for the stake of power,
5. increasing materialization of politics or money politics.

Ogundiya and Baba (2007:245-246) supported the view of Jinadu (1997), and thus, stated that:

In Nigeria, rather than being a political asset and a legitimate force, elections have become a political liability, a source of instability and decay. The various experiences with competitive electoral politics in Nigeria have brought the worst in political thuggery and brigandage, unmediated and unrestrained violence, characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property. In fact, the so-called electoral politics in Nigeria has likened by several Nigerian scholars to warfare. In Nigeria today, the largesse that accrue from political offices make these positions very tempting, and so engender crisis each time there is an election that could warrant the incumbent leaving that richly-rewarding and juicy position. Consequently, vote miscounting is expected to advantage the incumbent since the incumbent is more likely to control the vote count process (for example, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC).

For example, in the 2007 general elections in Nigeria, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) dully won the election with 70% votes, as did 28 of its candidates in the 36 states' gubernatorial elections. However, the elections were deeply flawed through maladministration, violence, bribery and vote miscounting. The multifarious flaws are noted from the comments of the Independent International and Local Observers:

Rigging, violence and intimidation were so pervasive and on such naked display that they made a mockery of the electoral process. Where voting did take place, many voters stayed away from the polls. By the time voting ended, the body count had surpassed 300 (Human Rights Watch, 2007:21). The irregularities were so numerous and so far-reaching that the election was a charade and did not meet the standards required for democratic elections (Transition Monitoring Group, 2007:7). Nigeria's elections were not credible and fell far short of basic international standards. Elections for president, state governors and legislators were marred by violence, poor organizations, lack of transparency significant evidence of fraud, voter disenfranchisement and bias (European Union

Electoral Observation Mission, 2007:4). According to Ogundiya and Baba (2007:245) election is a veritable platform for conflict resolution and transformation outside the battlefield and without bloodshed. Hence the requirement for elections to be free and fair. Unfortunately, while much lip-service is paid to the norms of free elections, too often the reality is a travesty of democracy. According to them election devoid of the attributes of freeness and fairness, becomes an empty shell, lacking any real democratic content. But this has been the lot in most African states, and Nigeria is one of the worst culprits in this. However, it must be reaffirmed that elections are not only meant to ensure, confirm or re-affirm the legitimacy of the governors through a regular consent, but also to provide a fertile ground for democracy to thrive. On the other hand, violence, thuggery, abusive language, the dissemination of falsehood, enmity and hostility are injected into the life of the people (Nnoli, 2003: 220-221). According to Mackenzie (1986), elections can only be free and fair in an environment where:

1. An independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws,
2. An honest, competent, non-partisan administration to run elections.
3. A developed system of political parties, well organized to put their policies, traditions and team of candidates before the elections as alternative between which to chose and;
4. A general acceptance throughout the political community of certain rather than vague rules of the game which limits the struggle for power because of some unspoken sentiment that if the rules are not observed more or less faithfully the game itself will disappear.

According to Okoye (2003), elections are rituals of choice and that their binding characters are derived from the participation of the individual as a chooser in a social act which confers legitimate authority on the person chosen. Obi and Abutudu (1999:285) posit that, elections offer the electorate the freedom of choice, the power to hold elected leaders accountable and provide protection against perpetuation of arbitrary rule. Bratton (1999) agreed with Obi and Abutudu that in spite of the clear distinction between elections and democracy, elections remain fundamental, not only installing democratic governments but also and more significantly as a necessary requisite for broader democratic consolidation.

Elections are a complex set of activities with different variables that act and feed on one another. It can be defined as a formal act of collective decision that occurs in a stream of connected antecedent and subsequent behaviour. It involves the participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders and their own participation in governance. Elections are not necessarily about Election Day activities although it forms an important component. It encompasses activities before, during and after elections. It includes the legal and constitutional framework of elections, the registration of political parties, party campaigns, the activities of the electric and print media in terms of access; it includes campaign financing, the activities of security agencies and the government in power. It includes the authenticity and genuineness of the voters register; it includes the independence or lack of electoral agencies and organs. It includes the liberalism or otherwise of the political process in

the country and the independence of adjudicating bodies of elections (Okoye, 2003:7). Election is a civil process of enabling citizens to exercise their democratic rights, and participate in public affairs by either offering themselves for election or electing their chosen representatives into various organs of government. The right of citizens to participate in public affairs has been internationally recognized and enshrined in such status as:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human right;
2. The International Covenant on civil and political rights;
3. The African Charter on Human and People's Right (Egwu and Ibrahim, 2006:1).

A successful election is one that creates legitimate representative government. At a minimum, this means an election in which all significant players compete and accept the outcome. Beyond this, a successful election is one that not only elects a government, but also elects a viable opposition that is respected by the government and with which the government is prepared to bargain (Baxter, 1997:1). Also, Akinboye (2005:295) argues that elections generally, represent a means through which political expression is measured and the exercise of state power legitimized and accepted as being derived from the consent of the people. It is also a means by which the citizens choose their representatives in confronting with the dictate of modern democracy. A survey of the history of elections in Nigeria shows that it has been characterized by massive frauds, the intimidation and even assassination of political opponents. This is because Nigerian State did not emerge from internal class struggle, rather, it was imposed from outside by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. At the dawn of independence, those who emerged as leaders were collaborative class and having no economic base, they all struggled to get control of the state. Given that, the inheritors of the colonial state did nothing to restructure it, while it is serving the metropolitan bourgeoisie, it is being used by the nascent petty bourgeoisie, who inherited it to strengthen their economic base (Okoye, 2003).

Accordingly, in supporting the above assertion, Rahaman (2009), posits that, elections in Nigeria since independence were characterized by malpractices, which often had corruptive influence on democracy. The federal elections of 1964 and 1965 were full of rigging, acrimony and violence. The dominance of the political leaders or ruling class in Nigeria was quite strong and will do everything possible to win election. This is why elections in Nigeria is seen as do or die affair, since they see political power as a means for the accumulation of wealth. Ekekwe (1986:63) stated that:

The evolution of a dominant local bourgeoisie was thwarted by the role of foreign oligopoly and the support of the oligopoly by colonial state. The petty bourgeoisie too was frustrated and although it became the dominant political force and subscribed to the ideological position of foreign capital, it was economically very weak in relation to the capital. This is the reason why the dominant class in Nigeria sees winning election as an opportunity to capture state power and use it to accumulate wealth. Chukwu (2005:357) agreed that elections are properly regarded as the central institution of democratic governments. This is because in a democracy the authority of

the government derived solely from the consent of the governed. The principal mechanism for obtaining and translating that consent into governmental authority is the holding of genuinely democratic elections. Indeed, all modern democracies hold elections but not all elections are democratic. A democratic election would characteristically be competitive, periodic, inclusive, definitive, free and fair. Election is the process by which people (voters) freely elect their leaders directly or indirectly through peaceful means. However, for election to be free and fair there must be competent and unbiased electoral management body such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); independent judiciary and well-organized and functional political parties to obey the rules of the game and the press freedom.

There should be transparency which is the openness in the election process while the integrity of an election process means the ability of electoral management body to operate without any interference that could destroy its independence. Therefore, election provides an avenue for smooth, peaceful and acceptable means of recruitment/ replacement of leaders all over the world. Periodic elections are one of the central ideas of democracy through which citizens chose their representative in government in a peaceful manner. However, Ibrahim (2006:22) insists that elections in Nigeria are characterized by controversies and disputes which, in most cases, transform into violent conflicts. Election related conflicts stem from many causes, including the structure of the state, the structure of the electoral system, political culture, political intolerance and repression, undemocratic practices by political parties and failure to recognize the legitimacy of opposition, corruption and election rigging, clash of political ideologies or cultural values, media bias, fear, misinformation, and political bigotry.

Again, Ibrahim (2006:31) posits that, the nature of election process is competitive, entailing engagement by political actors for limited political space and positions. The confrontational nature of this competition generates conflicts whose consequences threaten, and at times destroy, the nation-state. Elekwa, (2007:9) strongly upheld the opinion of Ibrahim (2006:31) when they posit that, the inordinate level of barbarism being displayed by members of the Nigerian political class gives Nigerians a cause for worry. Following the wave of democratization that has become the fad globally, and given that there seems to be an acceptance of democratic rule by human society generally, elections are now commonplace and taken for granted in all cultures. Nigeria is not left out in the bid to follow the trend after decades of military rule that ensued that elections did not hold or when they held, the votes of the citizens did not count. From the above definitions of election, our operational definition of election is the selection of individual or group of individuals by the population to represent their interest in government

### **Opposition from APC**

At least four major political parties and several political groups had merged in 2013 to form the All Progressives Congress. The parties include the All Nigeria Peoples Party, the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive

Change, and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance. One major goal the APC wants to achieve is to end the reign of the ruling PDP, which has been in control of the central government since 1999. It is bent on sacking President Goodluck Jonathan from office at the Presidential Villa in 2015.

Savouring his victory after the election, Governor Aregbesola, however said:

Ordinarily, this should be a moment of joy and celebration consequent upon the hard earned triumph of the people's will. However, this election shows that democracy is still gravely endangered in Nigeria. We witnessed gross abuse of power and, of due process before, during and even after the actual voting process. It is so sad and unfortunate that what should be a normal, routine process was maliciously allowed to snowball into a needless virtual war by the Federal Government and the PDP. Osun State was unduly militarised in an unprecedented manner through criminal intimidation and psychological assault on our people. This election witnessed an abuse of our security agencies and amounted to a corruption of their professional ethics and integrity. The security agencies were unprofessionally utilised in Osun State to harass, intimidate and oppress the people whose taxes are used to pay their salaries and provide their arms. Hundreds of leaders, supporters, sympathisers and agents of our party were arrested and detained. Also, hundreds of other innocent citizens, including women and the aged, were harassed, brutalized and traumatised. In spite of this condemnable repression and abuse of human rights, the unflagging spirit of our people triumphed (Ezea, 2014:46).

Responding, the National leadership of the PDP urged the opposition to learn from the Osun gubernatorial election and desist from actions and utterances that were capable of overheating the system and creating room for violence. In a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Chief Olisa Metuh, the party hailed President Jonathan for creating a peaceful environment for the Osun election, it described as "*a clear testimony to President Goodluck Jonathan's unparalleled commitment to peaceful elections in Nigeria* (Baiyewu, 2014:14)." Speaking on this issue, at an inter-denominational church service organized as part of activities to commemorate the 2014 Armed Forces Remembrance Day, Jonathan said: "*I have always said it that any ambition I have at any time is not worth the blood of any Nigerian. I will never ever expect a Nigerian to spill a drop of his blood because Goodluck Jonathan must fulfil his ambition* (Ukaibe, 2014:22)."

The party said, "*the lesson from this election is that the opposition party should stop crying wolf where there is none. They must desist from actions and statements that cause confusion and create unnecessary tension, capable of igniting violence and blood-letting in elections* (Ezea,2014:46)." Ahead the 2015 general elections, the PDP accused the leadership of the APC of plans to truncate the elections through its attack on the Presidency, the Judiciary, security agencies and other organs of government. Claiming that the APC and its leadership were on the destructive march against the PDP stressed that in 2010 and 2011, they made similar statements

which allegedly culminated in the crises and violence which erupted in some parts of the country. The stance of the APC is raising question among observers on whether or not the Jonathan's administration will maintain the track record of violence-free and credible election on account of caustic controversies trailing his second term ambition. The merger had given the opposition party more national appeal, as it was made up of parties allegedly considered by political analysts as regional. Again, a large percentage of the APC is made up of prominent ex-PDP members, including serving governors, who had left the ruling party for the opposition. Again, the APC has zoned its presidential ticket to the North, which political analysts believe is a deliberate attempt to lure the zone into voting against Jonathan from the South. Furthermore, none of APC's presidential aspirants — former Head of State, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (retd.); former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar; and Governor of Kano State, Rabi'u Kwankwaso — can be underrated by the incumbent. Except the APC adopts a consensus arrangement like the PDP, Jonathan will know his biggest opponent when the opposition party's candidate emerges from the primary scheduled to hold on December 2.

### Internal crisis in PDP

The PDP is not at the crossroads in choosing its presidential candidate, unlike the APC, as members of its Board of Trustees, National Executive Council and the National Working Committee unanimously endorsed Jonathan as their consensus candidate. However, second-term PDP governors, majority of who are senatorial aspirants, are seeking an automatic ticket in return. Also, the governors want to influence the emergence of their successors through adoption and consensus arrangements. These, observers have noted, will not go down well with other aspirants that will be eased out of the race. In another development, there is also the issue of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who had insisted that he would not be actively involved in the activities of the party unless his grievances are resolved. The ex-president had, on April 3, 2012, resigned his appointment as the Chairman of the BoT of the party.

Furthermore, in an 18-page letter dated December 2, 2013, Obasanjo had written a stinker to Jonathan, accusing him of various offences and listed what he felt to be Jonathan's failings, including not honouring his words and taking actions calculated at destroying Nigeria. The President had also replied Obasanjo, asking him to provide proofs for his allegations. The elder statesman had also written to the then National Chairman of the PDP, Bamanga Tukur, threatening to boycott activities of the party until the Chairman, Mobilisation and Organisation Committee of the party in the South-West, Buruji Kashamu, was sacked. After the protracted crises that led to the resignation of Bamanga Tukur as National Chairman of the PDP, Obasanjo, who had accused the President of using Tukur to cause the lingering crises in the party, insisted that the problems of the party were beyond the resignation of Tukur. As the 2015 elections approach, both ruling and opposition parties are now lobbying Obasanjo for his backing on their political adventures. The national leadership of the PDP had recently begged the ex-president for forgiveness and for him to "return to the party." Obasanjo had,

however, stated that he had never left and remained a member, while insisting that all the issues he raised must be resolved. Strong indications have emerged that some second term governors, especially those elected on the platform of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) who are eyeing the Senate in 2015, may have some hurdles to cross ahead of nomination. A meeting between the PDP national chairman, Dr Adamu Mu'azu, and governors elected on the platform of the party, which took place on Wednesday night at his residence, failed to reach a consensus on the vexed issue of endorsement and automatic tickets for first term governors, Senate-bound governors and their preferred successors. They are expected to reconvene over the weekend. A member of the party's National Working Committee (NWC), told a team of journalists in Abuja over the weekend that 'acceptable conditions' are likely to be given to the outgoing governors who want the PDP ticket to go to the Senate. He said that "they cannot have everything they want (Ezea, 2014:46)." According to him, the party was worried that even though it desired that some its ranking senators returned to the Senate in 2015, the activities of some of the governors had become 'big constraints on the way of the party's desire.'

The source also added that as the party tries to manage this development, a south-south governor (names withheld) and the senator representing his senatorial district openly confronted themselves before President Goodluck Jonathan at the Presidential Villa last week over the Senate ticket for the zone. Aside confirming that there were, indeed, pressures from the outgoing governors on Mu'azu and President Jonathan over the issue of automatic senatorial tickets for the two-term governors, the NWC member disclosed that the national leadership of the party had concluded plans to meet with the governors to reel certain conditions. He explained that:

The truth is that the pressure has always been there since the issue of the president's endorsement was concluded at our last NEC meeting. It has taken a very dangerous dimension because of our desire to strengthen our National Assembly, especially the Senate, so that the polity could benefit from their wealth of experience, but the governors and their desire to all go to the Senate is setting a big constraint on our desire for this. While we believe that the governors are our field commanders, we cannot say in the same breath that our senators are no more useful and should be discarded; so we have outlined some acceptable conditions that will guide both the governors and the senators; because, especially the governors, they cannot have everything for themselves without consideration for others. We are going to tell them politely that if a governor wishes to go to the Senate, fine, but such one cannot be the one to anoint his successor; and, if at all, let the senator any governor wishes to replace also take the governorship slot (Egburuonu and Oguntola, 2014:40).

The disclosure by the NWC member came on the heels of the report that a south-south governor had lured the senator representing his (the governor's) zone to Aso Villa to see the president. According to him, as soon as they settled for discussions, the governor told President Jonathan to 'look for something for the senator' after the elections because he (the governor) was already set to supplant the senator at the National Assembly. It was very embarrassing that the senator

had to pointedly tell the governor that if he wanted to go the Senate, he (senator) was ready to be governor. It took the intervention of the president to calm frayed nerves because it was becoming a heated argument between them in the presence of Mr President. It was gathered that the governor did not welcome the response of the senator because he had already endorsed someone to take over from him in 2015. It has emerged that in Enugu State, Governor Sullivan Chime is set replace Deputy Senate President Ekweremadu just as his Ebonyi State counterpart, Martin Elechi, is touted to be keen take over from Senator Chris Nwankwo. In Delta, it is Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan versus Senator James Manager even as Cross River State governor Liyel Imoke has not hidden his readiness to replace Senator Ndoma-Egba with Hon John Eno. It is Akwa Ibom State governor Godswill Akpabio trying to displace Senator Aloysius Etok just as Benue State governor Gabriel Suswam is battle ready to upstage former PDP national chairman, Senator Barnabas Gemade. In Niger State, Senator Nuhu Zagbayi's stay in the Senate might be abridged as Governor Babangida Aliyu has indicated an interest to take it over. As Governor Jonah Jang and Senator Gyang Pwajok are likely going to swap positions in Plateau State, Bauch State governor Isa Yuguda is running for the seat occupied by Senator Adamu Gumba.

### Running Mates Dilemma

A fresh plot to replace Vice President Mohammed Namadi Sambo, to stand as President Goodluck Jonathan's running mate for the 2015 presidential election is causing ripples within the top apparatchik of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Impeccable sources disclosed that the recent rapprochement between President Jonathan and the Jigawa State Governor, Alhaji Sule Lamido, is causing panic in the Vice President's camp that the President may have decided to field the governor as his running mate in next year's elections. It was gathered that following the President's visit to Jigawa State to inaugurate the new multi-billion airport in Dutse built by the Jigawa State government a few weeks ago, series of strategic meetings have been held by the President's kitchen cabinet to weigh the pros and cons of Jonathan/Lamido pairing for the PDP presidential ticket. During his visit to the state, the President spoke glowingly of Lamido, his achievements in office and how he contributed to his election as President in 2011.

He said,

I know the role Lamido played in my election in 2011. If a governor means well for you, he can at least support you during the primaries. Sule was totally committed to me and he is not somebody who talks with both sides of his mouth. Sule is somebody I trust. But let me tell you that I have no problem with Lamido and I will never have problems with Jigawa people. We will continue to do more to make Nigeria better and reduce poverty across board. I want to assure you that the relationship between the Federal Government, the Presidency and Jigawa will continue to be strong. From 2007 till now, I have seen what Lamido has done. I have to thank him immensely for the transformation of the state. I know what this state was and I have seen what he has done so far to change the tide. We must isolate talents and train them to excel.

Within Lamido's tenure, even the blind will see that he has performed (Egburuonu & Oguntola, 2014:41). And apparently to put to rest reports that he has an axe to grind with the President, Lamido said he was proud of the Federal Government's transformation agenda, while a former Minister of Power and Steel, Bashir Dalhatu also noted at the ceremony: We have been supporting you (Jonathan) and will continue to do so. We are honest and loyal to you. There is, therefore, a divine responsibility to point out what is the truth. Lamido is not against you. He is loyal to you and we believe you will continue to work with him. As a measure of good luck, you will succeed (Ukaibe, 2014:22). With the seeming reconciliation between the President and the governor, Presidency strategists are hoping that bringing Lamido on board the PDP presidential ticket would pacify the governor's political mentor and former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, whose relationship with Jonathan has worsened in the last one year. A source said: Picking Lamido would take care of two important issues; first, it is a way of making peace with Baba (Obasanjo) and second, it will erode the support base of the APC in the North West particularly in Kano, which appears to be an APC stronghold and Jigawa State (Baiyewu, 2014:14).

It was also gathered that besides using Lamido as bait to enlist Obasanjo's support for the President's re-election bid, a proposal is also been studied on the need to raise a high powered delegation comprising of former leaders and eminent traditional rulers to reconcile the President and Obasanjo. While it could not yet be ascertained if the President has accepted this proposal, sources disclosed that the Lamido option is being seriously considered to boost the President's re-election chances in the North.

A source added,

The political reality on ground is that the President must do something extraordinary to turn the current political tide in the North in his favour. Pairing Lamido on the PDP ticket could be the game changer. Yes, the incumbent vice president has been loyal to his boss and has brought stability to the government, but the truth is that he is not as politically grounded as Lamido. We are just being realistic (Ezea, 2014:14). The vice president, it was gathered, is aware of the plot to oust him and is not taking chances. His camp's main strategy is to continue harping on the continued stability of the government to make the President retain him and that replacing him with Lamido, who is also alleged to be nursing a presidential ambition, may rock the boat of the administration.

### **Alleged one-term pact with the North**

Without sounding patronizing, a major challenge to the perceived ambition of the President is the interest of power brokers from the northern part of the country. In the estimation of many, though the issue of zoning is not part of the constitution, majority of politicians of northern extraction irrespective of party affiliation believe that a northerner should emerge in 2011 for the sake of equity and justice. Political observers argue that based on the nation's political culture, it will be difficult to sell the candidature of Jonathan to the north considering that late Yar'Adua did not even finish his first

term of four years. For many, the calculation is that if Yar'Adua were to be alive, he would have sought a re-election after his first term in office. Those in this school of thought are in agreement that a northerner should be elected in 2011 to complete the remaining four years which could have been enjoyed by the north if Yar'Adua were to be alive. The thinking is that the South as represented by former President Olusegun Obasanjo was at the helm of affairs for eight uninterrupted years which means that for the sake of equity, the north should also be in power for the same period.

So, in the estimation of critical observers, President Jonathan really needs to work hard to worm his way into the hearts of the electorate and power brokers in that geographical zone of the country. President Jonathan had been accused of signing an agreement with northern elite to serve one term. The Governor of Niger State, Babangida Aliyu, who is also the Chairman of the Northern Governors' Forum, was among the first to make the allegation. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, as well as a Second Republic lawmaker and Convener of the Coalition of Northern Politicians, Academics, Professionals and Businessmen, Dr. Junaidu Mohammed — among several other northerners, mostly governors at that period — had also made the claim. For instance, Obasanjo, in the damning letter to Jonathan in 2013, had alleged that the President's failure to keep his promise not to seek a second term had also worsened the crises in the PDP. He said, while Jonathan kept denying nursing the ambition, his body language, as well as that of his aides, had indicated the contrary. Obasanjo recalled that before the 2011 general elections, Jonathan allegedly told some governors and PDP stakeholders, including him, that he would not seek re-election.

According to the former ex-head of state and president, Jonathan's failure to keep the promise had made him appear like a man without honour. He told the President that it would be "fatally morally flawed" for him to contest in 2015. "As a leader, two things you must cherish and hold dear among others are trust and honour, both of which are important ingredients of character. I will want to see anyone in the office of the Presidency as a man or woman who can be trusted, a person of honour in his words and character," Obasanjo added. The Presidency, including Jonathan himself, had dismissed the one-term agreement claim. However, the Presidency and the PDP will have to make Jonathan — a South-South man — appealing to the northern electorate, especially the elite. As it is, some northerners still believe that power should return to the region in 2015, a hurdle the APC appears to have crossed with its zoning plan.

In another development, Jonathan, on January 31, 2011 — few months before his election for the first term — reportedly said he had no intention to stay in office beyond 2015, saying he would not contest the 2015 election. *Vanguard* quoted Jonathan as saying this when he was interacting with Nigerians, most of whom were diplomats working for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union diplomats in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.

He partly said,

If I'm voted into power within the next four years, the issue of power will become a thing of the past. Four years is enough for anyone in power to make significant improvement and if I can't improve on power within this period, it then means I cannot do anything even if I am there for the next four years. I would have loved that the Nigerians in the Diaspora vote this year (2011) but to be frank with you, that is going to be difficult now. Presently, the law does not allow for voting outside Nigeria. And so, this year, Nigerians in the Diaspora will not vote but I will work towards it by 2015, even though I will not be running for election (Ukaibe, 2014:22).

### **Boko Haram and Chibok girls**

The current administration is battling with terrorism predominantly in the north-eastern part of the country. While the Federal Government claims to be winning the war against Boko Haram insurgents, killings, kidnappings and destruction have continued. Members of the Islamic sect had on April 14, 2014, stormed the Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, where they abducted over 200 schoolgirls. The development had called global attention to the spate of insecurity in the country. It would be recalled that the Northern Elders Forum, on August 11, 2014, issued an October deadline for Jonathan to produce the Chibok girls or forget about his 2015 ambition. Ex-Speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Mr. Solomon Dalung, who spoke on behalf of the forum at a press briefing in Kaduna, said, "In the light of our firm conviction that the insurgency and related security challenges pose threats to the 2015 elections and the survival of our nation, we strongly advise President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to bring an end to the insurgency in all its manifestations, and produce the Chibok girls before the end of October 2014". The NEF added, "In the event that President Jonathan fails to do this, Nigerians will be left with the only conclusion that he has forfeited his right to ask for our mandate beyond 2015." However, Jonathan said no group could threaten him before he would perform his official duties, adding that it was wrong for a group to issue such deadline. While speaking through his Senior Special Assistant on Public Affairs, Dr. Doyin Okupe, he said he was already working on how to rescue the abducted girls. The girls have remained in hostage for over six months, while Jonathan has announced his interest to seek reelection.

### **Challenge on eligibility**

There are pending cases in different courts, challenging Jonathan's eligibility to run for another term in office. Political observers appear not to be surprised with the development, considering that days before President Jonathan's endorsement and adoption by the PDP governors, National Executive Committee (NEC), Board Of Trustees (BoT) and National Working Committee (NWC) of the party, a PDP stakeholder and former governorship aspirant in Adamawa State, Dr. Umar Ardo had in a newspaper advertorial raised questions on the eligibility of President Jonathan to contest the 2015 presidential election. Many believe that dragging President Jonathan and the party to court on the issue may be a follow-up to the advertorial. According to the suit, Ardo urged the Court of Appeal to quash the resolutions of the National Executive Committee (NEC), the Board of Trustees (BoT) and

the PDP Governors' Forum that endorsed President Jonathan as the sole presidential candidate of the party in the 2015 presidential election. In an appeal number CA/A/574A/M2013 between Cyriacus Njoku as appellant and President Jonathan, PDP and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as respondents, Dr. Umar Ardo as an interested party applicant, is asking court to grant an appeal in suit number: FCT/HC/CV/2449/2012 between Cyriacus Njoku vs Goodluck Jonathan delivered on March 1, 2013. Ardo, who claimed to be a presidential aspirant of the PDP from Adamawa State, urged the Court of Appeal to grant him leave to use the particulars of the Cyriacus Njoku eligibility suit against Jonathan to challenge the president's eligibility to contest the 2015 presidential election as a candidate of the PDP.

He further claimed that his fundamental human right as a Nigerian and as a financial member of the PDP had been breached as a result of the endorsement of Jonathan by the PDP, NEC and other organs of the party. In the appeal filed on September 23, 2014 and signed by Dr. Amuda Kannike (SAN) and Doueyi Fiderikumo on behalf of Ardo, they claimed that the decision of the lower court in the FCT raises "grave points of constitutional law and jurisprudence that is the first of its kind in Nigeria." In the affidavit deposed by Ardo, he said: That I am desirous of contesting the election to the office of President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is slated to hold on or before February 2015 and my desire is mainly built on my conviction that the president would not be eligible to contest the said election which would have cleared the way for a free and fair level playing ground contest for the party primaries (Egburuonu & Ogunola, 2014:41).

But he lamented that his presidential aspiration has been jeopardised because of the aspiration of President Jonathan who has been nominated as the sole candidate of the party, which he is a financial member. Ardo and his lawyers also faulted the FCT High Court that dismissed Njoku's suit against the eligibility of President Jonathan, stating that Justice M.N. Oniyangi erred in law when he struck out the suit on the grounds that "there was no cause of action and disclosing the cause of action." He further said the trial judge erred in law when he ruled that there was no locus standi to sue the respondents in the case as there was no election in sight as at 2013, explaining that with the endorsement of Jonathan by PDP there are harms or damages done to his ambition as a presidential aspirant.

He further said the trial judge erred in law when he ruled that the president was on his first tenure of four years and therefore qualified to contest the presidential election in 2015.

According to Ardo in the affidavit,

President was sworn in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and he took the oath of office as president to complete the unexpired tenure between May 29, 2007 and May 28, 2011. "The votes used by President Jonathan to be sworn in as president of Nigeria came from the votes in favour of Jonathan as vice-president and the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua during the 2007 presidential election (Ukaibe, 2014:22).



He further averred that

Section 135(2) of the Constitution does not state that the provision will not apply to a situation where a person assumes the position of President in the circumstance where a President dies while in office. Section 137 (1) of the constitution applies to President Jonathan when he assumed the office of President upon the demise of Yar'Adua (Ukaibe, 2014:22). Also, a related suit seeking to stop Jonathan from running for the Office of the President in 2015 was filed at the Federal High Court in Abuja last week. This time, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and a member of the All Progressives Congress (APC) filed the suit. Another similar suit is also pending before the Federal High Court in Abuja. They among others sought to restrain the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) from allowing President Jonathan to participate in the 2015 presidential election. The suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/662/2014, with Adejumo Mansouru Ajagbe (a member of the PDP from Lagos State) and Olatoye Wahab (a member of the APC from Osun State) as plaintiffs, listed the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and defendants.

The plaintiffs argued that by the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the president, having contested the presidential election twice, won and taken the oath of office and allegiance twice in respect of that office, he could no longer present himself for election to that office the third time. The case was filed by James Ocholi, A. J. Owonikoko, Okon Efut and Mahmu Magaji (all SANs) and has been assigned to Justice Ahmed Ramat Mohammed for hearing. They relied on the provisions of sections 132(1), 135(2)(a) and (b), 137(1)(b), 142(1) and (2) and the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Marwa and Nyako (2012) 6 NWLR (Part 1296) 199 at 306 (). The plaintiffs argued that by the provision of the constitution, the president and vice-president, who were elected in the same election and sworn into office on the same date and at the same ceremony are, in law, taken to have been elected for one single term of four years notwithstanding the death or even impeachment of the president.

That being so,

The reference to "two previous elections" in Section 137(1)(b) of the Constitution includes two previous oath of allegiance and oath of office as President. It is therefore safe to conclude that a vice-president, who had taken the oath of allegiance and oath of office for two previous terms as president is, in law, deemed to have been elected into the office of president at two previous elections, thereby standing disqualified to contest another election into that office (Ukaibe, 2014:22). Many, depending on where their sympathy or political leaning lies have given different motives to the suits and those behind it. While some have described it as a political cum legal strategy to distract or thwart President Jonathan's second term ambition to pave way for a Northerner to capture Presidency in 2015, others see the development as part of democratic process that is vital in developing the practice. Some even said that the whole development looks like the Biblical hand of Esau and voice of Jacob; alleging that the suit is being

sponsored by the Opposition elements and their PDP allies. The plaintiffs argued that by the virtue of constitutional provisions, the President and the Vice-President elected in the same election and sworn into office on the same date and ceremony were taken to have been elected for one single term of four years. The plaintiffs argued that by the virtue of the oaths taken by Jonathan and Sambo, following the death of President Umaru Yar'adua in 2010 and their subsequent re-election in 2011, both of them were deemed to have completed the two terms allowed by law.

### **Recommendations**

At the end of this paper, it was discovered that lack of internal democracy, zero-sumness of elections in Nigeria, ethnic biases and ethnic discord have been enthroned as the major dominating features of elections in Nigeria especially, at the Presidential level. Consequent upon these findings, the following recommendations have been made. Political and economic ideologies should be part of the criteria for political party's registration and manifesto. This will help shift the participation of people from ethnic allegiance to ideological reasons, thereby, voting the parties with the most workable ideologies and programmes. It is also recommended that the so much emphasis ascribed to the identity politics and religion of party candidates often during elections as the case is in present day Nigeria should be made insignificant. The concern should be more centred on credential, credibility and capacity instead of ethnic and religious lines. In other words, a Christian-Christian ticket and a Muslim-Muslim ticket should be encouraged only if they are considered the most qualified for an office.

After almost half a century of lack of direction, it is conceivable that most voters would want a presidential ticket that is committed and capable of providing regular electricity, an enabling environment for the growth of sustainable refineries to reduce the cost of energy for citizens and government; creating jobs for young Nigerians and empowering our women; providing an educational culture that can compete in the modern world; etc. But it is also imaginable that there are many Nigerians who would want a guarantee of inclusivity, reflection of all forms of plurality or federal character in the room in which the national cake of job and other opportunities is shared. Such guarantee can come more assuredly from a secular constitution and modern religion-neutral institutions, than from good-hearted leaders who can proclaim that they are tolerant Christians, Muslims, or Animists.

### **Conclusion**

That President Goodluck Jonathan is fully in charge of the ship of state is no more in contention. The cloudy political atmosphere surrounding the presidential seat cleared since Wednesday, May 5, 2010 when the former Bayelsa governor was sworn in as successor to late President Umaru Yar'Adua. That Jonathan will also contest the 2015 presidential election is hardly in doubt. For followers of political events, the utterances of the former lecturer and his body language show that he is surely going to be in the race. On Thursday, October 30, the PDP confirmed the ambition of Jonathan. But even

with the reality on ground, what appears to be a mystery is how the seeming gentle President is going to use powers at his disposal to pursue his ambition to remain in Aso Villa beyond May 2015, after the expiration of his tenure. The questions agitating the minds of political watchers include: Will Jonathan allow a level playing field for all politicians including those who may be in the same race with him in 2015? Is he the long-awaited messiah that would clean the Augean Stable? Or will he toe the line of former President Olusegun Obasanjo who in the estimation of many, adopted arm-twisting tactics to realize his second term ambition in 2003?

According to Niccolo Machiavelli, the renowned Italian writer, Florentine patriot and author of *The Prince*, men rise from one ambition to another: first, they seek to secure themselves against attack, and then they attack others. Already, Politics is gathering momentum and politicians are gradually getting set to play the game they know best. It is a period of late night meetings where all manner of strategies and plots are hatched. So, those conversant with the trend of politics in the country would expectedly like to see how the former Bayelsa governor would swim through the murky waters of Nigerian politics. Since the emergence of the former lecturer in the nation's political landscape, he has cut different images in the minds of people. To his admirers and supporters, he is destined for greatness and nobody can stop him from reaching the mountaintop of his political career. But for critics and political opponents, the Acting President is an opportunist who has perennially reaped where he did not sow. Whatever the argument for or against President Jonathan, the truth is that there are hurdles before him ahead of 2015 presidential election. But what are they? This paper addresses these challenges and concludes by positing that the way he is able to pacify his opponents and critics will go a long way in strengthening Nigeria democracy. It will equally help to determine the eligibility of Kaduna State Governor, Alhaji Rahman Yero and his Taraba counterpart, acting Governor Alhaji Umar Garba who took over office in a circumstance similar to that of President Jonathan.

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