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POLITICS AND RELIGION IN NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SECOND AND FOURTH REPUBLIC.

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Abstract:
Religion though idealistic, unrealistic and visionary in nature, has in recent years in Nigeria greatly intertwined with politics to the extent that from lenses this look more like Siamese twins conjoined at the heart. This study on politics and religion in Nigeria: A comparative study of the second and fourth republic has as its major objective to identify the relationships between religion and politics, comparing the extent of influence one over the other during the second and fourth democratic republic. To achieve this aim, three research questions were proposed including, what were the relationships between politics and religion in the Nigeria's second and fourth republic? What are the major manifestations of religion on politics in the second and fourth republic? The theoretical base of the study hinges on the Social Identity Theory (SIT), the data for the study were obtained basically from secondary sources. The significance of the study is based on the role the finding and recommendation will play in a politico-religious divided and crises redden Nigeria state. The findings of the study shows that religion though part of the foundation of the politics of the Nigerian state, now plays more role in the fourth republic than it has ever done in the history of Nigeria, replacing competence and statesmanship as the criteria for leadership selection and recruitment. The study therefore concluded that to accelerate development, the infiltration of religion into politics must be put to a stop and by a way of recommendation, the study asked that all national and constitutional recognitions accorded to religion should be rescinded and withdrawn, this includes state sponsorship of pilgrimages, prayer at state organized events and the de-recognition of National Mosque and National Ecumenical Center.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Religious politics, Democracy, Republic

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Nigeria though a secular state according to the provisions of the 1999 Constitution as severally amended, the issues of religion has over been the years a strong determinant of political direction in Nigeria, permeating such areas as bureaucracy, electoral process and governance in general. Three major religions (viz: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion are practiced in Nigeria alongside a plethora of others.

As a multiethnic and secular state, the citizens of Nigeria are constitutionally guaranteed some-level of freedom of worship and association. To this end, religion has become increasingly important in the public sphere especially in political circle given the leverage that religious organizations have to participate in politics and governance in the Nigerian state.

Religion and politics in Nigeria are deeply rooted, and operates more like a conjoined twins connected by the same life cord and very difficult to separate. Religion in Nigeria is as important as life. The issues of faith is as central to everything

to the extent that some believer had actually begin to imagine that life may cease to exist outside of religion. This is so because the adherents of the deferent religions seeks protection from the God of their religion, with the firm belief that their God can even help them succeed in the political arena.

The political class in Nigeria have come to view religion and faith-based organizations as partners, agents and avenues for the mobilization of support for political parties and candidates of the same faith. The appeal to religion and faith by the political class is fast creeping into the ethnic arena especially given the north-south dichotomy of religious divide in the country. The ethnic bias attached to politics and religion now pitches the north against the south as support for a party or political candidate and government is viewed from the spectacle of regional, linguistic and or religious affiliation(s) (Malomo, 2022, Odeminde, 2004).

In recent times, Nigeria has been bedeviled by both political and religious crisis in such magnitude and dimension never before witnessed in Nigeria. From Maidugri to Jos and from Sokoto to Kaduna, the volume of sectarian turmoil that have come to characterize both political and socio-economic development of the Nigerian state deservers a thorough inquest to unravel the relationship that subsist between this twin drivers of social interaction.

Despite the daily rhetoric's and policies of government aimed at either assuaging or remedying the persistent religious and political crisis that have now characterized the Nigerian landscape, the emergence of new religious sects, and organizations which employs politics as a means of actualizing its aim of dominating and further propagating it core ideals and religious tenets have continued to grow at a geometric progression. This incessant religious and political tension often time call to question the unity of the Nigerian state and the continued co-existence of the multi ethnic groups and diverse population that make up the country.

The issues of religion, faith and the worship of any kind of higher being, spirit or forces are in themselves antagonistic to each other, this antagonism and the claim of superiority or direct link to the almighty has crept into politics in the Nigerian. As enigmatic and elusive as the conceptual clarification of religion has been, its effects on politics and development especially in some African countries like Nigeria have been enormous, tremendous and myriad. This seem to be the case because religion in Nigeria has been in the hand of villains who seeks ego massage, the dehumanization, and the domination of all those of different faith and sects. The resultant effect of these approaches to others is a fiasco that characterizes the political atmosphere in Nigeria.

Most unfortunately for the aboriginal Nigeria, two of the three dominant religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam) are foreign imports, professing and practicing monotheism, consequently antagonistic against the polytheist indigenous African traditional religion with such fierceness that suggests crass disharmony. Many of the crisis in Nigeria that are religiously connected can be squarely laid on the door step of these two foreign religions and its influence on the mind and psych of Nigerians, having shaped their mind, thinking, reasoning and behaviors for over a century.

Though the two religions have been co-existing in the country from the time before independence, the animosity of the recent times have aroused the need for a quick comparism of religious tolerance in Nigeria during the second democratic republic 1979-1984 and the current fourth republic since 1999 to date. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria, Analyze the effects of religion on politics in the second and fourth democratic republic, and proffer workable solutions to the problem of religious influence on politics in the fourth democratic republic. To achieve this the following probing questions become a sin qua non.

1. What were the relationships between politics and religion in the Nigeria's second and fourth republic?
2. What are the implications of religious influence on politics in Nigeria?
3. How can the influence of religion over politics in Nigeria be addressed?

Given the recurrent and persistent religious crisis that have come to characterized the Nigerian political landscape. This study is considered very significant to the extent that it will juxtapose and analyze the relationships between religion and politics in Nigeria during the second republic and in the present fourth democratic republic.

The study will effectively identify what was and what is, with the aim of proffering solution to the menace of religious bigotry and extremism. The study is also significant to the extents that, the recommendations if properly implemented will cub the infiltration of religion into politics, while drawing a boundary between the two phenomena to ensure that none permeate and control the behaviour of players in both spheres.

The theoretical base of this work is hinged on the Social Identity Theory (SIT) developed by Henri Taffel and John Turner 1979. The central argument of the theory states that an individual's self-concept derives largely from their group membership. "People are motivated to maintain high self-esteem by viewing their intergroup more favourable than out-groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts of Politics

Laswell (1902-1978) defined politics as who gets what, when and how. In the view of Laswell, politics is a struggle or legitimate channel for the distribution of scarce resources including power, wealth and respect. With regards to power as stated in the Laswellian definition, some scholars prefer to simply define politics as the exercise of power; power here which is conceptualized as influence over the action of others will fit into this contraption if and only when politics is considered with regards to the activities of the state.

Laswell's definition of politics also permeated into the economic sphere whereby politics is to be involved in the distribution of resources, 'who gets what". We cannot but agree with Laswell because given the definition of politics as the exercise of state powers and by the doctrine of social contract only the state can exercise power for the distribution of resources and determines not only who gets what but when (see Hobbes, 1651. Locke, 1690).

While we agree with Laswell on the definition of classical politics which focuses on public good, virtue, citizenship and the belief that the state exist only to help the individual to live a better life under a just, humane and legal society. The definition of politics in Sub-Saharan black African society like Nigeria may not follow such classic example, rather, politics is seen as a wealth seeking and accumulation venture for conscienceless individuals who has the ability to lie, deceive coarse and forcefully enthrone themselves into position of state powers.

Concept of Religion

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, (2021) religion is an organized system of religious attitude, beliefs and practices. It portrays a range of social and cultural system including designated behaviours and practices, ethnics and morals beliefs, world views, sanctified places, prophecies and so on, or an organization that profess to connect humanity with the supernatural, transcendental and spiritual elements. Despite all these, Morreal (2013) noted that scholarly consensus over what constitutes religion is still arguable. These contention about the definition of religion, Astor (2022) posited is as a result of the differences in religion, divinity, sacredness, faith, modus and the supernatural being(s) or object of worship (Tillieh, 1957. Vergpte, 1996).

Scholars often reduces Karl Marx's critique to his famous assertion that religion is "the opium of the people." Such a reduction, however, obscures the depth and complexity of his analysis. Marx (1844/1978) described religion as "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions and the opium of the people" (p. 54). the omnibus reading of these metaphors reveals a layered sociological interpretation of religion as both an expression of human suffering and a response to it, while also functioning as a mechanism that may reproduce existing social conditions.

When placed in conversation with Epicurus (341-270 BCE), Spinoza (1670), Augustine (354-430 AD, Aquinas (1225-1274), and Bertrand Russell (1927), Marx's formulation emerges not as a singular rejection of religion, but as part of a broader intellectual struggle over whether religion is truth, illusion, consolation, or social necessity. Marx's characterization of religion as the "sigh of the oppressed creature" suggests that religion emerges from lived experiences of hardship, deprivation, and domination. A sigh as it were is not the origin of suffering but its audible expression. This assertion was reinforced by Marx when he argued that "religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering" (Marx, 1844/1978, p. 54). Religion therefore is designed to functions as both emotional release and symbolic articulation of resistance among those experiencing material deprivation.

This interpretation finds a partial parallel in Epicurus, who also locates religious belief in human vulnerability, particularly fear of death and divine punishment. Epicurus maintains that death is "nothing to us" because when we exist, death is not present, and when death is present, we do not exist (Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus). Both thinkers thus demystify religious fear, but they diverge sharply in explanatory depth. Where Epicurus offers an ethical therapy aimed at individual tranquility, Marx situates religious experience within historically structured relations of production, insisting that fear is socially produced through material insecurity rather than merely psychologically generated.

The empirical research of Norris and Inglehart (2011) supports Marx's sociological interpretation of religion as a response to insecurity. This demonstrates that religiosity is consistently higher in societies characterized by economic insecurity, political instability, and existential vulnerability. Their findings suggest that religion often functions as a coping mechanism through which individuals manage uncertainty and structural disadvantage. This aligns closely with Marx's view that religion becomes most salient where social conditions generate sustained vulnerability.

A comparable, though differently grounded, insight is found in Baruch Spinoza, who interprets religion as a historically conditioned form of imagination shaped by social and political forces. In his Theological-Political Treatise, Spinoza argues that religious authority often stabilizes political order by channeling obedience through sacred narratives. While Spinoza does not reduce religion to economic structures as Marx does, both agree that religion performs social functions beyond metaphysical truth claims. Marx, however, radicalizes this by arguing that these functions are rooted in class relations and material deprivation rather than primarily in epistemic misunderstanding.

This social function of religion is further supported by Putnam and Campbell (2010) who opined that religious congregations generate significant social capital through networks of trust, mutual aid, volunteerism, and civic engagement. In many contexts, religious institutions also provide welfare services where state capacity is limited. These findings substantiate Marx's insight that religion often operates as an institutional "heart," supplying care and solidarity in structurally unequal societies.

This existential dimension resonates partially with Bertrand Russell, who similarly views religion as grounded in human fear and emotional dependence. Russell argues in his thesis, "Why I Am Not a Christian" that religious belief persists largely due to fear of death and uncertainty rather than rational justification. However, whereas Russell frames this primarily as an epistemological failure, Marx interprets it as socially produced alienation embedded in economic structures. The difference is significant: Russell critiques belief; Marx critiques the conditions that generate belief.

The most contested element of Marx's analysis is his claim that religion is "the opium of the people" (Marx, 1844/1978, p. 54). While often read as a purely dismissive statement, the metaphor is historically situated. In nineteenth-century medical usage, opium functioned both as a painkiller and as a therapeutic substance. Marx's analogy therefore suggests that religion is used superficially to alleviates suffering without addressing its structural causes. It soothes pain but does not cure the social conditions that produce it.

According to the African Study Association, (2005) an estimated 10,000 distinct religions exist worldwide, with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism accounting for over 77% of the world's population as followers and

adherents. The origin of religious belief continues to be an open question, with possible explanations including awareness of individual death, a sense of community and dreams (Zeigler, 2020).

Religion according to Reggs (2015) have sacred histories, narratives and mythologies, preserved in oral traditions, sacred texts, symbols and holy sites that may attempt to explain the origin of life, the universe and other phenomena. Religious practices may include rituals sermons, commemoration or veneration of deities or saints, sacrifices, festival, feasts, trances etc.

The Britannica Religion overview explains religion as a structured system of beliefs, practices, and worldviews that connects humanity to spirituality, supernatural or a high power. Religion typically provides answers to life ultimate questions, establishes moral codes and unites adherents into a shared community. Following from the religion overview of Britannica, this study wishes to state and or define religion as that human belief system in an unseen divine deity(s) which promises reward for worship obtainable only after death or religion as the sale of an invincible product for physical cash, which the buyer is always blamed if and when the product fails to work as the seller had promised.

This study further sees religion as that subtle and persistent division and control of humans and regions of the earth through the belief in an unseen deity who specializes in hiding himself except as revealed in a book and never interfering in the affairs of men despite the ever presence of such event as serious crises, war, hunger, poverty, disaster and so on.

Politics and Religion

Even at the level of conceptualization, the concept of politics and religion has remained problematic. The problem persists either as religious politics or politics of religion (Ogugua and Ogugua 2015).

The rivalry between the Christian majority south and the Muslim majority north in Nigeria according to Gbadegesin, (2022) is a fallout of the politics of religion in the country. This situation Gbadegesin noted has led to the enthronement of many incompetent leaders who rode on the back of the politics of religion, having recognized the powers of politic to liberate one or a region from both economic and social obscurity. The politics of religion therefore has been responsible for letting several greedy and incompetent individuals to achieve unmerited political ambitions since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

Maloma, (2022) noted that though religion had significant impact on politics since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, one of the very notable influences of religion on politics was the introduction of the Sharia Legal System in Zamfara State in October 1999, few months after the return to democratic rule. The Sharia legal system was interpreted by many especially Christian as antagonistic schemes against a government led by a Christian President (Chief Olusegn Obasanjo). While others like the then Christian Association Chairman of Abuja, Archbishop Ola Makinde are of the view that Sharia was meant to reduce and retard the growth of Christianity in the northern part of the country.

The politicization of religion is one of the blind eyes of the Nigerian State according to Aguwa (1993) Religion Aguwa noted easily succumbs to religion inclines towards the dialogic relation with several other socio-cultural institution. The attempt at the Islamization of Nigeria as against plural and circular nature has shown that, rather than religion acting as a catalyst for development, it has spin intolerance of one group against another, brewing crisis and destructive violence.

Attending also to the effects of religion on politics, Amucheazi (1986) noted that, religion is not the only catalyst that react with politics. He specifically mentioned the high level of ethnicism and regionalism, describing it as skillfully crafted by the colonial and post-colonial administration to the destruction of Nigeria. The resultant effect of overt regionalism and ethnicity has gave rise to why the focus identity never shifted to Nigeria in a bid to build one nation, rather remained with the regions by building multiple pockets of nations within the Nigerian State.

This study shares the views of Amucheazi on the role of ethnicity and regionalism in the Nigerian body polity. The division of Nigeria into three unequal regions since 1946 gave rise to the growth of religion and religious domination in each of the region, while trying to make an inroad into the other regions, for example, while the Islamic religion dominated the Northern region, Christianity dominates the eastern region. While Islam is fighting hard to make an inroad into the southern part of the country through the western region, Christianity already has foothold in some central area of the northern region. This state of affairs has thrown up religion as a veritable tool in the Nigeria political space coursing many politicians to appeal to both ethnic and religious sentiment while campaigning for political offices. These facts are clearly visible in the voting pattern during-elections since attaining political Independence, especially for presidential elections where the whole country is reduced to a single constituency (Cookey-Gam and Diri, 2021).

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings:

General Impact of Religion in Politics

Politics of religion appears to be one of the greatest challenges to nation unity and cohesion in Nigeria. This is especially in the northern region where religion has successfully intertwined with culture and tradition, assuming the same meaning and interpretation. Often times, the entire northern region is passed in political circle as Muslim north, without regards for other religious practices in the region like the festering Christian community and tradition African worshipers.

On the other hand, the southern region comprising of east, west and south-south is more engrossed in religious politics. While the entire Christian community are up against African traditional believers, the politics of church denomination segregates the entire Christian community between Catholics, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal and Charismatics.

Religion though not entirely without influence, however the politics of the creation of Nigeria as either a protectorate, a colony or an independent state was predicated on ethnicity rather than religion. For example, the division of the country into three (3) regions in 1946 by the Sir Author Richards Constitution was based on dominant ethnic groups (Hausa north, Igbo east and Yoruba west) this is regardless of the plethora of other minority ethnic groups that abound in Nigeria. The creation of the mid-western region after independence also followed ethnicity rather religion (Nweke, 2014).

Granted that all state creation in Nigeria was the handiwork of military government. Noticeably, all states creation from 1967 to 1996 followed the same ethnic line with new minorities emerging after each state creation with new demands and agitation for a new state or local government to accommodate their ethnic group. For example, Rivers State was created out of the old eastern region in 1967 to accommodate the none Ibo's (Ijaws) who were hitherto in the old eastern region, and in 1996 Bayelsa State as an entirely homogeneous Ijaw state was carved out of Rivers State. The same could be said of the then South Eastern State comprising the Efik, Ibibio and Anang which was further balkanized into Cross Rivers and Akwa Ibom along ethnic lines between Efik and Ibibio. Furthermore, upon the recognition of the diversity in the old Bendel State, the state was divided into Edo and Delta, which further strengthens the fact that during the early days of Nigeria's Independence, politics of religion was not so entrenched in the body polity, with little or no influence in politics as politics was purely based on competence and regionalism as the requisites for leadership selection and recruitment.

Politics of Religion in the Second and Fourth Republic

The shift towards the politics of religious influence in Nigeria can be traced to a series of events that took place after Nigeria's attainment of political independent, viz; the 1966 Coups, the restructuring of Nigeria from a federal state to a unitary state, the Civil War, the overthrow of General Yakubu Gowon and the assassination of General Murtala Ramat Muhamed.

While the 1966 January and July Coups and the thirty month long civil war left a deep scar on the body polity of the Nigerian state. Leadership especially military leadership was based on seniority and regional sentiment. However, after the assassination of Murtala Ramat Muhamed Nigerian Head of State 1975-1976, religion began to play vital role in the entrusting of leadership position. For example, General Olusegun Obasanjo a Christian from the south west was required to choose General Shehu Masa Yar"Adua as his second in command between 1976-1979 despite the rank of General T.Y Danjuma (Diri, 2021).

During the second democratic republic 1979-1984, less emphasis was placed on religion for the attainment of national political positions. For example, while Alhaji Shehu Shagari from the north west was elected the first Executive President, Chief Alex Ekueme from the south east was Vice President. Though many political watchers may interpret that to mean a combination of a Muslim northern President and a Christian southern Vice President. However, to show the none consideration of religion in the leadership selection, one must look at the leadership of the two chambers of the National Assembly. Between, 1979-1983, Dr. Joseph Wayas a Christian southerner from the present-day Cross Rivers State was Senate President, while Chief Edwin Ume-Ezoke another Christian from the south east was the Speaker House of Representatives 1979-1983 October. Between, October 1983 to December of the same year, before the military under General Muhamadu Buhari and Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon took over power, another Christian from north central Benjamin Akaai-Chaha became the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

It therefore means that the two chambers of the National Assembly were under the control of Christian leadership. Conversely in the early days of the fourth democratic republic, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian southerner was President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, a Muslim Northerner was Vice President, Chief Evan Enwerem a Christian from the Southeast was President of Senate, while Salisu Buhari a Muslim northerner was made speaker of the House of Representative, June-July 1999. He was replaced by Hon. Ghali Umari Na'Abba July 1999 – June 2003, between June 2003 – June 2007, when Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Massari was speaker of the House of Representatives, Chief Adulphus Nabara and Ken Nnamani served as Senate Presidents.

At all times during this period, there was a direct unspoken urge to always strike a balance in the leadership of the country between Muslims and Christians. In fact, the election of Hon. Patricia Ete a Christian from the south as speaker House of Representatives sparked an outrage in the House as some Muslim members disagreed with Christians heading both Houses of the National Assembly. The issues of religious balance in politics were especially amplified after the introduction of the Sharia Legal system in Nigeria by the then Governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Ahmed Sani Yerima and later adopted by Ibrahim Shakarau of Kano State.

As the Sharia legal system continue to spread across the states in the northern region, the issues of religious politics took center stage in Nigeria. Before the present fourth democratic republic, specifically in 1993 during the aborted third republic, the two political parties (National Republic Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) both fielded Muslim candidates, Alhaji Bashir Tofa (NRC) and Chief Moshood Abiola (SDP). In fact the Social Democratic Party fielded a Muslim-Muslim ticket (i.e. Abiola and Kingebe) without any fuss or show of concern from the Christian community as religious politics was a none issue by the time, rather, the majority of Nigerians across both religions were in interested in competence and voted massively for SDP despite the Muslim – Muslim ticket (Obiechina 2021).

A quick comparism of the 1993 scenario with the brouhaha that greeted the Muslim-Muslim ticket (Tinubu and Shettima) in the 2023 presidential election, one is compelled to agree that the issue of religion in politics has over the years grown into an intolerable monster to the detriment of development in Nigeria.

Finding also revealed that the misgivings about Muslims in politics of religion actually gained traction with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism (Boko Haram, ISWAP and Fulani Bandits). With the rise of insurgency and crises in the northern region and parts of south west propelled by the teachings of the Islamic religion, many especially those of the Christian faith are beginning to fill very uncomfortable with the trend of terrorism linked to Islamic fundamentalist, therefore a Muslim-Muslim ticket feels more like an alienation of the entire Christian community and a drive toward the Islamization of the country.

Politics of Religion and the shield of fundamentalist and Terrorist in the Fourth Republic

Prior to the fourth democratic republic in Nigeria, terrorism was not a thing of concern because it was practically none existent. However, from the early days of the fourth republic, the incessant attacks by the Islamic Boko Haram sect, Fulani Herdsmen rampage, Banditry and insurgency together brought to the fore the issues of terrorism and especially the issues of Muslims involvement in all the aforementioned acts of terrorism. Despite all these, many prominent individuals have found ways and means to ensure that the perpetuators of these heinous crimes are shielded from prosecution (Ademiluyi, 2023).

Some notable Islamic scholars and clerics with significant political influence were said to have ties with either Boko Haram, Bandits and or Fulani Herds-men. These men are said to have used their offices to either shield or advocate for and sympathize with Islamic terrorist (see Jonathan, 2025, Thurston, 2018, Okupe, 2014, Yaba, 2026). Some have even used their position to advocate for either the release, reintegration or the granting of amnesty for "repentant" Boko Haram members and Bandits.

Furthermore, the killers of two female Christians in the northern region in this fourth democratic dispensation, (Deborah Yakubu in Sokoto, May, 2022 and Eunice Olawale, July, 2016 in Abuja) by suspected Muslims fundamentalists have remained unpunished, believed to have been shielded from prosecution by prominent Muslim leaders using the auspices of religious politics.

The recruitment of "repentant" Boko Haram members into the Nigerian Army stands out as another sore-thumb, viewed by many as part of the religious politics to protect the interest of Islam, while IPOB and, Eastern Security Network members are designated as terrorist and are either summarily executed or indefinitely detained due to their religious affiliation while their Muslim counterparts are given soft landing despite committing more heinous crimes.

The Eastern Security Network which is believed to be linked to IPOB was said to have been established to defend the infiltration and spread of Islamic influence in the eastern region of Nigeria and also to protect the lives of dwellers in the region. The rise of ESN was squeal to the rampaging terrorism spread by Islamic fundamentalists which resulted in the secession agitation of the Indigenous People of Biafra who emphasizes the none inclusion of easterner in major government offices since the dawn of the fourth republic and the lack of development in the area.

Solution to Religion-Political Crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria is an averred secular state which draws its law not from theocratic code but from the constitution. Therefore, to avert the frequent religious related crisis and especially the infiltration of religion into the body polity at every sphere of the Nigerian state, certain conscious effort may need to be taken including amongst others the following.

Supremacy of the Constitution:

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the grand norm and therefore should be accorded a prime place in all political and legal structures and arrangements within the country.

The Constitution should be amended to de-recognize any and all religion as state religion. The mention of sharia legal system and laws in the Constitution should be expunged, while the application of the criminal code as the basics for criminal prosecution should be made mandatory and country wide.

The practice of praying at State events including Jumat and Thanksgiving services should be discouraged. No individual or institution should be recognized on the ground of religious affiliation. For example, no Pastor or Iman, should be accorded national recognition and the practices of having a National Mosque or Ecumenical Center(s) should be out rightly discouraged and jettisoned.

Every act of religious intolerant should be frowned at and the perpetuators of such act severely dealt with. For example, anyone who for religious reason commit any crime or a breach of the peace in any part of the country must be dealt with in accordance with the laws without any attendant religious prejudices.

The use of public facilities including roads, stadium, schools and other such facility for religious purposes should be stopped and discouraged. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be mandated to carry out public reorientation programmes to educate the public on the need to remove religion from politics in the interest of development.

CONCLUSION:

The politization of religion in Nigeria has risen to the level of state craft by a particular religious sect, this is despite the existence of multiple religious groups in Nigeria as three major religions seem to dominate with two dividing the country into two equal halves, north and south.

The infiltration of religion into politics has significant impact on not just development in Nigeria but also meaningful contribution by the deferent regions and peaceful coexistence in the country. The rampaging of Islamic fundamentalist, Fulani herdsmen and Bandits and the government inability or unwillingness to arrest the situation has elicited international condemnation and the intrusion of a foreign power into the domestic affairs of the Nigerian state. The Sokoto bombing of 25th December 2025 and the designation of Nigeria as a country of particular interest by the United States of America stands out as a sore thumb and desecration of Nigeria's sovereignty.

Therefore, only if and until the incidences of impunity by some religious groups and their leaders, the display of crass carelessness about the lands and people of Nigeria is nipped in the bud, politics will continually be manipulated by religion for the benefit of religious people, region and or ethnic nationality.

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