



Ethnicity and Religion in Nigerian Politics: A Historical Analysis

by

Walter O. Ogah, Abdulmumin M. Omiya,
Ibrahim S. Ibrahim and Anas A. Dankasa
Department of Sociology

Federal University, Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State
ogarwalter@gmail.com; Babsomiya@gmail.com;
khaleelsoe@gmail.com; Dankasajegal@yahoo.com

Abstract

There is no doubt that credible leadership is crucial in every known human society, but the nature at which leaders are brought to power using chronic religious and ethnic sentiments is a setback to the politics and political development in Nigeria. Both ethnic and religious involvements in Nigerian politics in the pre, during and the post colonialism were investigated. Social identity theory was used in the study. Data was collected from both secondary and primary sources. Primary data was collected through the use of questionnaire and in-depth interview. It was concluded that both ethnicity and religion have been militating against the politics and political development of Nigeria. The major recommendation was that Nigerians should uncompromisingly put the country first, before religion and ethnicity, so as to have credible leadership which will give rise to sustainable politics and political practices.

Key words: Ethnicity, religion, politics, Analysis.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with diverse socio-cultural patterns (Otite, 2003). The pre-colonial history of various human settlements that constitute the present geopolitical entity called Nigeria today has within it several indicators that express the social reality of human diversity, socio-cultural, economic, religious and political reality. It is, of course, this odd arrangement that made late chief Obafemi Awolowo to describe Nigeria as a mere geographical expression. For this simple reason, Nigerians found themselves in a challenging society where everyone strives for survival irrespective of the legality of the processes and channels.

The historical amalgamation was, therefore, the foundation only to an ascribed social system, a “deliberate arrow” that benefits the architects only. Obviously, therefore,

Nigeria right from its creation has come along with cracks, these cracks were most serious in the area of economy politics and religion (Aruwan, 2008).

The ambition of each of the tribes - Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and other minor ethnic groups has always been centered on the seat of leadership, being a major channel to reach the economic power. One of the most potent weapons by which the political actors penetrate the very minds of the Nigerian masses is religion. Political actors in Nigeria, right from pre-colonial era down to present time, have been using both ethnicity and religion in gaining access to political position. Religion is a very sensitive social institution in Nigeria due to the heterogeneous nature of the people. Aside from this socio-cultural fusion, the majority of Nigerians remain strongly attached to their cultural and religious principles and practice. The issue of religious conflicts in Nigeria is, therefore, an intimate product of the inter-elite and intra-elite struggle for power especially between the northern and the southern elements of the nation's political elite (Gofwen, 2000). According to Gofwen (2000), the social formation of Nigeria was predicated on mutual suspicion and mistrust between the north and the south regions. The mistrust stemmed primarily from the politicization of ethnic and religious differences by colonial administration.

One of the most recent examples of religious politicization in Nigeria is that of Zamfara state during the tenure of Ahmed Sani Yarima as governor. Yarima gain popular acceptance not only in Zamfara but among the Muslims Ummah within and outside Nigeria as he cast a religious spell on the minds of the electorates. Once he achieved his political aims, the clergy's real intension began to unfold before his congregation (Enweren, 1995). Many of our politicians today, have used religion in their efforts to get political power and as well to legitimize their ill-gotten wealth. This is evident in Zamfara and many other states (Gofwen, 2000). During his tenure, Governor Yerima awarded contracts for the building of multi-million naira mosques in Gusau the state capital and other parts of the state from monies donated Arabic nations. These funds were found looted in the name of religion.

Religion is now an important factor in the Nigerian political arena where incompetent candidates are being put-up for elections solely on religious qualifications. The manner in which the politicization of the country through religion and ethnic politics has caused or damaged the affairs of good politics in Nigeria leading to political thuggery, violence, conflicts and misrepresentations etc. Religious and the use of ethnicity in Nigerian politics has given rise to the mismanagement of funds or resources, even when what the politicians are doing goes contrary to the teachings of their religion.

In many ways, religious organisations in Nigeria have made themselves the mouthpiece of powerful individuals and preach the gospel as interpreted by or as suitable to interests of the said individuals. The Constitution says in Section 23: "The National Ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism". How ironic, given the fact that many of the so-called spiritual leaders today preach fear and intolerance to others and are only interested in making quick money.

The politicization of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, under the then Chairman, Ayo Oritsejafor, for example, has not enabled peace or unity. Rather than being the voice of the voiceless (of all faiths), CAN has often been seen as an arm of the PDP (Vanguard Online Newspaper, 2015). The Constitution allows every Nigerian to propagate his/her religion but rather than manifest conscience and spread goodwill, our religious pronouncements are now almost warlike. From jihad in the North East to an evangelism that now reeks of bigotry, Nigeria is at war on so many fronts.

2. Materials and Methods

Both primary and secondary methods were used to gather data.

Theoretical framework

Social identity theory

It was pioneered by Henri Tajfel in 1979. This theory is of the view that cultural and value differences couple with group interests all influence relationship between individual and group. Social identity is a person's sense of who he is, based on his group membership. Tajfel (1979) posited that the groups (e.g. social class, family, political party, religion, race, region) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. Since people are divided into 'them' and 'us', social identity theory states that the in-group will discriminate against the out-group. Alubo (2003) posited that various eruptions of conflicts are related to claims and contestation over identity as a basis for determining who included or excluded from participation is or benefiting from opportunities in particular situations. Alubo (2011) also asserted that civil disturbances may be broadly classified into religious, ethnic and political conflict. According to Brahim (2006; Alubo 2008), there is basically a division of Nigerian citizen into indigenes and settlers and such claims are used as bases for access to or denial of opportunities.

This theory is suitable for explaining the inter-group conflict. The issue of in-group and out-group (group formation) is very critical in the explanation of conflict. People who share common identity or belief such as ethnicity, religion, culture, politics, race or gender tend to see others as their opponents. This theory was adopted in explaining ethnic and religious exhibition in the Nigerian politics, based on the assumption that group formation is critical and indispensable in every known human society. In Nigeria there a diverse ethnic and religious groups guarding their group interest jealously without reservation. Eventually, due to socio-cultural variation and chronic ethnocentrism, they view themselves as mutual opponents. By developing strictly at the back of their mind the concept of out-group and in-group, and see themselves as enemies considering their divergent cultural values, hence the mutual sentiment in assuming political positions in Nigeria without weighing the political morality of the politicians. Though this theory explained identity formation perfectly well, it didn't explain the economic benefits of politics that actually pushed people to firmly form such group sentiment, hence the need to use political economy theory.

Political economy theory

This theory has a good relationship with the works of Adam Smith and Philosopher Karl Marx. Most, if not all the explanation of social phenomenon by Marx was anchored based on political economy. His historical and dialectical materialism are the evidence. The theory is of the view that there is a strong correlation between economics and politics. That whoever have authority in a given society or situation have fleshy access to the economy of that society or situation and vice versa.

Therefore, in the case of Nigeria this theory is relevant in the sense that As Christians or Muslims the perception is to have someone of “our” faith to get the mantle of leadership so that he will employ more of our members, retire most of their member and elevate ours, give us soft loans more and most of he can political implement policies that gives us upper hand in terms of land ownership etc. the same thing with ethnicity.

Ethnicity and religious politics in Nigeria from pre-colonial era to 1989

Historical identities have played a significant role in the Nigerian political process during the colonial period and in the post-colonial era. During the colonial period, the administrators allowed the emergence and aggravation of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ syndrome, where Muslims were pitted against Christians, Northerners against Southerners, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo against each other and so on (Adefemi, 2003; Okpanachi, 2010). In this era, religious and ethnic differences became prominent factors in instituting and executing socioeconomic strategies and applications. Therefore, the differentiating outcome of colonialism became the forerunner of the socioeconomic disequilibrium among the different regions, and then this became an important factor in stimulation of identity awareness so as to efficiently ‘divide and rule’ (Fearon and Laitin 2003:83; Okpanachi 2010). But, as a counter argument, it must be said that internal factors are more determinant than the external ones in creating the cleavages in Nigeria. This is also the case in many other countries.

Ethnicity is seen as the most basic and politically silent identity of Nigerians. This argument is based on the premise that in their competitive and non-competitive context, Nigerians tend to define themselves in terms of ethnic affinities as oppose to their identities (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). A survey conducted in Nigeria by Lewis and Bratton (2000) found that almost half of Nigerians (48.2%) labeled themselves with an ethnic identity compared to 28.4% who labeled themselves with respect to class while 21% identify themselves religious group (Lewis and Bratton 2000; Osaghae and Suberu 2005). This means over 66% of Nigerians view themselves as members of elemental ethnic or religious group. What is even more interesting is the fact that religious and ethnic identities remain salient than class identities (Lewis and Bratton 2000; Osaghae and Suberu 2005). However, this is not at all that surprising especially if one considers that ethno-religious formations are the most persistent behavioral unit in Nigeria (Nsongola-Ntalaja 2004; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

Politics of ethnic identity in Nigeria

Ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is manifested in interaction among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system where language and

culture are the most prominent attributes. The formation of dialects within languages was one of the ways in which ethnicity-both small-scale and large-scale – became fixed in Nigeria. Although, there are over 400 languages in Nigeria, only three are considered major while the rest are considered minor languages. However, the distribution of these languages is directly proportional to both political and socio-economic power, and, therefore, the language group to which one belongs defines ones status in the society. Christian missionaries and local politicians created standard languages with the hope that they would homogenize languages and ethnicity, and create a more harmonies ethnic identities.

Ethnicity is natural in almost all societies that are composed of more than one ethnic group. This observation tends to offer the suggestion that the interaction between different ethnic groups within a single set-up generates ethnic identity. An interaction of this kind can create a common consciousness of being one in relation to other relevant ethnic groups (Erikson, 1996). That in turn, results in the emergence of in-group and out-group confines which come to be guarded jealousy overtime. Based on this approach, ethnicity thus becomes a process through which ethnic identities are politicized (Erikson, 1996).

Ethnicity and religious politics in Nigeria from 1999-2018

An empirical research on Nigeria to determine the ethno-religious components of Nigerian politics conducted by Samson (1999) revealed that 82% of the respondents which constituted the majority agreed that ethnicity had an impact in political development in Nigeria. Samson further posited that the tested hypothesis which attempted to determine whether the opinion about the relationship between ethnicity and political development was influenced by religion revealed that 76.9% of Christians and 100% of Muslims agreed that ethnicity had an impact on political development, but their opinions were influenced by their religions”. Ethno-religious conflicts have become one of the major problems affecting the social, economic and political developments of Nigeria in these recent times.

As a result of the pressure from within and around the world, Nigeria once again decided to return to yet another civilian regime. It is called the Fourth Republic. The republics before it were chronologically truncated by the military juntas suspected to be coloured by religious and ethnic motives.

Shariah Law and the Nigerian Politics

Sharia is a law based on the tenets and the teachings of Islam. Since Nigeria was initially organised based on the idea of being a secular state considering its multi-religion and ethnicity, it should be noted that making sharia a state law in some northern Nigerian states ushered in an aspect of religious role in the state politics. Starting from Zamfara State, it then spread to other states in northern Nigeria. According to Olatunji and Mavalla (2016) the introduction of Islamic Sharia law in 2000 in Kaduna state against the secular state status and principle of the Nigerian Constitution sparked one of the most violent conflicts ever witnessed in the state. The ethno-religious conflict has further complicated

the worsening interplay between religion and ethnicity in the state. This mutual suspicion was further aggravated by the introduction of the Sharia that was expressed in the open confrontations between the two groups in February and May, 2000. Anugwom (2008) contended that in some quarters, the emergence of the Sharia law has been perceived as more of a politically motivated action than a call to holy living. On the basis of the above view, it thus seems logical to see the Sharia issue as the basis of the North's desire to build a coherent political bloc, with religion as the basis of mobilization. He further affirmed that No matter how it is rationalized, Sharia law represents a very big challenge to a supposedly secular state. Therefore, the call to shape state and society by the rules of Islam has increased antagonism between Muslims and members of other faiths. Christians and Traditionalists are worried that Islamic law may spread to other parts of Nigeria and that it may pervade more spheres of social life. Where Sharia becomes dominant, non-Muslims are excluded, to a large extent, from political participation, and their social environment is determined by the laws of an alien religion.

Politics in Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani conflict since transition to civilian rule in 1999

Since the onsets of civil rule in 1999, Yoruba and Hausa have bloodily confronted each other on several occasions. The earliest is that of Sagamu near Lagos on 17 July 1999, as a result of a death of a woman who was alleged to have desecrated the Owo Festival. At least 50 persons were killed as a result of the conflict. There were reprisal attacks in connection to the crisis, as returnees recounted their experiences in Sagamu. Hundreds of lives were lost in these reprisals. Subsequently, on 26 November 1999, Yoruba and Hausa traders clashed over the control of the strategic Mile 12 Market in Ketu, Lagos. The intervention of the OPC, whose fundamental objectives include 'to monitor the various interests of all the descendants of Oduduwa, by whatever name called, anywhere on the face of the earth and struggle for the protection of these interests', culminated in the escalation of the clashes with 115 persons dead. All these, according to Ukiwo (2003) were highly architected by June 12, 1993 events when General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida annulled the general election which was highly acclaimed to be in favour of Mashood Kashimawo Abiola, the flag bearer of National Democratic Party (NDP). While most Nigerians and civil society organisations challenged the annulment, the protests, which became popularly known as June 12, persisted in predominantly Yoruba states. It claimed a lot of lives as it turned into a clash between the Yoruba and Hausa ethnic groups.

Ethnic and religious play in Jos politics since 1999

Currently vegetating towards a seemingly a confused state, Jos conflict according to some reliable theories was ethnically motivated (it was later coloured by religion) between the indigenous ethnic groups on the other hand and the Hausa and Fulani on the other side, based on who controlled the affairs of the community. It should be recalled that the Hausa-Fulani according to some theories, came to Jos from several states of northern Nigeria and having stayed for a very long time soon became the economic heavyweights of Jos. With huge and considerable demographic advantage in Jos town,

they soon became interested in who rules their community. The result was the appointment of the Chairman of Jos North Local Government Area back in 1994 by General Abacha which according to Segun and Ebenezer (2013), ignited the first major conflicts in Jos in 1994. That was when the indigenes and Hausa-Fulani group engaged in violent confrontation over the appointment of a Hausa candidate to chair the Jos North Local Government Council which was created in 1991 by the military government of Ibrahim Babangida. It is believed by the native that the military regime created the Jos Local Government Area to satisfy the interest of the Hausa/Fulani population in Jos North. This conflict is based on who rules who rather than selecting the right leader. To these warring groups, the leaders of the community must emerge from “us” not from “them” without considering the political morality of the leader. Since the Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslims and the indigenous folks predominantly Christians, other ethnic groups who are Muslims were ignorantly dragged in to support the Hausa-Fulani while the Christians support the indigenous fellows (Berom, Anaguta and Jarawa,). Segun and Ebenezer (2013) further asserted that, “The Hausa argued that they established Jos, and that it was nurtured by them till it become a modern city without any help from any of the indigenous ethnic groups in Jos”. But on the contrary, Best (2007) posited that the indigenes debunked these claims by saying that they were never conquered by the Fulani Jihadists following the Usman Dan Fodio Jihad policy; and that the Hausa settlers came to Jos after the British conquest of the area to work in tin mining industry and were never indigenes. It was after they had settled they renamed the streets giving them Hausa names.

As the Fourth Republic set in (1999), several conflicts were recorded as a result of the Jos North Local government elections. The ugly event which Krause (2010) posited that no fewer than four thousand (4,000) and possibly as many as seven thousand (7,000) persons have been killed since late 2001, when the first major violence in more than three decades broke out in Jos. Plateau State has lost thousands of her citizens to this crisis. In addition, important infrastructural facilities have been destroyed. Therefore, the only peacefully elected Jos north chairman was **Frank Today in 1999 till date since the onset of the fourth Republic**. Ostein (2009:35) stated that “one interesting issue about the mobilization was that campaigns were not issue based but were principally bared on promotion of religious programs. In line with this, Danjuma (2008:30) maintained that:

prior to the 2007 elections in Plateau State, voters were mobilized through religious/ethnic sentiments, pastors were preaching in churches that everyone should go and vote only Christian candidates and that they must not vote Muslims that Christians must fight against the Islamisation of Plateau. On the other side Muslims preachers declared that it was only infidels that should vote for a Christian or rather the People’s Democratic Party in Plateau State, members of the Hausa/Fulani community were being sensitized in mosques to vote Muslims and to resist any attempt to rig elections by the ruling democratic party in Plateau State. Also,

candidates canvassed for votes in churches or mosques and promoted principally religious agenda first rather than developmental issues.

Ethnicity and Religion in Jos North 2008 Local Government Election

On Friday, November 28, 2008, violence erupted in Jos, the capital city of Plateau State. The immediate cause of the conflict, this time around was said to be the local government election that took place the previous day in which the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate for the chairmanship of Jos North Local Government Area, Aminu Baba, was set to defeat the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Timothy Buba, but the result, which was declared in Government House, Jos, gave victory to the governor's party, the PDP. What followed, in terms of humanitarian catastrophe, can only be comparable, in recent times, only to the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The pre, during and post-election of 2007 were coloured by ethno-religious motives, rather than the tenets of democracy. The Hausa-Fulani and several other ethnic groups who are predominantly Muslims in Jos identified themselves with Aminu Baba, the ANPP (All Nigeria Peoples Party) chairmanship candidate and rallied in his favor. While Timothy Buba, a Christian and PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) was overwhelmingly supported by the Berom, Anaguta and Jarawa and other ethnic groups that are Christians. As a result of this crisis, lives and property were lost; academic activities were disrupted. In fact, the University of Jos was shut down and several Governors sent buses to convey their students back home.

Ethnic politics in Assakio in Nasarawa state between Eggon and Alago, 2007

The quest for political power is central in the incessant conflicts between the Alago and the Eggon in the area. In addition, the Alago believe that as the first settlers in the area, they own and should determine the traditional and modern political leadership, a position other ethnic groups like the Eggon are now challenging. According to Tsaku and Embu(n.d):

In 2007, many people contested for the governorship position in Nasarawa State including Solomon Ewuga who is of Eggon extraction. Despite the well-established socio-cultural relationship between the Eggon and the Alago, on 30th March, 2007 Solomon Ewuga who was a governorship candidate went to Assakio for his political campaign with a large convoy of Eggon followers brandishing sharp knives, sword, cutlasses with the intention to demonstrate their overwhelming numerical superiority and to intimidate the Alago in Assakio.

Tsaku and Emgu Further maintained that:

The problem of Eggon in Assakio started in 2002 when Lafia East Development Area was created by Abdullahi Adamu led administration. It became serious in 2003 when Assakio chiefdom was created by the same regime. Following the creation of the chiefdom, the Eggon people in Assakio were totally alienated from the power sector

and became subject to the estranged chiefdom. This was done despite the presence of the Eggon natives in Assakio who inhabit the bulk of the area of the district at all material times to the creation of Assakio chiefdom. The chiefdom was used according to Eggon as an instrument to alienate and suppress the Eggon natives from their means of livelihood

What actually happened was that there was a deep chronic ethnic exhibition in terms politics in Assakio, this became bolder when on 30th March, 2007 Solomon Ewuga, an Eggon man who was contesting against late Aliyu Akwe Doma, an Alago man, came to Assakio for campaign. An incident occurred with varying ethnic versions that ignited an armed confrontation between the two ethnic groups which resulted into huge humanitarian and socio-economic disarray. According to the Eggon, the Alago started the whole trouble because they did not want Ewuga, their brother to win. While according to the Alago, the crisis was started by Alago who should take the blamed for the conflict. Without doubt, ethnic sentiments played a big role in determining who ascends the mantle of leadership in the area.. Thus, rather than support aspirants based on their political morality, the two ethnic groups allowed their emotions to sway the to the contrary.

The role of ethnicity and religion in Nigerian politics during the 2015 Presidential elections

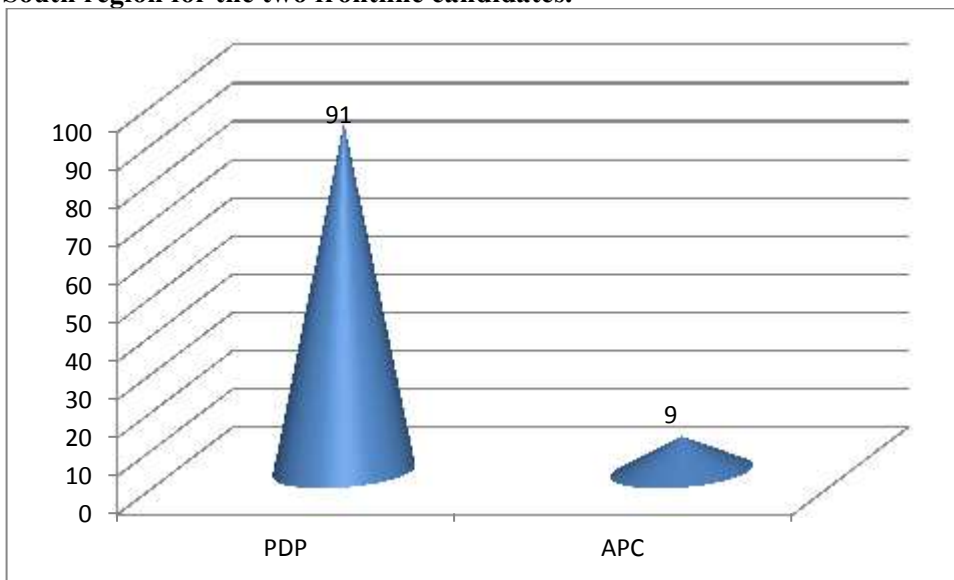
The need for political stability and a virile democratic culture in Nigeria is of great concern to all Nigerians and the international community. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic in 1999, many elections have been conducted, but the 2015 election is of high significance because it exposed the unflinching role of ethnicity and religion in the voting behaviour of different segments of our society (Egobueze, 2017). Table 1 shows some results of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria in addition to showing how ethnicity, region and religion played some roles in the eventual victory of Mohamadu Buhari.

Table 1: The result of Presidential general election in 2015 of the two leading parties (PDP) in South-South

SN	Name of State	Buhari-APC	Jonathan-PDP
1	Akwa Ibom	58,411	953,304
2	Bayelsa	5,194	361,209
3	Cross River	28,368	414,863
4	Delta	48,910	1,211,408
5	Edo	208,469	286,869
6	Rivers	69,238	1,487,075
	Total	423,784	4,714,728

Source: Egobueze, 2017.

Pie Chart showing percentage of votes in the 2015 Presidential election in the South-South region for the two frontline candidates.



Pie chart showing percentage of votes in the 2015 Presidential election in the North-West region for Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari

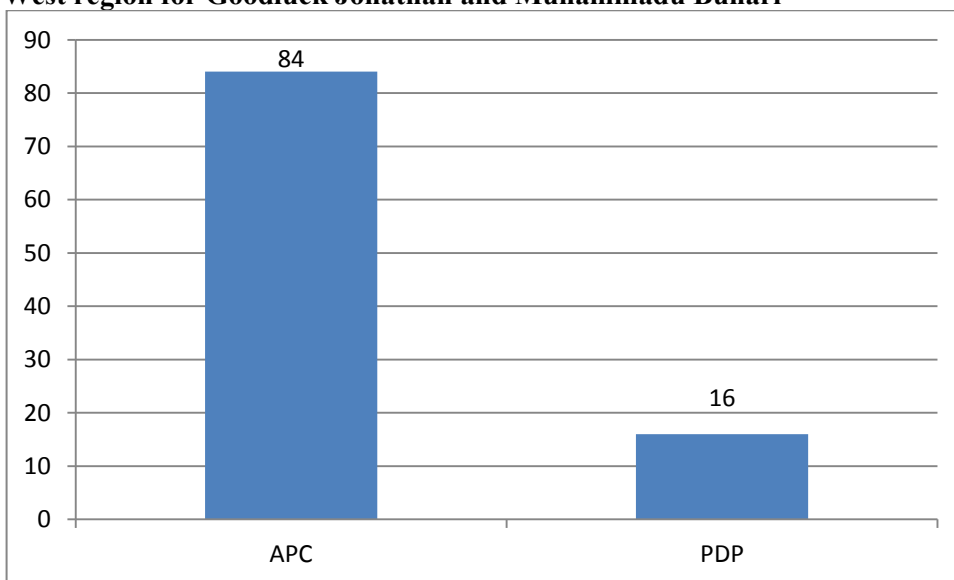


Table 1 and the accompanying charts show clearly how religion, ethnicity and region played a vital role in bringing Buhari to power. Considering the regions, the South-south which is dominated by Christians and where Goodluck Jonathan hailed from, voted

massively in support of him while only a few voted for Mohamadu Buhari. This is almost, if not a direct opposite of what happened in the North-West were Buhari hailed from, as majority of those in the North-West are Muslims, Hausa and Fulani. Considering the overall result of the election based on the six geo-political zones, Goodluck Jonathan won in only two geo-political zones namely; south-south and south-east. **What about the West?** These are areas that are predominantly Christian. Buhari won in the remaining four (4) geo-political zones that are predominantly Muslim. The North-east and North West are predominantly Muslim and are inhabited by the Hausa and Fulani.

The anticipated Presidential election result the forthcoming 2019 presidential election in Nigeria

Next election is to be held in February, 2019. The result of the just concluded Presidential primary election gave birth to Atiku Abubakar, a Fulani Muslim as the flag bearer of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) while President Buhari, another Fulani Muslim, both from northern Nigeria, the incumbent emerged the APC flag bearer. Considering the thinking of a great majority of Nigerians, ethnicity still played out. Most Christians, especially in the south-east, south-south and middle belt voted Atiku Abubakar, considering his seemingly secular and cosmopolitan nature, most Moslems went for Buhari.

3.) Data Analysis

The empirical study of ethno-religious influence on voters decision in Gusau metropolis of Zamfara, Nigeria.

A sample size of one hundred (100) was drawn from some selected areas in the metropolitan city of Gusau in Zamfara state which include Tudun Wada and Sabongari areas, mortgage and Sabon-hegi areas all in Gusau town. This distribution was based on the fact that, the population of Sabongari is made up of people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, while the characteristics of Tudun Wada showed much of concern on the problem of religion, similarly, mortgage and Sabon-hegi people to some extent display similar characteristics, which led to the assumption that similar information might be obtained from them.

Distribution of Respondents Based on Ethno-religious Affiliation and Candidate's Competence on Voting Preference

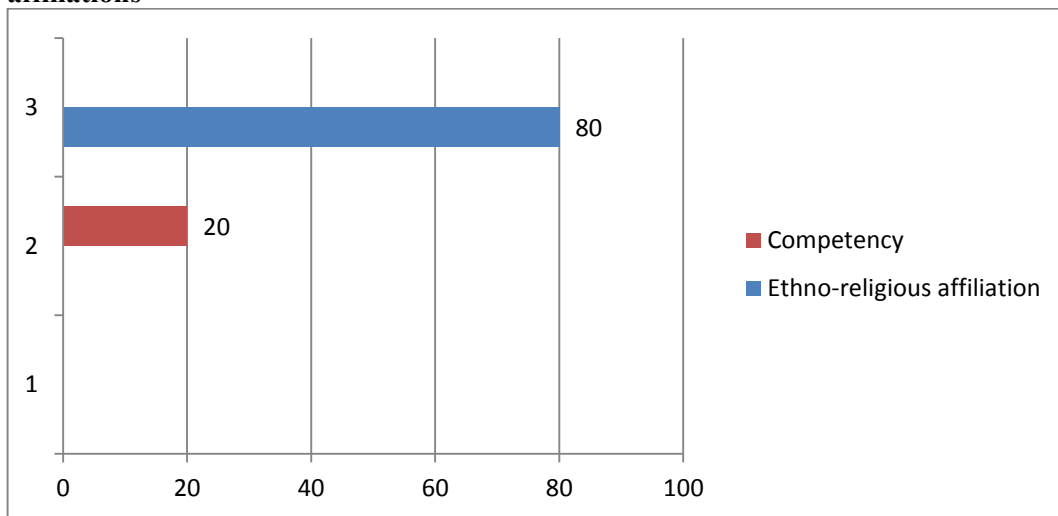
S/N	Voting Preference	Frequency	Percentage
1	Religious Affiliation	48	80
2	Competency	12	20
	Total	60	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Findings from the result gathered using questionnaire distributed in the selected areas to determine the role played by ethnicity and religion in Nigeria revealed that 79% of the respondents constituting the majority agreed that religion and ethnicity had a great impact in political development in Nigeria. Findings from the study using Chi-square test of hypothesis at 0.05. level of significance, further showed that there was a significant

relationship between religion and ethnic affiliation with voting preference. The study also explored the various ways by which the religious organizations participated in support for many candidates using different methods ranging from prayer sermon to preaching grounds across all the religious groups especially the two major religions. These findings coincided with that of other previous researches in the area, like Samson, (1999).

Fig 1: Bar chart showing voting preference based on competence and ethno-religious affiliations



Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Fig. 1 shows that ethnicity and religion played a vital role on voting preference in Nigeria with 80% against candidate's competence. This is to show that majority of electorates in Nigeria vote in line with the candidate's religion or ethnicity not on competence.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

The affirmation of ethnic groups and the intensification of an ethnic ideology led to the politicization of tribal and ethnic interest during the post-colonial era. A number of political, economic and religious institutions have followed this ideology in the appointment or election of leaders. **It is, therefore, common in Nigeria that the religious institution which was founded by a person of a particular ethnic or tribal group?** This negative trend witnessed during the post-colonial period has also constituted a source for the formation of successive leadership ideology. Also, during the post-colonial era, aspiring to and retaining leadership position were viewed as reachable goals through engagement in vicious and combat strategies that entailed the use of violence and fraudulent means. This ideology has sadly been sustained by political leaders and adopted by religious leaders.

This study in one sense has tried to look at the emergence of identities and their impact on the conflict in the most crowded African country, Nigeria. From social and political perspective, "identity" has a personal and social meaning. And it is an

individual's sense of belonging to a group which often has an impact on his/her political behavior (Erikson 1968; Anderson, 2010).

Identity has been significant aspect of the Nigeria political process, during the colonial period and in the post – colonial era. Ethnicity is a social phenomenon that is related to interactions among individuals of different ethnic group within a political system where languages and culture are the most prominent attributes. Both ethnicity and religiosity have emerged as the most basic and politically salient identities of the Nigerians.

In Nigeria, structures of political control are formed on the basis of ethnicity and religiosity via custom made patronage system. These identities have been a constant source of conflict and cleavage in the country. Since the restoration of democratic rule, ethnicity identity and mobilization in the Nigerian political landscape has often results in the political instability and constant conflicts. A number of uprising and concomitant mayhem have been reported since 1999 and have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and the destruction of property. In recent times, for instance, the militarization of Boko Haram has undermined Nigeria's stability and placed the country under constant threat. Despite some exceptions, such as the Yoruba being made up of both Christian and Muslim segments, ethnic identities generally overlap with religious identities in Nigeria. For that reason, it is difficult to distinguish ethnic conflicts from religious ones in this country. However, it can be said that ethnic differences in Nigeria would not have been such a prominent cause of conflict they have not overlapped with the religious identities, or vice versa. In other words, in many instances, religion provides a mobilization frame for conflict and this effect is amplified when religious and ethnic cleavages run parallel. And there is no doubt that inter-religious conflict in Nigeria form part of the dynamics of identity politics. As stated above, while some sources (Lewis and Bratton 2000) revealed the importance of ethnicity as a causal factor of cleavages, others (Ruby and Shah, 2007; Pew research Center 2010; Green, 2011) underlined religious identities as a more determinant element in the perception of difference. The diversity in the scientific findings and literature was probably caused by researchers focusing on different groups in Nigeria. Basically, this means that for some groups ethnicity is more sense of belonging. The following recommendations are made:

- i. Nigeria first, every social affiliation second , and not the other way round
- ii. Nigeria religious and political leaders should be reminded that they are not simple political heads; they are the mystical and religious heads, the divine symbols of their people's health and wellbeing.
- iii. Nigeria re-orientation should be directed towards the wellbeing of the Nigeria populace rather than on religious and ethnic affiliation.
- iv. Nigeria should shun-away from religious and ethnic sentiment and embrace a common wealth.
- v. "Indigene" and "settler" ideology should be discouraged.
- vi. No government at all levels should be allowed to use public funds to finance any religious activities.

- vii. During electoral campaign, any political aspirant who uses ethnicity and religion as a weapon for his/her electoral campaign should be disqualified and be brought to book.

References

- Adefemi, I. V. (2003). Migration, land tenure, citizenship and communal conflicts in Africa. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 9(1), 1-19.
- Anderson, M. R. (2010). *Community identity and political behavior*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anugwom, E. E. (2008) Contested terrain: Economic Migration, Islamic shariah Law and ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. *African Monographs*, 29(2) 159-181.
- Best, S.G. (2007) *Conflict and Peace Building in Plateau State, Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd;
- Egobueze, A & Ojirika, C. U. (2017) Ethnicity, religion and voter's behaviour: The Experience of the 2015 Presidential Election in Nigeria. *Global Journal of human-social science: Political Science*, 17(4) 25-36.
- Erikson, H. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Erikson, T. H. ((1996). *Ethnicity, race and nation*. In Hutchinson, J. and A. D. eds. *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gofwen, R. I. (2000). *Religious conflict in northern Nigeria and nation building: the theories of two decade (1980-2000)*. Jos: University of Jos Printing Press.
- Green, M. C. (2011). Religious, family law, and recognition of identity in Nigeria. *Emory International Law review*, 25 (2), 945-966.
- Krause, J. (2010). *A deadly cycle: Ethnic conflict in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria*. Working Paper, Geneva: Switzerland.
- Olatunji, E. A., & Mavalla, A. G. (2016) Kaduna State Sharia Crisis of 2000: The Lessons and Challenges after Sixteen Years. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 21(10) 08-14
- Samson, A. A. (1999). The impact of ethnicity on Nigeria's political development. *International Journal of Research and Development Organisation*, 2(12), 71-99
- Segun, J & Ebenezer, A. J. (2013). Ethnicisation of Violent Conflicts in Jos. *Global Journal of social science*, 13(7) Online ISSN: 2249-460.
- Shehu, I. I. (2008). *Religious manipulation and political struggle in Nigeria: A decade (1998-2008) analysis of Zamfara state Administration in Gusau Township*: Unpublished Undergraduate Research Work.
- Tsaku, H., & Embu, R. (n.d). Theatre and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: The 2012 Assakio Ethnic Conflict as Paradigm. <http://irepos.unijos.edu.ng/jspui/bitstream/123456789/1867/1/THEATRE%20AND%20CONFLICT.pdf>
- Ukiwo, U. (2003). Politics, ethno-religious conflicts and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies*, 41 (1), 115-138.