Journal of Current Research and Studies

Volume 01 Issue 02 Sep-Oct 2024
https://journalcurrentresearch.com/
ISSN:3048-9911

OPEN ACCESS

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Works Cited

Esther, Ojone Joseph & Jibrin, Amos Ochimana (2024). An Investigation in To the APC'S Same-Faith Ticket for the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election. Journal of Current Research and Studies, 27-35.

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An Investigation in To the APC'S Same-Faith Ticket for the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the role of religion in Nigerian politics by examining the emergence of same-faith ticket within the All-Progressives Congress (APC) party for the 2023 elections. The study seeks to explore the motivations behind the party's decision to adopt a same-faith ticket, its potential impact on the political landscape, and the implications for religious diversity in Nigeria. The research methodology employed a combination of qualitative approaches. Additionally, secondary data from reliable sources such as academic articles, reports, and media coverage on religious and political dynamics in Nigeria were analyzed. this research reveals that the adoption of a same-faith ticket by the APC party is driven, in part, by the desire to appeal to religious sentiments and consolidate support from specific religious groups. It reflects a growing trend of religious identity shaping political affiliations and electoral strategies. However, it also raises concerns regarding the potential marginalization of religious minorities, and the potential risks of exacerbating religious tensions in a diverse nation like Nigeria. The findings underscore the need for a careful balance between religious considerations and inclusivity to ensure a harmonious political landscape and safeguard religious diversity in Nigeria. Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made. Firstly, political parties should prioritize inclusivity and promote candidates based on their qualities and capabilities, rather than solely on religious affiliation. Secondly, it is crucial to encourage interfaith dialogue and engagement among political and religious leaders to promote peaceful coexistence and understanding. Lastly, further research is needed to delve deeper into the impact of religion on Nigerian politics, exploring its influence on voter behavior, policymaking, and overall democratic governance.

Keywords

Religion, Nigeria, Politics, Same-Faith, Election

1. Introduction

The role of religion in Nigerian politics is a complex and significant aspect that has influenced governance and policy decisions in the country. Religion plays a crucial role in shaping political decisions, with both positive and negative impacts observed. The interaction between religion and politics in Nigeria has often led to challenges such as religious prejudice influencing appointments, civil service, and overall governance.

The politicization of religion in a multi-faith society like Nigeria can lead to division and hinder national development. Recommendations emphasize the importance of adhering to religious moral values, respecting freedom of religion, and observing the Nigerian constitution to enhance national development and unity. Scholars highlight the need for politicians and religious leaders to work together to ensure a harmonious relationship between religion and politics for the benefit of the nation.

Religion affects many facets of human existence, including people's political lives. According to (Olatunde, 96) that religion is of great importance in this country is known to all and sundry; it permeates the rank and file of the citizens of the nation. Religion and politics are interwoven; there are three major religion practices in Nigeria: Christianity, African Traditional Religion and Islam. None of these religions prohibit its followers from getting involved in politics. Although it's common knowledge that religion is Nigeria's problem, one author asserted that "religion is not bad in and of itself; rather, it's the people who practice it that make it bad." The functionalist school of thought holds that religion unites people, making it an effective instrument for nation-building. According to (Olawale, 2) Political scientists believe that man is a political animal. This means that we cannot do without politics as well as religion in our everyday life. This means that man cannot do without both parties. This paper focuses on the meaning of politics, religion, and its significance, as well as how religion functions in Nigerian politics. It also discusses the selected political parties in Nigeria and their Ideologies.

2. Methodology

A combination of descriptive, historical, and sociological methods was used in this work. The qualitative method is used because it offers a thorough comprehension of the study. The paper uses primary as well as secondary sources of data collection to make sure sufficient details are supplied. Selected participants were interviewed in a qualitative manner to learn more about their own perspectives, experiences, and reactions to APC'S Same-Faith ticket of 2023 election.

2.1 What is Religion?

Researchers have been finding it difficult to give religion a specific definition; this is because religion means different things to different people. Nevertheless, we shall look at some definitions of religion from different authors. The term "religion" is derived from its Latin root "religio-religionis" to bond or obligation, which is from "Ligare" to bind. Robinson defines religion in three different ways, namely as; (1) a belief in, or worship of a god or gods; (2) a particular system of belief or worship such as Christianity or Judaism; (3) anything to which one is totally devoted to which rules one's life for example Football. Anyanwu defines religion as the interaction with the supernatural in order to cope up with life's crises. Friedrich Shcleiermacher views religion as a belief in Supreme Being and a feeling of absolute dependence. According to

Hinnels simply refers to religion as “a general term used in most European languages to designate all concepts concerning the belief in GOD and GODDESS (ES) as well as other spiritual beings or transcendental ultimate concerns”. In modern parlance, the understanding of religion transcends its root religare, which denotes repetitive veneration practices or religare indicating close affinity between God and humankind. It has been proved that religion is spoken of ore in terms of fides (belief), secta (line to be followed) or Lex (law) in ancient and mediaeval times, rather than religio, which has become the general term used to designate Christianity after the reformation (Fidelis, 8-9). Emile Durkheim, in his book the elementary forms of religious life defined religion as a unified system of belief relative to sacred thing, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. It is a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane. (35)

2.2 What is politics?

Etymologically, the term politics is linked to the Greek word for "city-Statea” known as "polis" and its counterpart "techne" (art, skill, tradecraft and method). Thereby "he politike" (politics) simply means the art of governing the city. Politics then involves the art of organizing people in the society to live together and to relate so as to realize their full potentials or common goal. Mclean puts it; politics occur where people disagree about the distribution of resources and have at least some procedures for the resolution of such disagreement. Quincy describes politics as the art of influencing, manipulating or controlling major groups in the environment so as to advance the purpose of some persons against the opposition of others with conflicting desires. Politics to Eliade means

the accumulation, organization, and utilization of power in a religious territory, or society, especially the power to govern, to decide who controls the common institutions of society and on what terms. The prevailing assumptions are that politics occurs only at the government and state levels involving party rivalries. But in reality, politics involves so many other dimensions of life, such as family, sports, the church etc that explains why the traditional definition of politics as the practice of the art or science of directing and administrating states or other political units (Fidelis, 10).

2.3 Party Politics

Party politics refer to actions or political behaviors motivated by what is best or right for the political party, rather than for the people. When a politician passes a bill that is beneficial to his political party or his political career but harmful to the people he is representing, this is an example of party politics. According (Ngozika and Paul, 150) Political parties are supposedly the power house in any democratic society.

3. Four Major Political Parties in Nigeria and their Ideologies

All Progressives Congress (APC): is one of the two major contemporary political parties in Nigeria, along with the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Founded on 6 February 2013 from a merger of Nigeria's three largest opposition parties, the party came to power following the victory of party candidate Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 presidential election. This marked the first time in Nigerian history that an opposition party unseated a governing party and power was transferred peacefully. Formed in February 2013, the party is the result of a merger of Nigeria's three largest opposition parties – the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), and the All-Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) along with a breakaway faction of the All-Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and the new PDP – a faction of the ruling People's Democratic Party. The resolution was signed by Tom Ikimi, who represented the ACN; Senator Annie Okonkwo on behalf of APGA; Ibrahim Shekarau, the Chairman of ANPP's Merger Committee; and Garba Shehu, the Chairman of CPC's Merger Committee.

Ideology: The APC is generally considered to be a centre-left political party that favors controlled market economic policies, and a strong and active role for government regulation. A substantial number of its political leaders are followers of or politicians who subscribe to the social democratic political philosophy of Obafemi Awolowo and the socialist and anti-class views of Aminu Kano. Moreover, the majority of the APC's base of political support is in southwestern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria, which are dominated by the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani, respectively. The APC support states' rights, advancing state police as part of its manifesto. Its social policy is a combination of social nationalism. Despite the parties' domination by pro-devolution politicians like Atiku Abubakar (prior to his leaving the party), Bola Tinubu and Chief Bisi Akande, the party's presidential bearer and the CPC wing is less inclined to federalism. On 1 November 2017, Aliyu Ibrahim panda became the first candidate under the party to declare his intention to seek the office of the president of Nigeria in the 2019 elections.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP): is one of the two major contemporary political parties in Nigeria, along with its main rival, the All-Progressives Congress. Its policies generally lie towards the centre-right of the political spectrum. It won every presidential election between 1999 and 2011 and was, until the 2015 elections, the governing party in the Fourth Republic, although sometimes amid a few controversial electoral circumstances.

Ideology: The party has a neoliberal stance in its economic policies and maintains a conservative stance on certain social issues, such as same-sex relations. The PDP favors free-market policies which support economic liberalism, and limited government regulation. In 2003, President Olusegun Obasanjo and Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala embarked on an economic reform program, which reduced government spending through conservative fiscal policies, and saw the deregulation and privatization of numerous industries in Nigerian services sector — notably the Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) industry. The PDP is against same-sex relations, and favors social conservatism on moral and religious grounds. In 2007, the PDP-dominated National Assembly sponsored a bill to outlaw homosexual relations, making it punishable by law for up to 14 years in prison.

The party is a moderate advocate of state-autonomy and religious freedom for the Nigerian states. In the year 2000 the introduction of Islamic law in some states in Northern Nigeria triggered sectarian violence in Kaduna and Abia states. The PDP-led federal government refused to bow to pressure from the

southern, predominantly Christian states to repeal the law, and instead opted for a compromise where Islamic law would only apply to Muslims.

The Labour Party (LP): is a social democratic political party in Nigeria. The party was created in 2002 and was previously known as the Party for Social Democracy (PSD) before changing its name to the Labour Party. Built on the ideology of social democracy, the party aims to promote and defend social democratic principles and ideals for the purpose of achieving social justice, progress and unity. On 27 May 2022, the party's membership and support increased drastically as the former governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi joined the party shortly after he quit the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in a bid to run for the 2023 Nigerian presidential election

Ideology: The Party was formed in 2002, as the Party for Social Democracy before its name was officially changed to the Labour Party after the 2003 general election.

NNPP: it stands for new Nigeria people's party, and was founded by Boniface Aniebonam on 2001. The founder described the development and forming of the party as a divine intervention, saying, "we are the beautiful bride in the North as it is and we hope to expand in all parts of Nigeria as the best party". Indeed, the supporters of the NNPP have rapidly increased across the 34 Local Government Areas of Kano State, mainly, the internal crises that arose in the APC and PDP brought about his growth, currently Kwankwaso is the flag bearer of NNPP and he joined it in March 2022.

4. Interaction between Religion and Politics in Nigeria

One may ask whether religion and politics are in opposition or in agreement. Is there any relationship between them? Nigeria is the most religious nation in Africa and at the same time it is a democratic nation. Some believes that religion is the root cause of Nigeria problem, others reject this statement. (Alexander, 2) opines that religion is a double edge sword, it can make or mar, depending on how it is used. Nevertheless, if we'll harness, the religiosity of Nigerians can be used to build a politically stable Nigeria. The history of religion shows that man has always been devoted to a supernatural being higher than man himself. Man's adherence to various supernatural injunctions has helped in the development of the society in various ways. It is believed that when a state religious life is flourishing everything in that state including politics will go well and vice versa. (Olatunde, 96) testifies to this fact when he said, it is necessary to affirm that the two have always been together in the Nigeria context. Let's look at the three religions in Nigeria and their view about politics.

5. African Traditional Religion's View of Religion and Politics

African traditional religion is the indigenous belief of the people of Nigeria before Islam and Christianity were introduced, and it was the oldest religious system practiced in this country. The doctrine of this religion is based on the five major structures viz: beliefs in Supreme Being, divinities, spirit, ancestor, magic and medicine (Ogunleye, 101).

Traditional African society regarded religion as a mobilizing factor. A ruler in the African Traditional society is both a political ruler of his community as well as the Chief Priest. This Phenomenon, according to (Alexander, 3) quoting Awolalu, is particularly noticeable among the Yoruba where the Oba (king) is referred to as "igba keji Edumare" i.e. (Next in rank to the Supreme Being) and he is also regarded as "Olori awonnAworo" - leader among the priests. This implies that the Oba is both a political gear and religious leader. As a result, in traditional society, religion and politics are both interwoven; both have direct influence on each other. The religion dictates how the community will be run and virtually, the king does nothing until direction and guidance is received from either Ifa priest (Okebuko,la, 3).

6. Christianity view of Religion and Politics

Christianity is the religion of the followers of Jesus Christ who believed that salvation could only be sought through Jesus Christ whom they believed had died for the sin of the world. It sees nature as a manifestation of God's power and recognizes God as the ultimate power acknowledged through the power of the gospel (Ogunleye, 102).

To the Christians, God rules His people through chosen individual. There is no government that can rule well except God allows it. (Okebukola, 2) quoting Apata said Jesus was a political activist and Messianic revolutionist who like the Zealot of his time, wanted freedom from Israel. He asserted that in discussing religion and

politics in Christianity, one might note that the Christians church does not uphold any sine political system but accommodates itself but to many forms of secular government even when they are highly imperfect. The Church is ready to acknowledge any state which does not forbid it freedom to fulfill its spiritual purpose. Olubayo also acknowledged this fact when he said; Paul's instruction in Rom 13: 1-7 is a watershed. His point in this passage is that Christians have a legitimate and lawful duty of political participation in the governance of their countries. They have both have duties not only of civil obedience and payment of tax, dues, and revenues to state coffers; they also have a duty of exercising their political rights to vote and be voted for (13).

7. Islamic view of Religion and Politics

Islam is the religion of the followers of prophet Muhammad (SAW) who are called Muslims. It is believed that God has chosen him as the last and the seal of al prophets and messengers of God who only can lead men to salvation and the house of bliss on the Day of Judgment. It sees nature as the display power and identifies devotion as a symbol of closeness to God (Ogunleye, 102)

Islam is another prevailing religion in Nigeria. It is important to examine briefly the Islamic view on politics. This will assist to ascertain how religion has become a force to reckon with in the political system or Nigeria. Islam as a religion is inseparable from politics because the polity under Islamic control must practice theocracy. Political authority, therefore, resides with the clerics; a political order of a secular nature (Okebukola, 3). Quoting Odunuga, he said in Islam, politics and religion are parts of a single alloy. It was said that the greatest achievement or Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was the religious and political unification of Arabia. In Islam, the most functional political system us 'theocratic', in the sense that Allah is the only recognized authority (3).

It is evidently clear from the above statement that Nigerians practice either of the religions. From time past in Nigeria politics, no atheist has ever ruled as a political leader anyone aspiring to lead must belong to one of the three recognized religions in Nigeria. This point shows how important religion is in Nigeria. This is made clear in the incident that took place at the unveiling of Shettima the Vice-Presidential candidate for 2023 election, this happened at Shehu Yar'adua Center, Abuja. According to vanguard news, Ahmed Bola Asiwaju Tinubu stated that "if Asiwaju intended to cash in on ethnicity, he would have picked a running mate from the North Western part of Nigeria, which has the highest number of registered voters".

Premium times recorded how some men in cassocks, on Wednesday, attended the unveiling of Kashim Shettima as the vice-presidential candidate of the APC in Abuja. It was also recorded the presence of the cassock-wearing participants suggested some Christians leaders are in support of APC's Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket in spite of opposition by the Christian Association of, Nigeria (CAN). The cable also recorded the statement of Bayo Onanuga, the campaign's director of media and communication, he said the clergymen are known because they are not "big names in christianity yet". However, can has since disowned the men, saying they were imposters hired by the APC to fake a Christian community support for the Tinubu-Shettima ticket

If religion does not matter in Nigeria politics why will a Presidential candidate go and hire people to wear bishop attire to come for his political event? This could mean that he was trying to buy the heart of Christians to support his Muslim-Muslim ticket. Using Christian's leaders to him could mean the Christians are in support of Muslim-Muslim ticket but unfortunately the plan didn't work as planned. We have what is called "colony of Bishops" as a result of APC political era, we only have Bishop of Diocese. Ahmed Tinibu was saying that around 1993 it was Mulism-Mulism during the time of Abiola, though he won but he was not swearing in. The former Governor of Maiduguri, Momoh Sheriff stated that Muslim-Muslim ticket will not work that if it happens, he will decamp from APC to PDP. All these are indices that show APC Muslim-Muslim ticket will not work because people believe that anything that happens in politics has religious undertone. If the researcher is opportune to become a presidential candidate, he will not take same-faith ticket. Take a look at Abubakar Atiku, is a Muslim from Northern Nigeria and he take a Christian (Okowa, current Delta State Governor) as running mate this is similar to Peter Obi of Labour Party his running mate is from Kaduna State, Senator Yusuf Datti Baba Ahmed. Then Kwankwaso of NNPP his running mate is a Christian from Lagos, Isaac Idahosa.

From the current situation of Nigeria politics, the place of religion in Nigeria politics cannot be occupied by any other thing. In July, one of the Presidential candidates

for 2023 election in person of Peter Obi attended a program in Dunamis international Headquarters, Glory Dome, Abuja, Nigeria. During the meeting, the political leaders present were invited to pray for the nation and Peter was part of those that represent Nigeria. If religion does not matter, why would he attend the meeting? The researcher thinks that was the first time Peter Obi had ever visited the church. It is clear that when election is approaching those aspiring for any political position in Nigeria suddenly start visiting religious leaders either for prayer or to help mobilize their members to support their ambition. This scenario shows how important religion is in Nigeria. Some political leaders want to use religion to achieve their aim and also some religious leaders want to use politics to achieve their aim. This brings us to our conclusion that religion and politics are in agreement and not in opposition.

8. The Potential Implications of the Same-faith Ticket in Nigerian Politics

The potential implications of the same-faith ticket in Nigerian politics are complex and multifaceted. The APC's decision to field a Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket has been met with criticism and concern from various quarters, including religious institutions and political analysts. Some of the potential implications include:

Polarization: The same-faith ticket could exacerbate religious tensions and deepen the divide between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, potentially leading to increased polarization and social unrest

Regional Imbalance: The dominance of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria has led to a regional imbalance in political representation, and the same-faith ticket could further entrench this imbalance. According to Hamza:

> When a presidential contender and their running mate have the same religious beliefs, this is referred to as a "same faith ticket" in Nigerian politics. It may appeal to those who place a high value on religious membership, but it raises questions about inclusivity and the possible exclusion of other viewpoints. For all citizens to benefit from good governance, a political system must strike a balance between representation based on skill, talent, and diversity (Interview).

Ethnic Tensions: The same-faith ticket could also contribute to ethnic tensions, as some ethnic groups may feel marginalized or excluded from political power.

International Perception: The same-faith ticket could negatively impact Nigeria's international image, as it may be perceived as a move towards religious extremism or intolerance

Political Instability: The same-faith ticket could lead to political instability, as it may not be popular among a significant portion of the electorate, potentially leading to protests or other forms of political unrest. Onoja is of the view that, Nigeria been a multi-religious country and diverse beliefs being faced with a same faith ticket is bedeviling and an antagonist to unity, peaceful coexistence and socialization in the country. He continued by saying that, proposing same-faith ticket is underestimating and oversight on other faith and beliefs in the country (Interview).

National Development: The same-faith ticket could hinder national development by focusing on religious affiliation rather than merit, competence, and the common good

International Relations: The same-faith ticket could affect Nigeria's relations with other countries, as it may be seen as a move towards religious extremism or intolerance.

Another illustration of the power religious leaders have over their adherents is the way they frequently support political candidates because of their same religious convictions. Election results can be affected by these endorsements, as seen by the 2015 and 2019 elections, in which well-known religious figures publicly backed different candidates. The Nigerian state is secular, and there's a chance that religious tensions could worsen during election campaigns, which is one reason why the emphasis on religion affiliation in politics causes concerns. Furthermore, placing a premium on same-faith tickets might support divisive identity politics and impede efforts to promote national cohesiveness and unity. Ahmed stated that, from this I think same faith ticket in Nigerian is not proper especially politically because Nigeria is diverse and with a 60-40% Muslim Christian population, it should have been like before, but the Apc and Tinibu made it so be their political interest. He further in states, the first lady is a Christian but doesn’t have power to present the Christian views politically, even as a Vice President the power is limited not even when it’s a same faith ticket (Interview).

Overall, the same-faith ticket in Nigerian politics has the potential to create significant challenges and implications for the country's social, political, and economic stability.

9. The Role of Religion in Nigeria Politics

The researcher is of the opinion that religion plays a vital role in every aspect of the society including politics. Even though most people believe that religion is not helping matter in Nigeria, the truth of the matter is Nigeria politics cannot run well without religion, this is because of the various role's religion play in Nigeria. Assessing the role of religion and politics in Nigeria, (Ogunade, 65) concurs that both have continued to play vital roles in socio-cultural and geographical development of Nigeria. Here we shall consider some roles of religion in Nigeria politics

- Positively, religion can direct politicians and policymakers to respect moral standards and advance social welfare by acting as a moral compass. In times of political unrest or economic hardship, a lot of Nigerians look to their faith for consolation and direction. Religious teaching helps political leaders and religious adherents in nation building. All religions in Nigeria believe that we are all one in the sight of God, no discrimination. This belief will help citizens of Nigeria to love themselves and live in peace with one another and also it will help her citizens to come together to build the nation. All religions kick against vices such as corruption, killing, injustice, nepotism, kidnapping, dishonesty and disrespect to constituted authority. In this respect to this fact, one could reckon with the views of Abogurin as quoted by (Clemet, 291) when he said that;

  Man is God's concern and this attaches to him some moral obligation. These moral obligations are taken as divine obligations which are exposed in good character or conduct that is manifest in chastity, Truthfulness, honesty, hospitality, tolerance, generosity, kindness Responsibility, patience, endurance, honor, respect, prestige and good reputation.

All the vices mentioned are the prevailing issues in Nigeria today, if the adherents of various religions can be obedient to the teaching of their religions Nigeria can become a great nation.

- Influence from religion on political alliances and voting patterns is one of the main ways that religion affects Nigerian politics. Religious leaders frequently have a great deal of power over their adherents and have the ability to change their political inclinations for religious reasons. Due to this tendency, political groups and parties with a religious focus have emerged, with the goal of furthering the causes of particular religious communities. Religion helps in the mobilization of people to participate in Political affairs and other citizenship initiatives. There is no doubt that some religious people show apathy towards politics but on the other hand most religious people are interested in politics in our contemporary Nigeria. Using Christianity as an example, currently most churches in Nigeria are encouraging their members to get their Permanent Voter's Card (PVC). They encourage them to vote and not only rely on prayer this is a way of working alongside having faith. Some churches liaise with INEC representative to come down to their churches to register their members. Clergy men also encourage their members to indulge in activities that will lead to the development and growth of the nation.
- religion has also been a source of conflict in Nigerian politics, particularly between the Christian and Muslim communities. Competition for political power and resources along religious lines has fueled tensions and violence in the country, leading to instances of communal strife and even terrorism. The Boko Haram insurgency, for example, has its roots in religious extremism and has had a significant impact on Nigerian politics and society. Despite these challenges, religion has also played a positive role in Nigerian politics. Religious institutions have often served as mediators in times of political crisis and have played a crucial role in promoting peace and reconciliation. Additionally, many religious organizations in Nigeria are involved in providing social services, such as education and healthcare, filling gaps left by the government and contributing to the development of the country.

- Organizing prayers and other spiritual activities. Prayer is significant in all religions; it is a means by which people communicate to their god or gods. From Christianity it is believed according to the bible that "God honor the words of his prophet", this believe makes most political aspirants to visits religious leaders for prayer and in some cases fasting. Religious leaders always pray for political leaders and concerning the upcoming election they pray to God to bring “a man after God's own heart". Prayer helps a long way to bring about successful election not only during election but also to bring about a peaceful nation, it is on this ground that Olatunde says:

  > This interplay of religion and politics is seen actively in Nigeria Politics. For example, when politicians get to the echelon of power, they go to their temples of worship either as Christians or Muslims, to thank God for victory at the polls. Usually, none openly identifies Himself/herself with traditional medicine men/women and their Charms to achieve political victory. They also use such charms for Protection and longevity of life (97).

- Religion helps to maintain peace in the society via inter-religious dialogue. Nigeria has been characterized by various forms of conflicts over the years; these conflicts could include ethnic conflicts, political conflicts and religious conflicts. Inter religious dialogue is a platform for various religions to meet to sensitize people. This sensitization can help remove ignorance which could lead to conflict and political instability; it is on this note that Ogunleye opines that: one of the responsibilities of government in any given society is to provide good governance that will exercise power in the management of the country economic, social, political and even religious crisis. However, when it seems that government cannot single handedly handle the case of various conflicts in this country; we need to resort to a religious dimension (107). Promotion of peace in the society is one of the major roles of religion. In addition to this, the Vatican council II (!962-1965) issued a declaration pleading with all to; forget the past and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit f all men and to let them, together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral value (38).
- Religion can serve as intermediary between politicians and the society. As we all know the citizens look up to politicians for provisions of basic amenities. However, in a situation where it seems politics has is failing to fulfill its objectives the people divert their attention to religious organization to fill that vacuum. A good example is the reoccurring strike in the educational sector of the nation between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). It was reported that the president (Muhammad Buhari) pleaded with religious leaders to beg ASUU to call off the long-term strike.
- Religion increases the standard of living of the people by providing employment for the masses. Religion is in the game of development. It has helped the Nigeria nation in economic development. The provision of employment is no longer left for the government alone unlike in time past when government is the only source of employment. Religion has employed many people into different sector of the nation; this includes the area of health, education, transportation, building etc.

Religion significantly influences Nigerian politics, shaping governance and policy decisions. However, it can lead to religious prejudice and division, hindering national development. To enhance unity and development, it's crucial to adhere to moral values, respect freedom of religion, and follow the constitution. Collaboration between politicians and religious leaders is essential.

10. Conclusion

Religion has a place in every nation including Nigeria. The researcher is not disputing the fact that religion has negative side but at the same time the positive aspect of religion cannot be downplay. The event that took place at APC Unveiling of vice president candidate for 2023 election shows that religion is important in deciding the political destiny of Nigeria. There are speculations that Muslim-Muslim ticket could lead to Islamization of Nigeria, it could also lead to inter religious conflict. Despite the fact that politicians bare

trying to use religion for their selfish and greedy interest, religion still stand as a key factor in the development of Nigeria and religion really matter in the political affairs of Nigeria. If people do what their religion teaches, it will lead to good governance, political stability, meaningful development and justice but any attempt to bypass religion in Nigeria politics will lead to failure thus, on this note (Okebukola, 4) concurs to this when he said, It is certain that a good and healthy placement of religion in the social policy of this nation will always ensure that the inevitable positive qualities of religion are harness, while a bad one turns religion not only into opium according to Karl Mark, but also a time bomb. Religion plays a significant role in Nigerian politics, particularly in the context of ethno-religious tensions and electoral competition. While religion undeniably plays a significant role in Nigerian politics, particularly evident in the APC's adoption of same-faith tickets for the 2023 elections, it is essential to recognize the complexities and implications of this phenomenon. Striking a balance between religious inclusivity and political pragmatism is crucial for fostering a democratic and pluralistic society in Nigeria.

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