

Religion and African States' Politics in the 21st Century: A Historical Discourse of Nigerian Elections, 1999-2019

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Abstract

This paper examines the nexus between religious practices and the conduct of Nigerian elections in Africa. The issue of religion over the years in the conduct of Nigerian elections has become a subject of constitutional matter. Its position is that religion should not determine Nigeria's politics but the continual reliance on religious considerations has continued to impact on the conduct of Nigeria's elections thereby putting their electoral processes at risk. In this context, arguments have raged whether or not religions are the bane of political instability in Nigeria. Some are on the side that religious manipulation in Nigeria's electoral system contributed to the electoral irregularities that have led to political crises in Nigeria. The other side of the argument opines that religious considerations have helped to stabilize Nigeria's politics and would want that to continue. Therefore, this paper explores history to unearth how ethno-religious pluralism decimated Nigerian state. Sources of data for the analysis were derived mainly from secondary/documentated materials, while a thematic, descriptive and analytical methodology of historical research was adopted. The study concluded that there is religious consideration that influences Nigeria's electoral processes.

Key words: Religion, African States, Historical, Nigeria, Elections

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I. Introduction

African states in this 21st Century have witnessed several political crises arising from undemocratic processes and institutions. Some of these crises were predicated upon the attendant religious correlates or more specifically, religious pluralism in country like Nigeria where religions have influenced her electoral processes since its creation. Consequently, the 1999 constitution provides in section 10 that no government of the federation or the state shall adopt any religion as a state religion (Odey, 2012). However, there are religious discontents that have continued to impact negatively on how elections are being conducted to the extent that its processes are religiously based. In this context, Sheikh Abubakar Mahmoud Gumi once in October 1987 told Nigerians during an interview with the Quality magazine, that Nigeria would rather divide on religious grounds than for Muslims to allow non-Muslim to be the leader of the country (Odey, 2012, 57). In this context, Gumi when asked on what to be done in order to ameliorate the problem of disunity in "Nigerian unity" maintains that, if I am to do my best, is to try to convert Christians and non-Muslims as much as possible until the other religions become minority and they will not affect our society. The implication is that religious factor among others determine the unity of Nigerians and impact negatively on Nigeria's electoral processes.

Generally, religion itself has to do with man's relationship with the supernatural. It is also primordial and easily used in the same manner with ethnicity to mobilize members of the same religion and sect. Indeed, religious identity as part of an ethnic identity is very instrumental to the conduct of Nigeria's elections. Its consequences have led to political crises in some parts of Nigeria particularly, in Kaduna where religious strife between Christians and Muslims has continued to impact on the Nigerian state.

The effects of this crisis led to an institutionalised principle of Christian-Muslim ticket. The idea is to placate religious intolerance and ensure that power rotates between Christians and Muslims and that no particular faith will dominate politically in Nigeria. Since then, Nigerian Government has been able to palliate the attendant crises that could come with religious differences except in few states like Kaduna and Jos where religious feuds have continued to influence politics negatively to the extent that it has become a re-occurring decimal. In Kaduna, religious consideration has continued to influence peoples' life and determine the success of their businesses. The height of religious fanaticism has led to unguarded utterances that provoked internal crises. The worst of it now is the concentration of Christians in Southern Kaduna to the extent that the area seems much neglected from State Government presence. In 2019, Mallam Nasri el-Rufai led government exacerbated religious differences between the two faiths. His choice of Muslim running mate has been widely

condemned but rather than rescinding the decision he chose to defend his decision to run with a fellow Muslim, saying that 67 per cent of Christians would not vote for him, even if the Pope was his running mate.

In Jos, the crises vary in degree, scope and in tactics. This implies that, there were those crises that were based on indigene/settler dichotomy, religion and political discontents. For instance, there were in 1987, the Hausa-Berom indigene/settler's conflict, Darika-Tijianniya Islamic Sectarian crisis over doctrinal differences in 1980 and Mwanghavul-Pyem crisis over chieftancy matters in 1987. By this, Nwogbaga, opines that the crisis in Jos got intensified when Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas were created with Jasawa (Samaila Mohammed) as the elected chairman of Jos North (Nwogbaga, 2013: 17). Apart from the ethno-religious factors that affect some individual states' elections, religions generally have impacted on Nigerian elections. In this case, religions and religious organisations are usually viewed as one of the contributing factors to socio-political conflicts in Nigeria. While it could be said that religious and faith communities have contributed to post conflict peace building, Fox (2003: 1-19) observes that it would be an error to ignore the influence of religious ideologies in conflict regions such as Africa and Asia. This is to say that African states system is characterized with conflicts of different magnitudes. Therefore, it is instructive to note that while religions act as catalyst to election crises in Nigeria; it is however contributing to post conflict reconstruction of the political institutions.

Background to Nigerian Elections

Nigerian elections over the years have been quiet controversial. Each of the elections was conducted by a constituted authority under the watch of international observers who certified the election results on the ground that it was free and fair despite its irregularities. However, no matter the degree of irregularities, only in 1993 that the Presidential election was cancelled in Nigeria without a concrete reason. Many commentators attributed the cancellation to ethnic consideration; others saw it as political gimmick by a maverick who never wanted to relinquish power.

In this context, the election result of June 12 was annulled on the ground that politicians overheated the polity and used huge amount of money to buy party tickets and electorates during the party primaries and Presidential elections. In this regard, General Ibrahim Babagnida made a live broadcast citing irregularities as the reason behind the cancellation. In his statement, he maintained that there were proofs as well as documented evidence of widespread use of money during the party primaries as well as the presidential election. These were the same bad conduct for which the party presidential primaries of 1992 were cancelled. Evidences available to government put the total amount of money spent by the presidential candidates at over two billion, one hundred million naira (2.1 billion) (Sahara Reporters, 2018). Again, apart from the tremendous negative use of money during the party primaries and presidential election, there were moral issues which were overlooked by the Defence and National Security Council. There were cases of irregularities against party agents, officials of the National Electoral Commission and members of the electorates. In this regard, it was observed by the Defence and National Security that to proclaim and swear in a president who encouraged a campaign of divide and rule among our ethnic groups would have been detrimental to the survival of the Third Republic hence, the election was annulled.

Similarly, in 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was nominated as the presidential candidate under the platform of Peoples Democratic Party primaries. The nomination was widely criticized but it was seen as a compensatory gesture to Yoruba ethnic group whose mandate was truncated in 1993. Part of the criticism was that Obasanjo as a Christian was brought out of the prison and thus, had lost certain rights that would have qualified him to contest for the president. In 2003, there was a serious political gang up against President Obasanjo from the Northern politicians as Muhammadu Buhari of All Nigeria People's Party enjoyed 85% support of Northern politicians who were determined to install him as the president. This may not be unconnected with religious consideration on the ground that the Muslim North wanted power back to their region and secondly because, Obasanjo was poised to democratize Nigerian political system. By this, Clark (1991: 229) quoted Abubakar Ahmed Gumi as saying that no Muslim on the ground of faith will join a Christian led party; if the Christian refused to join a party led by a Muslim, however, it would appear to be a two-party system and the two parties would not be South against North but Islam against Christianity. The gang up employed Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to adopt every measure necessary for his re-election including rigging, vote buying, political violence and disenfranchisement.

Against this odd, both domestic and international election observers documented massive irregularities and refused to endorse the result hence Iyayi notes:

In many instances, political candidates who did not stand for the elections were returned as having won the elections. These events helped by others, notably, multiple ghost and underage voting, violence, intimidation and harassment, stuffing of ballot boxes, stealing and buying votes, disruption of polls, absence of electoral officers, intimidation of election observers and

justification of rigging by president, Governors, Ministers and party officers all affected the prospect of the election (Iyayi, 2004: 8).

It was noted that one of the most serious cases of the 2003 election was the use of religions to influence the elections of candidates. In Anambra state at Okija shrine, Chris Ngige in company of Chris Uba was taken to swear an oath of loyalty as the gubernatorial candidate for the election (newsrescue.com). In Aba state, the same was heard of Theodore Orji whose filmed presence at Okija shrine appeared on the internet in 2008. Apart from religious influences in individual states' elections, religions have continued to influence Nigeria's elections generally.

In 2007, there were religious considerations to the nomination of Musa Yar'Dua as the PDP presidential candidate. As a build up to the election, it is instructive to note that President Obasanjo preferred Donald Duke-a South-south man to Northern candidature. The Muslims who saw this as Christian's domination worked in accord to stall Duke's nomination. Campaigns against him were taken to mosques and amidst controversy, Obasanjo budged and Yar'Dua became nominated with Jonathan as his running mate. The result of the election was announced in favour of Yar'Dua and PDP political party. Within one and half year, Yar'Dua died and Jonathan succeeded him.

In 2011, and with the death of Yar'Dua, tensions flared up considerable when Goodluck Jonathan, an interim president decided to run amid the controversial death news of President Yar'Dua. It was clear that the 2011 elections were followed with controversies as to whether a Muslim or Christian should be allowed to become the president, given the tradition of rotating power between the two religions as major political parties had adopted the principle of zoning based on religions. PDP nominated Jonathan and ANPP fielded Muhammadu Buhari. Onapajo (2016:120) opines that all the Christian pastors campaigned for Jonathan in their churches. According to him, Pastor Paul Adefarasin asked his members to vote for a Christian president when Jonathan visited his church in Lagos. The result of the election saw Jonathan won the poll with 22.5 million votes, surpassing his rival with 10 million votes. The U.S Department hailed the election as a "positive new beginning for Nigeria". Falusi (2012: 23-24) attributed Jonathan's landslide victory to the controversial statement of General Muhammadu Buhari in 2003 when he said that Muslims won't vote for Christian candidate. When he was criticized for that, he changed his strategy and chose Pastor Tunder Bakare as his running mate.

Consequently, the 2015 election was an extension of the presidential election of the 2011. The Muslims in their determination to ensure that the Nigerian president came from Muslim community had come into the politics with different agenda. Such agenda was adopted by Muslims across the country as their bias was premised on Jonathan's relationship with Christian leaders especially the Christian Association President, Pastor Ayo Oritsjafor. By this, it was alleged that Jonathan gave the Christians 6 million through the CAN president. In a bid to install the Muslim candidate, party campaigns took different dimensions resulting to burning down of churches and mosques with PDP supporters attacked in the North. When it was announced that Jonathan, the PDP candidate and a Christian from the south had won the election, violence broke out in the major cities of Northern states. This post-election violence undoubtedly led to the condemnation of the election result by the international observers which have been generally accepted to be freer than other previous election results.

Perspectives on the Persistence Religious Influences in Nigerian Elections

The impact of religions in Nigeria's election can be determined from the structuralist, pluralist and psycho-cultural perspectives. These theories have not only influenced the perceptions of scholars with regard to religious considerations in Nigeria's elections but have continued to also shed light on why Nigerian society has witnessed several religious crises especially during election time.

The Structural Perspective

The structural theorists tend to explain how religious influences arising from the way the society is structured and organised have created instability and continued to influence politics in Nigeria. These theorists contend that because of the way Nigerian society is organised, conflicts among the political class have promoted power struggle which has hitherto created class inequality among the political class. This political class however, tend to advertently manipulate religions into state politics by doctoring religious values and doctrines to influence the political system. Politicians who do this usually incite one religious faith or sect against another. Evidence of this, is fundamental to the rise of Boko Haram in 2008 in Nigeria hence, Okoro (2012:23) opines that with the north reluctantly conceded power to the south in 1999, the introduction of Sharia legal system in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states is seen to have been part of the strategy of the North to take power back. When this failed to stir up enough crises to force a collapse of the system, the northern political elite masqueraded under religious Puritanism to perpetuate religious crisis. To placate Northern politicians, Yar'Adua succeeded him and when he

was sick and eventually died, the political agenda of the elite class in the north was to ensure that a Northern Muslim replaced him as president.

This agenda became the basis of such statements credited to the president of the Northern Political Forum (NPF), Alhaji Adamu Ciroma amongst other elite mouthpieces of the region during the run-up to 2011 General Elections, to the effect that it is either a northern president or there will be no Nigeria (Ogodo, 2011: 12). This implies that it is the political elite in Nigeria that is fuelling the so called Boko Haram insurgency since there is no evident that even one prominent Northern leader has come out openly to condemn the Boko Haram sect. Scholars such as Marx and Engels, V.I. Lenin, Ross (1993) and Scarborough (1998) provided an explanation to the ways societies are structured and organised which induced religious conflicts. Therefore, these scholars contend that all political violence and crises in the society were religiously based, basically because of the way the political system of that society is structured between faith communities. In this case, Nigeria is one of those countries that have witnessed several religious crises because of the structural imbalance of 1914 arrangement that manifested in marginalization, domination, injustice, exclusion, exploitation and inequity as the sources of the conflicts.

Pluralist Perspective

The pluralists blame the persistence of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria on the multiplicity of rival ethnic and religious cleavages with each of the conflicting group continually competing for pre-eminence and dominance to avoid subordination (Olu-Adeyemi, 2006; Akinola, 2000 and Nnoli, 1994). In a divided or plural society, each ethnic or religious group usually seek for the control of the political institutions with the objective to guarantee the survival of their identity. This is the case in Nigeria where the two religions have demonstrated and advanced serious desire to dominate and hold on to power as many years as they like.

Therefore, it would be strange if diversity in religiously pluralistic society would not show itself in the process of political opinion formation. Believers are religiously motivated who always change when they enter the political arena. Moreover, religious communities may have special interests that they want to represent in a particular debate. These interests determine their dealings to the extent that they bring their feelings, ideologies and attitudes to bear in politics. In democracy, political rights like freedom of speech and association guarantee that everybody is entitled to participate in political discussions. In view of these fundamental rights, religions have inspired and contributed to shape our attitude to politics just like ethnic or regional considerations.

Therefore, religious cleavages have continued to impact on our national politics. It is little doubtful if not completely right to say that since the inception of Nigerian state, the cities of Jerusalem and Mecca have played considerable role in Nigeria's relations with the Middle East. There is barley no Christian Ambassador ever posted to Saudi Arabia neither has there been Muslim Ambassador to Israel. Implicitly, Christianity and Islam have been the most influential religions as they fundamentally shape Nigeria's bilateral relations to the Middle East countries. The admittance of Nigeria into the Organisation of Islam Countries (OIC) is to profusely scrutinise Nigeria's membership of Christian Association.

Systemic Perspective

The systemic theory provides a socio-structural explanation for the emergence of class differences in the society. The theory looks at the operational functions of the society which place certain advantages on political class. The theory further contends that due to the scarcity of resources and its allocation through lopsided political processes and competition, its negative effects led to the breakdown of cherished values and traditions that play crucial social control functions that resulted to widespread domination and marginalization of minority groups by those in the majority and ethnicity. This marginalization and domination that created class differences provided an explanation to the pervasive conflicts existing among the social groups. To that extent, the religious crisis that pervades Nigerian state will be explained from the point of view of systemic theory.

There have been political crises arising from religious differences among the political classes in Nigeria. Each of these groups tries to impose its own values as a base for politicking thereby creating differences that impact on the choice of leaders and appointment into offices. In recent times, political gladiators and religious zealots masqueraded under religions to perpetuate crisis in Nigeria. These groups often tend to arm-twist the provisions of law to favour their decisions. For instance, the appointment of Service Chiefs by Buhari's administration is evident of the fact that ethno-religious differences affect our democracy. The principles of federal character and charter of equity provide that power must rotate among the six geopolitical zones and appointment into offices must also be made to reflect federal character and in such a manner that does not show the domination of one ethnic or religious group. This appointment was widely criticised by other religious class accusing Buhari of attempting to Islamize Nigeria as 95 percent of the service chiefs were Muslims.

The Place of Religions in Nigerian Elections

Nigerian politics over the years has been religiously based. This religious consideration has heated the polity thus, leading to series of crises so far witnessed during elections in Nigeria. In so far as religions determine our politics, it is instructive to note that the emergence of aspirants for the political parties during the electoral processes is dependent upon the religious denomination the aspirant belongs to. To that extent, one can say that the rotation of offices of president and vice president between Muslim and Christian has deepened ethno-religious and political rivalries in the country with each ethnic group always galvanizing supports for its candidate. Therefore, Ugbudian (2016: 206) opines that following Goodluck Jonathan's victory at the PDP primaries, Muslim religious leaders began to send text messages to ask northerners not to vote Jonathan but should vote General Buhari on the basis of ethno-religious consideration. This had no doubt made the both sides to use members of their religious groups such as the clergymen, the Imam and pastors to promote and solicit supports and votes on behalf of their candidates based on religious orientations. While most pastors supported Jonathan, the Imam supported Buhari thus, turning the political contest to religious battle. This was evident in the pattern of attacks and violence on people. Christians in the north whether Hausa or none Hausa were attacked, maimed and their property destroyed. Churches were burnt down with people living an unsecured life.

Similarly, tensions within political parties created intra party conflicts. For example, the ruling political party in a build up to the general elections was thrown into ethno-religious differences. In this regard, two major camps emerged, namely, pro zoning/Northern group and pro Jonathan/Southern group. While the pro zoning group argues that it was the turn of the North to produce the president that would complete the two terms (eight years) of the North, the pro South cited the participation of a Northerner in 2003 party primaries to argue that zoning was not part of the party constitution. Accordingly, they maintained that the zoning clause inserted in the party constitution wasn't legally enforceable since it was never part of the constitution. Thus, a member of Northerner PDP proceeded to the Abuja High Court to determine whether zoning exist and if it was zoned to the North and to equally stop President Jonathan from contesting. The court in its judgement affirmed the zoning but refused to ban Jonathan from running as he was yet a candidate of the party.

In what was seen as a shrewd determination, the Arewa Consultative Forum as the Northern apex of socio-cultural organisation held election for the candidates from the North to nominate a conscious candidate that will project and defend northern interest and as well defeat Jonathan in the general elections. In this case, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was elected by the ACF elders as the conscious candidate, thus, setting the stage of political acrimony for the PDP presidential primaries. The battle within the PDP and presidential aspirants revealed the deeper systemic and structural defects within Nigeria polity mainly as candidate left issue based politics to mundane ethnic, religious and self-attacked campaigns. At one instance, Jonathan was described as a weakling, non-respecter of simple agreement whereas Atiku has been described to be over ambitious and corrupt.

Religions and Nigeria's National Interest

It was Tunde Adeniran that said when he was asked to speak on a national interest of a state that national interest constitutes actions that national leaders pursue to improve the welfare of the state. According to him:

When statesmen and bureaucrats are expected or required to act in national interest...what it means is that, they are called upon to take action on issues that would improve the political situation, economic and social well being, the health and culture of the people as well as their political survival. They are being urged to take action that will improve the lot of people rather than pursue policies that will subject the people to domination by other countries... policies which are likely to make them unable to stand among others nations (Adeniran, 1983).

In this context, Morgenthau (1952) wrote that national interest is the political traditions, and the total cultural context within which a nation formulates its foreign policy. The national interest of a state has much to do with the interest of the elites and to that extent Nweke (1985), maintains that national interest has very often been described as the interest of the elites. It deals with how state policies and programmes have shaped peoples' idiosyncrasies, perceptions and attitudes towards national issues or core values such as cohesion, sovereignty, security, welfare and relations with other nations. Arguably, Ojo and Seseay (2002) stress that some scholars with blind optimism and cynicism maintain that there is nothing like the national interest of a state; that the national interest is nothing more than and nothing less than what policy elites in a state say at any time.

Since the national interest of Nigeria reflects on the idiosyncrasies of Nigerian leaders which has much to do with their perceptions, values, tribal sentiments and religious beliefs, Amiara (2012: 153) maintains that from Nigeria's political stand point, those who are duly involved in the process of decision making seem to

pursue tribal interest and narrowly based self-interests than the general interest of the Nigerian state. To that extent, our religious beliefs, ideologies and values impact on election processes to the extent that it eludes any standard of politics anywhere in the world.

The Challenges to Nigeria's Election

Nigerian elections over the years have witnessed numerous political challenges; most of them were created out of inquisitiveness while others were the outcome of systemic dysfunctionality. Beginning from 1960 when Nigeria attained independence to the last concluded election in 2019, Nigerians have been poised to find a state in ethno-religious divided country. Part of this struggle was marred by religious crisis, political instability, rigging, corruption, vote buying and godfatherism.

Religious crisis

Religious crisis in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon. The height of it was the Maitatsine crises of 1980-85. The crisis was seen as the Northern Nigeria's first major wave of religiously-inspired violence. Led by Muhammadu Marwa, a Cameroonian living in Kano, the crisis prompted immense ethno-religious discord between Christians and Muslims. Ethno-religious crises in Nigeria have produced dysfunctional effects on social integration and the way elections in Nigeria are conducted. Religious conflict reinforces division in Nigerian State. This is often the case where the crisis is between Christian, Muslim and Traditionalist otherwise referred to the "indigenous" population on the one hand and on the other hand the so called "non-indigenous" population as it is conceived of Hausa-Fulani who are in the main Muslim or even between "indigenous" population verse "settlers" who share same religious affiliation (Institute of peace and Conflict Resolution, 2003: 148).

Similarly, it has been observed that as a result of incessant conflicts in Kaduna, there have been demographic shifts from the so called perceived "unsafe areas" to "safe areas" where boundaries are demarcated along religious lines. The tendency is that religious divide in Nigeria has great and negative repercussion for inter-religious and ethnic relations currently. For instance, after the 2000 Shariah related conflict in Kaduna, Muslim areas became "Mecca" with concentrations in Tudun-Wada, Kawo Dosa, Angwan Sarki, Angwan Muazu, Rigasa and Badrawa. The Christian areas tagged Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv included Sabon Tasha, Angwan Rimi, Nasarawa, Goningora, Narayi, parts of Makera and Kakuri (Kagoro, 2003: 69-70). In Jos, the 2001 crisis followed similar dimension with Muslim areas evolved as "Zamafara" and "Bin Ladin's zone" to include Bauchi road, Angwan Rogo, Angwan Rimi and Gangare. The Christian areas tagged "New Jerusalem" include; Jenta Adamu, Gadabiyu, Kabong, Kufang, Gigiring, Apata, Chorbe, Angwan Rukuba, Angwan Soya and Tudan Wada (Gwamna, 2001: 157).

Worst still, the introduction and re-introduction of Shariah legal code to become operational in Northern States such as Kaduna, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Zamafara, Sokoto, Gombe etc led to the intensification of religious divide and heightened animosity in those areas, the peak of which is often religious crisis. Crises in Nigeria are more often fuelled by religious differences where each of the faiths becomes committed to the protection of its religious tenets and doctrines thereby leading to domination, cut-throat and daggers-drawn, Eme (2012: 192) quoted Matthew Hassan Kukah as saying that both Islam and Christianity are straddled across the Nigerian polity, each no longer knocking and pleading to be admitted, but seeking to take over the architectural design and construction of the Nigerian polity.

Political instability

Another factor that challenged successful election in Nigeria is the political instability. Instability in politics arises when political parties became enmeshed in political violence. This usually occurred when party candidates manipulate faith community to satisfy their political interests. By this, political violence became a product of political class hence Eme further maintains that religious crises in Nigeria are a product of high-level manipulation by the political class/government (Eme, 2012: 195). Similarly, it is instructive to note that some top level politicians that want to pursue a particular cause often hire people to do the fighting for them under the guise of religious crisis. This is evident where recent attacks and crises issued from unguarded political campaigns and the desire of a particular political party to win elections. Violent elections are the product of inchoate politics arising from substandard political system.

There is a problem with Nigerian political system. Political parties do not play to the rules and party candidates often hijack this shortfall to manipulate the electorates for political crisis. This is because of the complexity of the constitution with regard to electoral processes and religions. It is important to know that party ideologies are sacrificed for personal orientations and manifestoes and due to the lack of these ideologies, violence political culture is instituted as guides to election victory in Nigeria hence, weak political system breeds political violence.

Rigging

Another challenge to the election in Nigeria is political rigging. Rigging has become a political culture within Nigeria's political context. Rigging of an election constitutes criminal assault on democratic principles, justice and rule of law and has however assumed a recurrent factor in Nigeria's electoral processes to the extent that it becomes an effective mechanism for electoral victory which every politician heavily relies on. In this context, Agbor (2004: 136), quoted Arthur Nzeribe as saying that all politicians rig polls, but the point is who is smarter. Therefore, every politician in Nigeria relies heavily on the instrument of rigging to win election and this process has negated the principle of Nigerian democracy by creating a weak institution that permeated election rigging.

To that extent, election rigging constitutes ballot box stuffing, absence of result sheets in polling units, harassment and intimidation of voters by security agents, unnecessary delay in the distribution of electoral materials, forgery and falsification of result sheets that manifest in brazenly irregularities, malpractice and crises in Nigeria.

Corruption

The concept of corruption is a controversial one, thus, it is difficult to pin down to a strait jacket definition. As a controversial concept, it is a principle of western ideology that is gaining promiscuous verbiage and cut-across economic to political hence we can talk of economic corruption, workplace or bureaucratic (office) corruption, religious corruption and political corruption. Because our concern is to explore corruption among political classes, our attention will be restricted to determining how political corruption has negatively affected our electoral process in Nigeria.

For Emordi and Unumen (2013: 381), political corruption takes place at the highest levels of political authority and it affects the manner in which decisions are made. Political corruption means illegal brokerage, bribe-taking, tax evasion among other ills. Political corruption grew out of ethnic conflicts in pursuit of politics for appropriating political space and resources among factions of political elites. It was in pursuit of this agenda that the various elections held since the period of 1963 to 2015 were characterised by allegations of electoral fraud such as rigging.

Indeed, there were cases of corrupt practices among the officials of electoral umpire. For instance, two INEC officials: Christian Nwosu and Tijani Bashir were sentenced to 7 years imprisonment for receiving N264.8 million gratifications from the erstwhile Petroleum Minister, Diezani Allison-Madueke as build-up to 2015 general election (Kuponiyi, 2019). More so, a non-governmental organisation identified as West African Network of Election Observers made up of retired INEC officials was used to bribe INEC staff to influence the outcome of 2015 general elections. Soriwei (2017) opines that about 202 staff that who involved were placed on half salary by the commission. This practice negatively affected the way elections in Nigeria were conducted and prepared ground for political crises.

Vote buying and Godfatherism

Vote buying during election is a product of godfatherism. Godfatherism plays an important role in the choice of candidate during party primaries, the result of which usually becomes an imposition of a particular candidate on the people. Some of these candidates are considered unsalable to the extent that their godfathers stop at nothing than to see their victory during the elections by sharing money to buying voters. This is called prebendal democracy. Prebendalism refers to patterns of political behaviour which rest on the justifying principle that such offices should be competed for and then utilized for personal benefit of office holders as well as of their reference or support group.

Godfatherism is one of the factors that has tempered with Nigeria's democratic values. It cast doubts on the democratic institutions such that an average 12 year old Nigerian understands the impediment of godfatherism in Nigeria's elections. Its process explains that one has to be nominated first to enjoy the trust, confidence and blessing of the godfather before such person can actually be voted for. Most often, such scenario leads to an agreement of award of contracts or diversion of treasury and payment of returns as compensatory gesture to such nomination. This contributes to unbridle extravagancy and clamped down the sanctity of democratic processes and system in Nigeria.

II. Conclusion

Religion and politics are two incompatible concepts. While religion preaches peace and morality, politics seeks power as an instrument for enforcing peace and good moral behaviours. For this reason, politicians often stop at nothing to enmesh powers and authority to lead and command peoples' will. This assertion has implicitly explained our analysis on religious correlates particularly with African politics.

African politics over the years have witnessed a lot of religious crises arising from the attempt to super impose one religious values, doctrines and ideologies against another. These crises often led to polarising faith

communities along political lines by using religions as base for political campaigns. This has manifested and become evident in Nigeria's elections where religions become key determinant and player to the successful elections. It is instructive to note that while politicians masquerade under religious guise to incite ethnic discontents, members of the religious groups became a manipulating agent that pummel democracy and incited these religious crises. This has negatively affected our electoral processes where religions supplant our electoral acts.

In Nigeria, elections are marred through religious crisis, political instability, rigging, corruption, vote buying and godfatherism. This is not good for our democracy and political system that defiles international best practices. Politicians should stop exploiting crisis situations to their advantages and desist from making unbridled comments that fan religious divide in Nigeria.

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