Beyond technology: A comparative literature review of campaign context and issues in three countries

Thomas Chukwuma Ijere[1]
Dodeye Uduak Williams[2]

Abstract

Since Barack Obama's campaign of 2008 and 2012, contemporary discourse and analysis of modern political communication have been variously and increasingly preoccupied with the analysis of the power of new technology-digital media platforms and algorithms as both the main ingredients and infrastructure for modern campaigns and electioneering. However, as important as these mediated tools and platforms have become, we argue that focus on context, ideas, issues, and campaign rhetoric is equally essential in making sense of factors that contribute in shaping and destabilizing elections and democracy. Drawing from an extensive review of campaign related literature in three countries and a constant comparative method of reading the literature, we illustrate such contextual issues, ideas and campaign rhetoric using examples from America, Britain and Nigeria. In all three examples, the literature reviewed highlight that context – i.e. socio-economic, cultural and political all compete to incentivizes and stimulate the formation of ideas and issues that dominate campaign and election cycles.

Keywords
Elections; Ideas; Issues and Context;

[1] Center for Advanced Internet Studies, Bochum-Germany, ijere4real@yahoo.com.
[2] Department of Political Science, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria, williamsdodeye@yahoo.com.

Introduction

Lately, dissimilar research from many fields is increasingly reflecting on the consequences that digitization has on contemporary society and democracy. Although the bulk of research that has emerged is increasingly questioning earlier notions of *'liberation technology'*, digitization-platforms and algorithms remain important in shaping the digital public sphere (Miller & Vaccari, 2020). While the bulk of this work remains important to the field, scholars such as Kreiss and McGregor (2021) argue that time and attention need to also be given to *'growing anti-democratic extremist threats'*, especially from political elites.

Whilst it is necessary to debate the ethics of digital political advertising and tech reform as ways of saving democracy, it is also important to identify, flag and call out country specific anti-democratic views, ideas and the elite/political party led campaign rhetoric, that is contributing in destabilizing democracy and society. Indeed, while the field and sub-field of disinformation has remained *'relatively silent about questions of identity, motivation, labor and morality'* (Ong & Cabanes, 2019), Kreiss and McGregor (2021) argue that 'technology does not create' views, ideas or campaign rhetoric, it is the ideologies' that political actors and political parties 'espouse or the discourses they express' that travel on mediated platforms during campaign and election (Paget, 2021). According to Adams and Kreiss (2021) embedded structural factors such as *'social sorting, high choice media and environments, partisan media, and campaigns'* also serve as *'origins of affective polarization'*. Thus, *'how ideas are formed, legitimated and spread and how they become influential'* is also important for contemporary political communication research (ibid).

For example, ideas, issues and views transmitted by digitization to an increasingly enlarging digital public sphere – i.e. inequality, global warming and environmental devastation, identities, religion, racism, population growth and mass migration driven cultural backlash, new nationalism and right and left-wing populism, rising insecurity and ethno-nationalism, have all contributed in driving polarization, shaping campaign rhetoric and election outcome in many countries (Davies, 2019). For example, in America, *'Donald Trump has been President'* and then the Capitol was attacked. In Britain, the Conservative Party won its first majority in 23 years in 2015 and have now led the country out of the European Union (EU). Across Europe and Africa, *'established political parties have been shaken as new political parties and leaders have emerged and won power in France, Italy'* Nigeria and Zambia. Similarly, *'neo-fascist political groups are gaining in popularity across the US and Europe'* (Davies *et al.*, 2020).

As an explanation for these events and election outcome, scholars and commentators have blamed new technologies of political communication (Persily & Tucker, 2020). Campaigns, they argue, now rely on *'state of the art'* technology and new technological advancements in the designing of political marketing, voter identification, persuasion and demobilization-with strategies that are data driven, technology intensive, digitally enabled and personalized (Johnson, 2017). In the United States for example, the literature points to the uptake of innovative new practices in campaigning, incentivized by new media and new technology as the driving infrastructure for modern campaigns and voting battle techniques (Kreiss, 2016; Johnson, 2017).

In the United Kingdom, even though the longstanding '*native British history of campaigning*' (Scammell, 1995) continues to surface in modern elections, scholars also suggest that new media technology, digitization and data driven insight is causing and inspiring shifts in political advertising, voter identification, targeting and mobilization (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2015; Anstead, 2017). In Nigeria, recent research also suggest that new media technology and digitization is changing and reshaping the structure, methods and face of contemporary electioneering and broadening Nigeria's fault lines of ethnicity and religion (Okeke *et al.*, 2016; Dunu, 2018).

This growing and transnational impact of technology as the new frontier for advancing modern political campaigns notwithstanding, Davies *et al.* (2020) argue that it is also important to consider '*the centrality of politics*' in the analysis of modern political campaigns, since '*political life is, now more than ever, infused with symbolic practices and communicative dynamics*'. Thus, while 'relationships between media institutions and political institutions reflect the relationships between politicians and journalists, messages produced and disseminated by political actors, messages produced and disseminated by media actors, national audiences and their news consumption patterns', and '*effects of political communication on citizens and societies*' continue to importantly shape research (Esser & Pfetsch, 2020), exploring context, ideas, issues and campaign rhetoric that shape modern election cycles can unveil the socio-political, economic and cultural dynamics that incentivize how political parties and candidates communicate with the electorate and, how these in-turn flow into mediated tools and media narratives. Indeed, uncertainty in the global political landscape makes this strand of academia relevant for the field (Davies *et al.*, 2020). Understanding the types of politics that are communicated on mediated platforms '*are undoubtedly key questions*' in unpacking the disinformation crisis (ibid).

Thus, while the study of technology – i.e. social media platforms and algorithms remain important, understanding the 'broader socio-political and economic systems are also becoming fundamental (Davies *et al.*, 2020). In this way, the '*focus on media logics*' can be reversed or rebalanced with more emphasis given to politics – i.e. the politics, ideas and issues that shape modern campaign and election cycles. As recent events in America, Britain, Brazil, Nigeria and Venezuela have shown, ideas matter for political actors and government, and it the ideas that political actors and government communicate or seek to communicate that flow into and on the digital public sphere. Indeed, like technology, '*larger social trends*' and shifts in economy, politics and institutions are shaping modern campaign and election outcomes in many democracies (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018; Davies, 2019). This article seeks to highlight those as a way of increasing the discussion and research that covers the importance of context.

Methodology

Methodologically, this article draws on an extensive review of campaign related literature and a constant comparative method (Barbour, 2008) of reading the literature to highlight socio-political and economic issues that contributed in shaping recent campaign in three elections in three countries: America (2016), Britain and Nigeria 2015 respectively. As an

approach, the constant comparative method can be used to identify patterns, similarities and differences within data, cases or literature (Barbour, 2008). Although much of the literature relating to the constant comparative method assumes that codes are used, this is not necessarily the case. In developing the method used in this study, a thorough literature review that involved constantly comparing evidence from empirical and technical literature and insider accounts on the three campaigns was used, in order to identify the themes discussed in sections 4, 5, and 6. As examples, the three countries and elections chosen as case studies have been selected for pragmatic reasons based on events and the election outcome, and the dearth of research in sub-Saharan Africa makes the Nigerian example important (Moghadam, 1995; O'Kane, 1995; Gerring, 2004). As the case studies for the analysis, the three countries and elections selected have been chosen and constructed for producing evidence and instances that represent our argument.

Elections and campaign: Ideas and issues in three countries

According to Ballarino and Regini (2008), a link exists between the economic situation of a country and the social-political action. Scholars argue that a country's socio-political and economic situation during an election can drive election dynamics, shape debates and blame game which is of fundamental importance in determining candidates and political party electoral fortunes (Eichenberg *et al.,* 2006). Key events according to Esser and Stromback (2012) can serve as '*situational triggers for the strategic priming and framing*' of campaign messages. Thus, political campaigns '*function as a filter to mediate the impact of events*' and echo those during campaigns to help voters form an opinion (Costa, 2012). Following Swanson (2004), Moser and Scheiner (2012) realized the need to consider socio-economic and political context where campaign and political messages are framed since they contribute to shaping both practices and outcome, sections 4, 5 and 6 below highlight dominant themes that emerged in the literature on the American, British and Nigerian context, and the socio-political and economic issues that contributed in shaping all three countries campaigns and elections in 2016 and 2015 respectively. This paper provides a comparative insight by identifying contextual issues and ideas that shaped the politics, the campaign rhetoric and the messages that flowed into the digital public sphere. Although the three countries are institutionally different, Britain is a parliamentary system, while America and Nigeria are presidential systems. Despite these institutional differences, the value of the analysis rest in its revelation of contextual conditions and how understanding of such context can help us explain what issues or ideas shape recent campaigns and election cycles and how such issues and ideas flow into media narratives and mediated platforms.

The 2016 US presidential election: Issues and socio-political and economic context

On the 8th of November 2016, the United States of America voted to elect Donald Trump the 45th President-with an Electoral College majority of 306 to defeat Hilary Clinton with 232 irrespective of Clinton's majority vote that was in excess of 3 million (see table 1).

Table 1. 2016 National popular vote share

Presidential Candidate	Political Party	Vote Share	Percentage	Electoral College
Trump	Republican	61,201,031 votes	47.0%	306
Clinton	Democratic	62,523,126 votes	48.0%	232
Others		6,464,094 votes	5.0%	

Source: AP-After 99.7% of voting districts

Arising from the unexpected and surprising election, commentators and scholars across diverse backgrounds, produced an array of explanations. Among the contextual issues that dominated the campaign, Fuchs (2018) pointed, for example towards President Trump's emphasis on *'racial proletarianism'* as his pathway to electoral victory – where a well-crafted distraction of attention from *'complex societal and political-economic causes of crises is employed by constructing scapegoats and preaching nationalism and law-and-order politics'*.

Although the trend highlighted above by Fuchs transcends American politics. Indeed, nationalist political framing apart from helping to elect President Trump has increased and produced electoral fortunes in many countries – where among other things-integration of ethnic minorities, immigration and mass migration, border control, Islamic related terrorism etc. have dominated as the *'most heated political issues'* (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Thus, Fuchs argument on Trump's campaign approach is that the *'mythology of unity and identity'* is the political instrument deployed to present 'a common instinctual fate between the bourgeois and the proletarianised groups', and it is such ideas that were communicated and transmitted in the digital public sphere (ibid).

That said, evidence from the literature also suggest that such nationalist and populist framing alone cannot be blamed for incentivizing the anti-establishment rhetoric that helped get Donald Trump elected. As Springer (2016) argues, the global political economy – 'structural adjustment, fiscal austerity and free trade, augmented by direct military force, a marriage of the *'invisible hand'* or the free market with the *'visible fist'* of US military and its allies served in feeding the US political climate. Thus, as Springer notes, in discussing factors that contributed to Donald Trump's election, they should be an appreciation of the capacity of neoliberalism to *'promote inequality, exacerbate poverty, license authoritarianism and advance a litany of social 'ills that reinforces anti-establishment'* rhetoric like those framed by Donald Trump during the 2016 campaign. Timcke (2017) argues for example, that because of the central place of the US and its allies in the international political economy', they cannot be exculpated from the consequences of the

crisis. As Fuchs (2018) argues, it is the economic crisis of capitalism that has turned into a highly dangerous political crises in Europe and the world system, where nationalism and the friend/enemy logic are rapidly spreading and expanding' in modern political discourse and campaign rhetoric (ibid).

Perhaps, it might be fair to add, that the market as the arguments above suggest may not be working for everyone, even though they have been *'spectacular economic growth in most part of the capitalist core'* (Basu, 2018). As Basu shows, global electoral upset like the election of Donald Trump is an indication of how *'economic crisis has morphed into a political crisis, with authoritarian populist figures marshalling people's anger and fear into nationalist projects'* (ibid). Nevertheless, such critique of market base neoliberal economics does not suggest that the left has a functional and all-fit argument or solution. At best, the debate by leftists has remained *'confined to questions of inequality and redistribution'*, without concrete proposals of how to create or reconstruct *'socialist productive economies'* (Desai, 2019). Nevertheless, Basu's concern is that the media, rather than presenting the economic crisis narrative, have been caught up in an *'acute amnesia'* preferring to stick with its root in the dynamics of free market capitalism and *'devotion to a narrative of swollen public sector and immigration'*.

Furthermore, scholars also suggest that long-term structural transformations in the US political system benefited Donald Trump and disadvantaged Hilary Clinton. For example, Frank (2016) suggests that elitist changes in the form of support of the professional class instead of the working class in the Democratic Party is one of such socio-political transformation in the US political landscape. On the Republican side, Kabaservice (2016) argues that the decline of moderates in the GOP has also augmented voices like Trump's, even though there are now governance and political challenges that have accompanied the party's presidential election victory of 2016.

Elsewhere, Norris (2016) and Norris and Ingelhart (2019) argue that growing economic and social exclusion sit at the heart of the recent rise in populism, with 'losers from globalisation', the *'forgotten American'* – providing the *'strongest support for authoritarian and populist values'* that incentivized voices like Trump (p.132). Perhaps, as Andrew Carnegie (1889) wrote, *'the problem of our age is that of proper administration of wealth'*. Thus, as Nye (2019) suggest, *'policy elites who support globalization and an open economy may have to pay more attention to issues of economic inequality as well as to adjusted assistance for those disrupted by economic change'* since these issues now contribute to how voters respond to politics.

That said, whilst populist political narrative continues to swell, institutions of liberal democracy seem to have mitigated and limited manifestations of authoritarian tendencies in some countries. Thus, the critical views on populism and populist leaders notwithstanding, Stavrakakis (2018) suggests that we consider, in our reading of populism, that *'its inclusionary form can be a corrective'* for democracies that are losing their egalitarian and participatory component.

In another strand of literature, Trump's victory in the 2016 election is said to also be rooted in cultural changes that metamorphosed into *'cultural grievances'* and the exploitation of *'cultural wedge issues – race, gender, religion and nation'* in ways that

resonated strongly with some part of the electorate because of the generational contrast in cultural attitude (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). In Norris and Inglehart's view, President Trump's election *'can best be explained as cultural backlash'*. Norris (2016) even suggests that *'by giving voice to, and amplifying fears of cultural change'*, Trump and the Republicans opened the way for populism in the US. Fuchs (2018) argues that recourse to such populist rhetoric apart from the electoral advantage it conferred the GOP, amount to a classic distraction from the class conflict that continue to shape modern capitalism. For Zizek (2017), such rhetoric, as events in large parts of Western politics suggest, demonstrates a surprising shift to humanitarian issues and refugees – a literal repression, and replacement of class struggles with *'liberal-cultural topics of intolerance and solidarity'*. Perhaps, *'the fundamental source'* of modern *'conflict'* as predicted by Huntington (1993) is now along *'cultural'* lines.

In another explanation, Oliver and Rahn (2016) point to culture, *'ideological shifts, party polarization and rightist evolution in the Republican Party that began with President Richard Nixon's appeal to southern conservatives'* as the electoral ingredient that came to favor Donald Trump. Historically, Neumann (1957) has shown for example, how anxiety in groups who feel disenfranchised and economically threatened tend to more likely support authoritarian and right-wing perspectives. Thus, Trump as Mutz (2018) and Klein (2020) suggest, may have capitalized on the rise of identity politics and the politics of *'marginalised groups'* as well as the decline in social status of white America to advance the politics of resentment, alienation and distributional challenges during the 2016 campaign. Fuchs (2018) argues, for example that Breitbart-news, articles and Stephen Bannon all served as suppliers of such *'coherent, incoherent and intolerant world view'* to the Trump campaign to help get him elected.

As Fuchs (2018) pointed out, readership of Breitbart for example increased from 7.4 million to 15.8 million between 2014 and September 2016. Similarly, Boczkowski and Papacharissi (2018), Block and Negrine (2018), Norris and Inglehart (2019), Oliver and Rahn (2016) all point to such rising polarization and partisanship in the media, social media troll farms and bots, the impact of mediated disinformation, Trump's news making ability – i.e. *'populist spectacles that sell as news and attract audiences'* and the rise in conspiracy theories as factors that may have influenced the campaign and 2016 election.

In what may sound like a racial interpretation of the election of President Trump, Norris (2016) also suggests that Trump's victory can also be interpreted as a backlash reaction to the election and re-election of the first African American president to the White House and public anger against the deep state-with such rhetoric resonating with *'older and non-college educated white men who felt threatened by 'liberal cultural currents'*.

In other commentaries, explanations like the death of *'old politics'*-*'radicalization of anti-intellectualism'* (Kayam, 2018); crisis of confidence and legitimacy in US government or what Short (2016) calls *'politics of de-legitimacy'*; candidate and party issue position – i.e. the political power of identity, identity partisan alignment, race, immigration and religion (Sides *et al.*, 2019); money, press coverage, rating boosting screen dominance in both less partisan and right-wing media ecosystem, and political communication practice/ strategy – the use of *'anti-intellectual rhetoric'* (Beckett, 2016; Kayam, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019);

'*Trump's personal brilliant use of social media to control the news agenda*' (Nye, 2019); his celebrity appeal, the fan feeling he created, the mood of the electorate and his reflection of the American voter '*ideological narcissism*' (Negra, 2016; Richards, 2016; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019); Hillary Clinton's emails controversy, Wikileaks and James Comey's unprecedented and controversial statement in the final days of the campaign (Edge, 2017); institutional rules – i.e. the Electoral College; '*deindustrialization*' and declining wages as well as the Democratic Party's campaign failure to invest sufficiently in '*Blue Wall of Rust Belt states*' (Short, 2016; Norris & Inglehart (2019), where according to Norris and Inglehart, a mere 77,744 switch in votes in the States of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania would have made Hillary Clinton president are identified as other factors that may have contributed to the election of Donald J. Trump.

Furthermore, considering the role of the Kremlin in the 2016 election, Ijere (2020) suggests that 'apart from modernization or innovation in data driven technology enhanced campaign practices-enabled by Cambridge Analytica and Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL Group) psychological profiling of American voters, the 2016 election of President Trump can also be perceived as a digitally influenced, manipulated propaganda product of Russia's contemporary active measures.

Thus, as the commentary from the literature highlighted above indicate, discussion on the impact of technology in the 2016 election of President Donald Trump must also account for the socio-political and economic context, issues, ideas and international politics that shaped the election cycle. Indeed, while technology remains important for campaigning, the 2016 US campaign cycle provides revelatory potential of the importance of context in understanding modern election campaign and outcome.

The 2015 British election: Socio-economic and political context

Held on the 7th of May 2015 to elect 650 members of parliament after a five-year fixed term parliament, 3, 971 candidates stood for the elections. Amidst speculation of another hung parliament and minority or coalition government, the election ushered in an unpredicted majority for the Conservative Party 'with 331 seats, 232 for Labour, 56 for the SNP, with the Liberal Democrats winning 8 seats and losing 49' (Electoral Commission, 2016a; Rose & Shephard, 2016; Hawkins et al., 2015). The first clear majority for the Tories in 23 years. Table 5.2 is a summary of result and vote share.

As Table 2 shows, multiparty politics is the norm in Britain. However, governance has traditionally been associated with the two major political parties (i.e. Labour and the Conservative) with fluctuating electoral fortunes for the Liberal Democrats (Denver & Hands, 2001; Forman & Baldwin, 2007).

That said, developments in British political communication have followed the trajectory chronicled by Jay Blumler and Denis Kavanagh (1999) in their three ages of political communication – where in the first age, political communication 'was subordinate to relatively strong and stable political institutions and beliefs; a second stage of shifting party loyalties – where television was the dominant medium of political communication, and the third age of media abundance – where a proliferation of channels of

communication now dominate – with intensified professionalizing, increase competitive pressures and anti-elitist populist practices'.

Table 2. 2015 Election result

S/N	Party	Votes	Percentage	Seats won	Gains	Losses
1.	Conservative	11, 291, 248	27.7%	331	35	10
2.	Labour	9, 347, 326	31.3%	232	22	48
3.	Lib Dems	2, 415, 888	8.1%	8	0	48
4.	UKIP	3, 862, 805	12.%	1	1	0
5.	Green	1 150, 791	3.8%	1	0	0
6.	Plaid Cymru	181, 694	0.6%	3	0	0
7.	SNP	1, 454, 436	4.9%	56	50	**0**
8.	Others	275, 919	0.9%	18	0	0

Curled from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/elections2015/results

In the literature, scholars trace these stages and historical chronology in Britain from 1945 to 1997, where elements like spin and spin doctors, political consultancy, the permanent campaign, canvassing, targeting, branding, opinion polling, advertising, negative attacks and trends towards *'presidentialization'* etc. became popular (Bartle & Griffiths, 2001; Denver & Garnett, 2014; Jones, 1996; Mughan, 2000; Norris, 1997; 2001).

Although, since then, sustained changes have taken place in the national context – i.e. in constituency campaigning, election administration and voting (Norris, 1997). Until recently, however, there has been continuity in the '*evolutionary adaptability of British institutions, history, parliamentary sovereignty, nature of the state, as well as the underlying cohesion of the society and degree of political agreement on fundamental issues*' (Kavanagh & Morris, 1994; Forman & Baldwin, 2007; Denver & Garnett, 2014). Nevertheless, Norris and Inglehart (2019) argue that the consequences of the 2015 election-Brexit referendum and the cultural backlash that has followed signaled a new era in British politics.

That said, the 2015 general election came at the back of the 2010 election that ended New Labour's 16-year prominence in British politics (Cowley & Kavanagh, 2015). Fought on a number of issues – the economy, the NHS, immigration, foreign policy, education, party leaders, defence, and permutations about Labour v SNP coalition (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015; Moore, 2015; Scammell, 2015), recent post-election events, particularly – the in/ out referendum on Britain's European Union membership and the controversy that trailed the result suggest that it remains one of Britain's defining elections in history (Rose & Shephard, 2016).

The number of issues that dominated notwithstanding, the economy, taxation and Labour's role in the deficit and the 2008 economic crisis were topical (Deacon *et al.*, 2015; Roberts, 2015; Salter, 2015). Butler and Stoke (1974) suggest that the state of the economy as the responsibility of any governing party in Britain has been the basis of dialogue between British political parties and the electorate, with the 'decline and *'recovery'* of both Labour and the Conservative Party in the 50s, 60s, and 70s traceable to their responsibility to the state of the economy (Deacon et al., 2015).

Furthermore, commentary in the literature also points towards press partisanship and negative attacks – similar to those launched on Neil Kinnock in the 1992 general election (Mullen 2015), money – the Tories war chest – an overwhelming 41% share of the entire amount spent by all political parties as factors that may have influenced the outcome of the 2016 election (Beckett, 2016b; Electoral Commission campaign spending report, 2016). Although British campaign rules (i.e. the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act 1883; Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA), and the Political Parties Election and Referendum Act 2000 (PPERA)) constrain excessive campaign spending (Castle, 2015; Law Library of Congress, 2019). In past elections for example, Norris (1997) found a *'relationship between level of campaign spending in a constituency and a party's local vote'* share (Norris, 1997).

In the 2015 Labour Party post-election autopsy report for example, Margaret Beckett and her team conceded that the party's financial position, as well as the *'two against one'* dynamic; fixed term parliament; cultural and economic backlash and the rise of challenger parties like UKIP; and failure to frame a clear political message and narrative was a challenge in competing with the Tories central operation and digital campaign (Beckett, 2016).

Furthermore, commentary on dominant issues in the 2015 election also suggest that decreasing youth participation and increase in turnout of the 65+ (78% vs 43%) who predominantly voted Conservative partly contributed to the election outcome (Hawkins *et al.*, 2015; Sloam, 2015). Historically, Butler and Stokes (1974) argue that the *'generational effect'* (Butler & Stokes, 1974), growing affluence, weakening of class alignment, and decline of politics as a zero-sum game represent some of Britain's most remarkable electoral changes. Sloam (2015) also argue that among all the 15 member states of the European Union, evidence from recent elections suggest that the United Kingdom's youth elections turnout has been *'lowest in 2001, 2005 and 2010'*. According to Norris and Inglehart (2019), such generational election *'turnout gap has grown over time'* in many Western democracies and serve as contributory factors in shaping election outcome. Thus, beyond it being an internet election as commentators suggested, contextual issues, socio-political and economic factors contributed in shaping the 2015 British election campaign.

Socio-political and economic context of the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria

The 2015 presidential election in Nigeria was dominated by many contextual issues. Although as Table 3 below indicates, significant voter apathy that accompanied the election notwithstanding, the significance of socio-political and economic issues and context rest on the fact that *'voter mobilization was essentially around ethnicity, religion and region, with northerners basically voting for a northern candidate, likewise the south-south and south-east-with the south-west vs northern alliance electing the president'* (Ijere, 2020). Drawing from the literature reviewed, three dominant contextual themes will be discussed below.

Table 3. 2015 Presidential elections result: Candidates and political parties

S/N	Candidate/Nominee	Running Mate	Political Party	Party Acronym	Votes Received
1.	**Allagoa Chinedu**	Arabamhen Mary	Peoples Party of Nigeria	PPN	24,475
2.	**Ambrose Albert Owuru**	Haruna Shaba	Hope Party	HOPE	7,435
3.	**Adebayo Musa Ayeni**	Anthony Ologbosere	African Peoples Alliance	APA	53,537
4.	**Chekwas Okorie**	Bello Umar	United Progressive Party	UPP	18,220
5.	**<u>Comfort Oluremi Sonaiya</u>**	Seidu Bobboi	KOWA Party	KOWA	13,076
6.	**Ganiyu Galadima**	Ojengbede Farida	Allied Congress Party of Nigeria	ACPN	40,311
7.	**Godson Okoye**	Haruna Adamu	United Democratic Party	UDP	9,208
8.	**<u>Goodluck Jonathan</u>**	<u>Namadi Sambo</u>	<u>People's Democratic Party</u>	PDP	12,853,162
9.	**Mani Ahmad**	Obianuju Murphy-Uzohue	African Democratic Congress	ADC	29,666
10.	**Martin Onovo**	Ibrahim Mohammed	<u>National Conscience Party</u>	NCP	24,455
11.	**<u>Muhammadu Buhari</u>**	<u>Yemi Osinbajo</u>	<u>All Progressives Congress</u>	APC	15,424,921
12.	**Rufus Salawu**	Akuchie Cliff	<u>Alliance for Democracy</u>	AD	30,673
13.	**Sam Eke**	Hassana Hassan	Citizens Popular Party	CPP	36,300
14.	**Tunde Anifowose-Kelani**	Ishaka Ofemile	Accord Alliance	AA	22,125
Invalid/ blank votes					844,519
Total					29,432,083
Registered voters/ turnout					*67,422,005 43.65%*

Source: INEC 2015

The emergence of an opposition coalition

Among the contextual issues that contributed to shaping the 2015 presidential election is the emergence of an opposition coalition. Historically, opposition groups have always existed in Africa even under single party and military regimes that dominated post-independent African politics (Olukoshi, 1998). However, the emergence of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in February 2013 from a merger of four political parties altered the 2015 political landscape and contest by weakening the 16 years hegemony of the

Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). In a country where ethnic, religious, and regional cleavages tend to militate against the creation of formidable opposition, the quest for power by a set of political elites and the prevailing socio-political situation in the country at the time, may have occasioned the formation and consolidation of the APC (Oyugi, 2006). Although with very blurred lines of ideological differences in comparison with the then ruling party the PDP, the formation of the APC largely influenced the context and contest of the 2015 elections through the emergence of a cross-regional alignment of a set of politicians and elites who were united against incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan (Abdullahi, 2018).

In the literature on ethno-national politics for example, scholars like Koter (2013) point to the relevance of shared ethnic identity between political actors and the electorate as a mechanism for electoral mobilization. According to Owen and Usman (2015) the elite alignment, defection of five PDP Governors, 37 House of Representative members to the APC, including the Speaker of the House of Representative and 11 Senators and the eventual victory of the APC in the 2015 presidential elections demonstrates the political and electoral value of a national coalition in election campaign. As Abdullahi (2018) argues, the '*decampees*' from the PDP 'supplied the blood that gave life' to the newly formed APC turning it into a formidable opposition and national party. For Jideonwo and Williams (2018), Muhammadu Buhari '*needed the APC to have been created for him to win*', having unsuccessfully attempted to be president on three occasions on the platform of a relatively unknown regional political party the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC).

Insecurity

Insecurity – Boko Haram insurgency in the north east, and communal clashes between farmers and herders in north central Nigeria was a dominant campaign issue. The influence of the security crisis was so strong that it provided reasons for the federal government to postpone the elections for six weeks (Orji, 2014). Significantly, the insecurity and the BringBackOurGirls campaign whose hashtag trended globally as a result of the kidnap of 270 schoolgirls in Chibok, Bornu State had a damaging effect on the government's reputation (Hamalai *et al.*, 2017). The inability to solve the Boko Haram problem became a sentiment that resonated with many Nigerians and exploited by the opposition who sold Jonathan to the public as 'unfit, uncaring and inept' (Adeniyi, 2017). For President Jonathan and his party the PDP, convincing Nigerians during the campaign that he was the man to be trusted with the nation's security became a herculean task (Abdullahi, 2018). As analysts like Adeniyi (2017) and Ewi (2015) argue, Buhari's victory in 2015 was handed to him by Jonathan's unpopularity occasioned by the nation's insecurity challenges and the way Jonathan's administration responded to it. Ayanda and Udunayo (2015) also suggest that the national security situation affected voter turnout with less than 30 million of the registered 67 million voters electing the president.

Ibrahim *et al.* (2015) argue that voter apathy and the reduction in the number of votes was due to fear and insecurity. As the figures show, turnout in the election was the lowest since the presidential elections of 1979. For example, of the 67,422,005 registered

voters, only 29,432,083 voted (ibid). Africa's electoral outcomes it is argued are in part, affected by 'fear of violence and voter intimidation' that usually diminish voter turnout (Mac-Ikemenjima, 2017). Indeed, while voter apathy may have contributed to shaping the 2015 presidential election outcome, maximum turnout of the registered voters could have also produced a different outcome. As Africa's emerging democracies evolve, it is hoped that both governments, political parties and their established democratic partners will work to improve election security and voter turnout.

The candidates, scandals and the economy

As important as the factors highlighted above were, the literature also suggest that the candidates mattered in the 2015 elections (Jideonwo & Williams, 2017). For the APC and its coalition of regional elites, Muhammadu Buhari represented a better symbol of change, irrespective of his previous leadership role as a military head of state from 1983-1985. For his handlers and branders, he represented the candidate of the moment and was presented as an incorruptible retired general who will guarantee security and prosperity (ibid).

Arguments on economic growth and development statistics were also a factor in the election debate. As Owen and Usman (2015) show, for the ruling PDP, the economy was at its best and was the largest in Africa having grown consistently between 6-7% from 2008 to 2014. According to the PDP campaign team, claims that the economy was struggling was a direct distortion of facts targeted at hitting a political goal (Omokri, 2017). Despite the impressive economic growth statistics, poverty, inequality and youth unemployment remained a key feature of the 2015 socio-economic landscape and these indicators were at the back of high oil revenue and the APC kept pointing at those (ibid).

On corruption claims, Adeniyi (2017) suggests that the opposition APC had pointed to President Jonathan's mismanagement of fuel subsidy funds, the revelation of a former Central Bank Governor that USD 48.9 billion of oil receipts could not be accounted for, as well as a presidential pardon granted a former governor who jumped bail in the United Kingdom having been held for money laundering as proves that the president condones corruption. In his response, the President's claim was that '*corruption was as old as independent Nigeria*' and every successive government has fought corruption including his (Jonathan, 2018). According to Adeniyi (2017) the president's response and disposition on these issues gave room for an unfavorable interpretation of his stand on corruption and contributed to his unpopularity. As Brian *et al.* (2014) note, voters usually make electoral choices based on a retrospective assessment of incumbents and perceived malfeasance by incumbents usually provoke voters to punish tainted incumbents electorally. Owen and Usman (2015) argue that this was the case with President Jonathan in 2015, as scandals and governance failure provided the opposition with '*sufficient ammunition*' and '*turned the tide of public opinion against*' his government.

That said, whilst new media technology and digitization continue to change and reshape the electoral landscape in Nigeria, what the literature above suggests as Swanson and Mancini (1996), argue, is that election campaigns '*are complicated subjects and what*

happens within them usually reflect the coming together of opportunity, circumstance, tradition, personality, political culture' and several other factors. Thus, *'situational triggers'* continue to matter for elections and electioneering (Esser & Stromback, 2012). Therefore, as historic as the defeat of the PDP and the victory of opposition APC was, beyond the role of technology – i.e. social media platforms, a combination of factors seem to account for both the campaign and election outcome.

Conclusion

This article has assessed the socio-political and economic issues in three countries and how these factors contributed in shaping campaign rhetoric, the campaigns, the political communication environment and election outcome. In doing so, it seeks to account for context and the socio-political and economic order and dynamics that shapes elections as a call for research that elevates the political as well as the technological in modern political communication analysis.

That said, taken together, and from the point of view of contribution to the literature, even though variations in context and issues exist in all three countries and three elections, the revelation of such contextual variation adds socio-cultural, political and institutional dimensions to the discussion on the role of technology in modern campaigns. A cross-case pattern-matching of the literature from the three case studies above point to underlying differences in context and issues. While the contextual landscape and issues in America and the United Kingdom suggest a pattern of sophistication associated with advanced democracies – with nationalist political framing, the economy, economic exclusion and immigration shaping campaign, the contextual environment and issues in Nigeria – opposition coalition, insecurity, the economy and corruption scandals point to indices of an emerging democracy that is building party and governance institutions.

In conclusion, the main point this article makes, is that while research that prioritizes the impact of technology on contemporary campaign and political communication is important, elevating research that explores the current global socio-political and economic climate – whether comparatively or as single country studies, is important for the field. Although as the literature in all three examples indicates, every country's campaigns and elections have their own complexity. However, as Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) argue, the beauty of such contextual understanding lies in the fact that it is the context that either promotes or constrains political communication practices within countries. Thus, beyond technology and its increasing impact in modern campaigns and electioneering, context-cultural, socio-political and economic matter for campaigns and elections as well, and an understanding of such country specific context can help us explain what ideas shape campaign and election cycles and how such ideas and issues flow into media narratives and mediated platforms.

R E F E R E N C E S

Abdullahi, B. 2018. *On a Platter of Gold: How Jonathan won and lost Nigeria*. Lagos: Kachifo.

Adams, K. & Kreiss, D. 2021. *Power in Ideas: A Case-Based Argument for Taking Ideas Seriously in Political Communication*. Cambridge University Press.

Adeniyi, O. 2017. *Against the run of play: How an incumbent president was defeated in Nigeria*. Lagos: Kachifo.

Anstead, N. 2017 *Data-driven campaigning in the 2015 UK general election*. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*. ISSN 1940-1612.

Ayanda, A. & Udunayo, B. 2015. Comparative study of the 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria. In *Global Journal of Human Science,* 15 (7).

Ballarino, G., & Regini, M. 2008. Convergent perspectives in economic sociology: an Italian view of contemporary developments in Western Europe and North America. In *Socio-Economic Review*, 6(2), pp.337-363. doi: 10.1093/ser/mwm020.

Barbour, R. 2008. *Introducing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Bartle, J. & Griffiths, D. 2001. Introduction. In Bartle, J. & Griffiths, D. *Political Communication Transformed*. Palgrave.

Basu, L. 2018. *Media Amnesia: Rewriting the Economic Crisis*. London: Pluto Press.

Beckett, C. 2016. *What does Trump triumph mean for journalism, politics and social media. Department of Media Communications LSE.*

Beckett, M. 2016b. *Learning the Lessons from defeat Taskforce Report.* labour.org.uk.

Bennett, W. L. & Pfetsch, B. 2018. Rethinking Political Communication in a Time of Disrupted Public Spheres. In *Journal of Communication,* 68, pp.243-55.

Block, E. & Negrine, R. 2018. The Populist Communication Style: Towards a Critical Framework. In *International Journal of Communication*, 11, pp.178-179.

Blumler, J. G. & Kavanagh, D. 1999. The third age of political communication: Influences and features. In *Political communication,* 16(3), pp.209-230.

Boczkowski, P. & Papacharissi, Z. 2018. *Trump and the Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Brian, C., Santiago, O., Joshua, P. & William, M. 2014. Elections as instruments for punishing bad representatives and selecting good ones. In *Electoral Studies*, 34, pp.1-15.

Butler, D. & Stokes, D. 1974. *Political change in Britain*. London: Macmillan.

Carnegie, A. 1889. The Gospel of Wealth. Retrieved from https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public.

Castle, S. 2015. *Britain Campaign finance laws leave parties with idle money. The New York Times*.

Costas, P. 2012. Campaign Context and Preference Dynamics in U.S. Presidential Elections. In *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 22(2), pp.123-137. doi: 10.1080/17457289.2012.662232.

Cowley, P. & Kavanagh, D. 2015. *The British General Election of 2015*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davies, A. 2019 *Political Communication: A New Introduction for Crisis Times.* Polity Press.

Davies, A., Fenton, N., Freedman, D. & Khiabany, G. 2020 *Media, Democracy and Social Change: Re-imagining Political Communications*. Sage.

Deacon, D., Dowey, J., Stanyer, J. & Wring, D. 2015. New media performance in the 12015 General elections campaign. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*, pp.8-13. Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Denver, D. & Hands, G. 2001. The fall and rise of constituency campaigning. In Bartle, J. & Griffiths, D. *Political Communication Transformed*, pp.71-86. Palgrave.

Denver, D. & Garnett, M. 2014. *British General Elections since 1964: Diversity, Dealignment and Disillusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Desai, R. 2019. What is to be done? The importance of Samir Amin's answer. In *Globalizations*, 16(7), pp.1053-1061. doi: 10.1080/14747731.2019.1654286.

Dunu, I.V. 2018. Social Media and Gubernatorial Election in Nigeria: A critical Discourse. In *Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 23 (1), pp.6-15.

Eichenberg, R., Stoll, R. & Lebo, M. 2006. War President: The Approval ratings of George W. Bush. In *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(6), pp.783-808.

Electoral Commission. 2016a. *Report on the Administration of 2015 General Election*. Electoral Commission.

Electoral Commission. 2016. *UK Parliamentary General Election 2015: Campaign spending report*. Electoral Commission.

Esser, F. & Stromback, J. 2012. Comparing Election Campaign Communication. In Esser, F. & Hanitzsch, T. *The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research*. London: Routledge.

Esser, F. & Pfetsch, B. 2020. Comparing Political Communication: A 2020 Update. In Caramani (ed.) *Comparative Politics. Oxford University Press.* (5th Ed.), pp.336-358.

Ewi, M. 2015. Was the Nigerian 2015 presidential election a victory for Boko Haram or for democracy? In *African Security Review*, 24(2), pp.207-231.

Forman, F. & Baldwin, N. 2007. *Mastering British Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frank, T. 2016. *Listen, liberal, or, what ever happened to the party of the people?* Metropolitan Books.

Fuchs, C. 2018. *Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter*. London: Pluto Books.

Gerring, J. 2004. What is a case study and what is it good for? In *American Political Science Review,* 98, pp.341-354.

Gurevitch, M. & Blumler, J. 1990. Comparative Research: The extending frontier. In Swanson, D. & Nimmo, D. (eds). *New Directions in Political Communication-A Resource Book*, pp.305-325. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hamalai, L., Egwu, S. & Omotola, J. 2017. *Nigeria's 2015 General Elections: Continuity and Change in Electoral Democracy*. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hawkins, O., Keen, R., & Nakatudde, N. 2015. *House of Commons 2015 General Elections Briefing Papers*. House of Commons Library.

Ibrahim, S., Liman, A., & Mato, K. 2015. The 2015 General Elections: A review of major determinants of paradigm shift in voting behaviour and political participation in

Nigeria. In *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2(9), pp.8-16.

Ijere, T. C. 2020. *Personalized Political Communication in the era of Media Abundance: A Comparative study of practices in the United States, United Kingdom and Nigeria*. Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Northumbria University at Newcastle.

Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. 2015. Introduction. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*. Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Jideonwo, C. & Williams, A. 2017. *How to win elections in Africa*. Lagos: Kachifo Ltd.

Jonathan, E. 2018. *My Transition Hours*. Kingwood TX: Ezekiel Press.

Jones, N. 1996. *Soundbites and spin doctors: how politicians manipulate the media and vice versa*. London: Cassell.

Johnson, D. W. 2017 Democracy for Hire: A history of American Political Consulting, Oxford University Press.

Kabaservice, G. 2012. *Rule and Ruin*. Oxford University Press.

Kavanagh, P. & Morris, P. 1994. *Consensus politics from Attlee to Major*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kayam, O. 2018. The Readability and Simplicity of Donald Trump's Language. In *Political Studies Review*, 16(1), pp.73-88. doi: 10.1177/1478929917706844.

Klein, E. 2020. *Why we're Polarized*. Simon and Schuster.

Koter, D. 2013. King Makers: Local Leaders and Ethnic Politics in Africa. In *World Politics,* 65(2), pp.187-232. doi:10.1017/S004388711300004X.

Kreiss, D. 2016. Prototype politics: Technology-intensive campaigning and the data of democracy, Oxford university press.

Kreiss, D. & McGregor, S. 2021. Polarization Isn't America's Biggest Problem-or Facebook's. *Wired*. 5th April, 2021.

Law Library of Congress 2019.

Mac-Ikemenjima, D. 2017. Violence and youth voter turnout in sub-Saharan Africa. In *Contemporary Social Science, 12*(3-4), pp.215-226. doi: 10.1080/21582041.2017.1369558.

Miller, M.L. & Viccari, C. 2020. Digital Threats to Democracy: Comparative Lessons and Possible Remedies. In *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25(3), pp.333-356.

Moghadam, V. M. 1995. Gender and revolutionary transformation: Iran 1979 and East Central Europe 1989. In *Gender and Society, 9*(3), pp.328–58.

Moore, K. 2015. Immigration coverage and populist cultural work in the 2015 General Election campaign. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics,* (p.14). Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Moser, R. & Scheiner, E. 2012. *Electoral systems and political context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mughan, A. 2000. *Media and the Presidentialization of Parliamentary Election*. New York: Palgrave.

Mullen, A. 2015. Political consultants, their strategies and the importation of new political communication techniques during the29015 General Elections. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics,* (p.42). Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Mutz, D. 2018. *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences*, 115(19), E4330-E4339. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1718155115.

Negra, D. 2016. The Reality Celebrity of Donald Trump. In *Television & New Media*, 17(7), pp.646-646. doi: 10.1177/1527476416675946.

Neumann, F. 1957. *The Democratic and the Authoritarian state*. Glencoe IL: The Free Press.

Norris, P. 1997. *Electoral change since 1945*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Norris, P. 2001. Political Communication and democratic politics. In Bartle, J. & Griffiths, D. *Political Communication Transformed*. Palgrave.

Norris, P. 2016. *It's Not Just Trump. Authoritarian Populism is Rising Across the West. Here's Why. Washington Post*.

Norris, P. & Inglehart, R. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nye, J. 2019. The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump. In *International Affairs*, 95(1), pp.63-80. doi: 10.1093/ia/iiy212.

O'Kane, R. H. T. 1995. The national causes of state construction in France, Russia and China. In *Political Studies,* 43(1), pp.2–21.

Okeke, C., Faith, C. & Ijeoma, O. 2016. Social Media as a political platform in Nigeria: A focus on Electorates in South-Eastern Nigeria. In *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21(11), pp.6-22.

Oliver, J. & Rahn, W. 2016. Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism and the 2016 Election. In *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 667(1), pp.189-206. doi: 10.1177/0002716216662639.

Olukoshi, A. 1998. *The politics of opposition in contemporary Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Omokri, R. 2017. *Facts versus Fiction: The true story of Jonathan years, Chibok, 2015 and the conspiracies*. Brentwood: The mind of Christ Christian Centre.

Ong, J. C. & Cabanes, J. V. 2019. When Disinformation Studies Meets Production Studies: Social Identities and Moral Justification in the Political Trolling Industry. In *International Journal of Communication,* 13, pp.5771-5790.

Orji, N. 2014. Nigeria's 2015 Election in Perspective. In *Africa Spectrum*, 49(3), pp.121-133. doi: 10.1177/000203971404900306.

Owen, O. & Usman, Z. 2015. Briefing: Why Goodluck Jonathan lost the Nigerian presidential election of 2015. In *African Affairs*, 114(456), pp.455-471.

Oyugi, W. 2006. Coalition politics and coalition governments in Africa. In *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 24(1), pp.53-79. doi: 10.1080/02589000500513739.

Paget, D. 2021. Mistaken for populism: Magufuli, ambiguity and elitist plebeianism in Tanzania. In *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 26(2), pp.121-141.

Persily, N. & Tucker, J. A. 2020. Introduction. In Persily, N. & Tucker, J.A. (eds.). *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field and Prospects for Reform*, pp.1-9. Cambridge University Press.

Richards, B. 2016. The narcissistic capture of American nationalism. In Lilleker, D., Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. & Veneti, A. *US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Early reflections from leading academics*. Centre for Comparative Politics and Media Research Bournemouth University.

Roberts, C. 2015. The festishization of the 'fiscal deficit': A media discourse. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*, p.96). Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Rose, R. & Shephard, M. 2016. *I'm afraid there is no money: Five years of coalition.* In Cowley, P. & Kavanagh, D. *The British General Election of 2015*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Salter, L. 2015 . This is cloud cuckoo': Radical alternatives to public debt. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*, p.97. Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.

Scammell, M. 1995. *Designer Politics: How Elections are Won. London. Palgrave Macmillan.*

Scammell, M. 2015. Extraordinary election, political communication as usual. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*, p.39. *Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.*

Short, J. 2016. The Politics of de-legitimacy. In Lilleker, D., Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. & Veneti, A. *US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Early reflections from leading academics*. Centre for Comparative Politics and Media Research Bournemouth University.

Sides, J., Tesler, M. & Vavreck, L. 2019. *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the battle for the meaning of America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sloam, J. 2015. Bringing out the youth vote? Young people and the 2025 General Elections. In Jackson, J. & Thorsen, E. *UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, Voters and the campaign. Early reflections from UK academics*, (p.11). *Bournemouth: Centre for the study of Journalism, Culture and Community. Bournemouth University.*

Springer, S. 2016. The Violence of Neoliberalism. In Springer, S., Birch, K. & Macleavy, J. (eds.). *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*. Routledge.

Stavrakakis, Y. 2018. Populism, Anti-Populism and Democracy. In *Political Insight*, 9(3), pp.33-35. doi: 10.1177/2041905818796577.

Swanson, D. & Mancini, P. 1996. *Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy: An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Consequences*. Praeger.

Swanson, D. 2004. Transnational Trends in Political Communication: Conventional Views and Realities. In Esser, F. & Pfetsch, B. 2004. *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Timcke, S. 2017. *Capital, State, Empire: The New American way of Digital Warfare*. London: University of Westminster Press.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. 2019. *Emotions, Media & Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Žižek, S. 2017. *The courage of Hopelessness: Chronicles of a year of acting dangerously*. London: Penguin Books.

Dr. Thomas Chukwuma Ijere is currently a fellow at the Centre for Advanced Internet Studies, Bochum, Germany where he is researching 'ethics of digital political advertising in modern British elections. He holds a B.Sc in Political Science and two master's degrees from the University of Calabar and the University of Sussex-in Policy and Administrative Studies and Governance and Development respectively and a PhD in Political Communication from Northumbria University, UK. Dr. Ijere is a former Adam Smit Fellow and recipient of Northumbria University doctoral studentship. His current work focuses comparative political communication, the politics of disorder, information control and patterns of content circulation in the digital public sphere particularly in the global south.

Dr. Dodeye Uduak Williams is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria. She holds a B.Sc in Political Science (Unical), M.Sc International Relations (UNN) , MA Global Security (Sheffield, UK) and a PhD in International Relations (Unical). She is an academic with over 20 years work experience. Dr. Williams is a former Commonwealth Scholar (2008-2009) Edinburgh, UK). She has published several academic articles in reputable journals and contributed several book chapters. Her current research interests tend to interrogate the complexities of the phenomena of politics, terrorism, violent extremism, counter terrorism and extremism in Africa. She is also currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for Gender Studies, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, UNISA.