

## RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND POLITICS AS IMPEDING FACTORS ON SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### *Abstract*

*Nigeria constitutes an indispensable partner on the African Continent. As such, it is expected that religious institutions, ethnic nationalities in Nigerian state should work in conformity for her survival. But, this has not been the case over the years. This study interrogated religion, ethnicity and politics and the effects on Socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. The study is qualitative and adopted exploratory research design. The method of data collection was documentary review complemented by key informant interviews conducted with 6 purposively selected interviewees from University of Ibadan. Content analysis technique was adopted and data collected were analyzed. The study found that, ethnicity and religion were used as political instrument during elections in Nigeria. It was discovered that the fusion of the trio in determining who gets what, when and how has had negative toll on Socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. The study concluded that socio- economic and political prosperity has been impeded because of the usage of ethnicity and religion as a political tool. The study recommended that, for meaningful development to take place in Nigeria, the component parts should uphold moral values, social justice and fear of God as epitomized in Church-state approach to conflict management.*

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Impeding factors, Nigeria, Politics, Religion.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems that impedes socio-economic and political development is the politicization of religion and ethnicization of politics in Nigeria. Given the important role Nigeria play in the comity of African Sub-region and the continent, the need for socio-economic and political development cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, all social institutions are expected to operate within their mandate. However, this expectation is being approached from different dimensions by component units/ institutions. The Nigerian society is religiously, ethnically and politically polarized and, this has impacted negatively on developmental policies of the country. The political elites are in the habit of using ethnicity and religion as veritable instruments during electioneering campaigns to score a political point by making the end to justify the means according to Machiavelli (1951). This situation has at best aggravated the general misconception that politics is a dirty game, and at worst, created the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, resulting into political apathy.

Unfortunately, Nigeria as a heterogeneous nation-state is very volatile when it comes to issues of ethnic cleavage, religion and political inclinations. It is appalling that many political parties have continually adopted very worrisome political campaign of calumny aimed at instigating the politics of hatred and division of Nigerians along ethnic and religious lines. This unwarranted approach is antithetical to national integration and cohesion required for the much desired sustainable economic growth and development. And, as a student of political science with special interest in peace and conflict management, this is unacceptable. It was against this background that the study examined the interplay of religion, ethnicity and politics and its effects on socio-economic and political progress in Nigeria. It also focused at the influence of the dependable and in-dependable variables at play as well as its impact in the polity.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study is qualitative and adopted exploratory research design. The major method of data collection was documentary review complemented by key informant interviews conducted on purposively selected postgraduate students of political science from University of Ibadan which comprised of 3 females and 3 males. Content analysis technique was adopted and data collected were analyzed thematically.

## **3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION/ANALYSIS**

Ethnicity, religion and politics like any other social phenomenon, suffers universally accepted definition. However, our intention here is to showcase different views of eminent scholars and arrive at a fairly acceptable explanation that will provide useful insights into the meaning and nature of the three concepts in this study. First, “ethnicity” in Jack Eller’s viewpoint denotes no specific definition because it can change to the next level. Ethnicity is predominantly used but seldom defined because, what may be ethnic today may not be ethnic tomorrow. It is against this backdrop that some exponents of Primordialist school of thought which contends that, ethnicity cannot be changed or be removed because human beings did not negotiate where to be born into. In other words, no one chooses family, parents, country, territory, language, culture and blood ties or ancestral lineage. They strongly argue that, we are all born into different ethnic background and there is virtually nothing anyone can do rather than accept it as an article of faith. For the chief exponents of Primordialism such as Clifford Geertz from Princeton and Patrick Moynihan, a former US Senator from New York a Democrat ethnicity remains one of the natural inheritance of mankind. The two cultural anthropologists conclude that, ethnicity could be best seen and taken as a God’s gift to humanity and no man can change it until death do him part.

However, modernization theorists as antithesis to the Primordialist school of thought argues that, ethnic identity can be constructed because a person who was born and bred in a particular place over a long period of time is bound to have imbibed different socio-cultural and linguistic orientations over a period of time. As such, he/she deserves the right to claim the ethnic identity where he/she domiciles. In another perspective, Scanner (1993) posits that, ethnicity is a mask of class struggle. To him, people especially overzealous people tend to use ethnicity only when they want to achieve their selfish political ambition. For the researcher, ethnicity is better described than defined. Nonetheless, ethnicity is a form of group – identity or distinctiveness typically based on common ancestral lineage, blood ties, common belief system, language and territory. However, people can

speak the same language, belong to the same territory and believe system in Nigeria but, belongs to different ethnic group. In point of analysis, this is one of the outcomes of the unholy marriage between Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914 by Lord Lugard. On Danjibo's (2012) account, ethnicism originated from the Greeks. *Ethnicos* – meaning “barbaric” or tribe which conveys derogatory remarks. Danjibo queries why the imperialists chose to call groups in Africa such a derogatory name – even though Africa is more populous than the whole Europe put together. They chose to call themselves “nations” and not tribe or ethnic group (Danjibo, 2012).

On the other hand, “religion” just like ethnicity conveys different meaning to their adherents across the globe. However, religion attracts more resounding definition than ethnicity because overwhelming scholars agrees that religion it has to do with the system of worship and belief in an imaginary supernatural being. For Ajaegbu (2012), religion is a system of social coherence commonly understood as a group of beliefs or attitude concerning an object, person, unseen or imaginary being or system of thought considered to be supernatural, sacred or divine (Ajaegbu, 2012). Religion is a belief in spirits. Spirits were gods, animating powers, animal-spirit companions, all of which seemed to have a religious cast (Tylor, 1958).

In the researcher's view, the concept of religion can be equated with the concept of ethnicity or tradition which is currency in national discourses but difficult to define with unquestionable precision. Interestingly, among all the perused works on “religion” it is the Karl Marx and his friend – Engel's work that provoked most heat debate.

For Marx:

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures. The heart of the heartless world, just as it is at the spirit of spiritless situation. Religious distress is at the same time, the expression of the real distress, and the protest against real distress. Religion is the opium of the people (Aja, 1997:28-29).

In point of analysis, the historical conception of religion by Karl Marx and his friend Engels was in the negative. Realizing that religion abhors violence and would not serve a revolutionary purpose in the overthrow of the capitalist world, both treated religion as inconsequential to mankind. They contend that, man makes religion and not religion that makes man. To them, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. Man is the world of man, the state and the society. In all, Marx was promoting disbelief in God and religion hence; some religious fanatics in the past and present express utter disgust that, Karl Marx had killed religion and God (Aja, 1997:29).

Marx and his friend was so determined to overthrow capitalism by means of violence and, since religion was against his chosen strategy of action, there was a great need to let people understand that, to take refuge in religion in the name of obedience to God amount to living perpetually under economic bondage and penury of capitalism. The researcher observes that many Nigerian have opted to this stand of taking refuge or resigning to faith that God is in total control and as such refuse to even ask basic questions on how they are being governed.

Nonetheless, Paul Tracey (2012:90) reminds us of the role of religion in enabling the people fight oppression between the 18th and 20th centuries in Europe and the United States of America. He asserts that between the 18th and 20th century, religious movements provided the basis for nearly all of the major uprisings by peasant or urban workers in Europe (Tracey, 2012:90). The politicization and radicalization of religion in a number of African countries such as in post-independence Nigeria, Rwanda and recently in Egypt, Kenya, Sudan and other African countries have led to violence, deaths, injustice, poverty and hardship, which will be very difficult to eradicate from the continent (Kalu, 2010:270-271). Religious riots and Islamic terrorism in Nigeria which speaks volume of impeding progress factor for development. In the nations of the global North or the so-called developed world, the forces of enlightenment and modernization have distanced religion from socio-political and economic life, relegating it to the private sphere. To provide a philosophical and ideological basis for the modernization agenda, “reason and faith were constructed as oppositional, mutually incompatible spheres. During the same era, religion was seen as counter-developmental. It was assumed that religious reasoning was inflexible and unyielding in the face of social and political change (Clarke & Jennings 2008:1).

Osaghae (1995:11) cited in Ukiwo (2017) offers more suitable description of the concept as far as this subject matter is concerned. The author defined ethnicity as the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and differences to gain advantage in situations of competition. (Ukiwo, 2017:4).

On the other hand, politics is a part of Social sciences. Social science in itself is an amalgamation of disciplines that probe into the various activities of human beings in the society as a whole. To the Greeks, Politics meant the organization and administration of the state. Greek philosophers were very much concerned about how to organize and administer the state in order to ensure the liberty of the individual and the enthronement of social justice. For us today in Nigeria, politics means more than this. The term politics is indeed very elastic. Many scholars have defined politics in different ways. For example, Harold Laswell defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how? He went further to explain that politics deals with the study of power or the study of influence and that of the influential. David Easter described politics as the authoritative allocation of values for the society (Omolayo & Arowolaju, 1987:6-7).

Weber saw politics as the struggle to share power or influence the distribution process. Politics has a wide scope in human society. This may be why Aristotle described man as “a political animal”. We all belong to the supreme organization called the state. In Nigeria, as in every other state, individuals and groups of individuals make competing demands over the allocation of scarce resources. Disagreements are bound to arise from time to time on the nature of these resources and how they would be allocated. This may be attributed to the fact that, the demand for the basic physiological needs of man are more than the available resources meant to be allocated for a purpose, or that, the resources meant for it are misappropriated based on ethnicity and religious consideration. For example, ninety percent of key political positions of the present administration under Buhari were allocated based on religious or ethnic consideration. By so doing, cases of spare pegs in round hole are common knowledge. This has negative toll on socio-economic and political development in the country in which its spillover effects are high rate of poverty, crimes, unemployment and diseases (2018-2019 Fieldwork)

Variably, ethnicity is a form of group identification or distinctiveness that is typically based on beliefs in a common biological ancestry which cannot be scientifically proven with accuracy. However, to say that not all ethnic groups are biologically homogeneous is not to deny the fact of kinship patterns within circumscribed geographical boundaries. According to Danjibo (2012), ethnicity is not static. It is in a constant flux. What may be ethnic today may not be ethnic tomorrow. Major characteristics of ethnicity are: Common ancestral origin, belief system, blood ties and territory. At times, some people would define their ethnic origin by territory. Many people can speak the same language but belongs to different ethnic group. This shows that ethnicity is indeed in a perpetual flux particularly in a pluralist nation-state like Nigeria (Danjibo , 2012),

Nigeria has three major religious groups: Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions. Traditional religious institution is the least politically active among the institutions. (Ethnic and religious crises in Nigeria – ACCORD. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ethnic-religious-crisis-nigeria/>) numbering several hundreds of ethnic groups and subgroups, villages, clans and kin groups; and involving the worship of different gods and goddesses. The perception of many Nigerians is that Christian and Islamic religious groups have continued to be the backbone of inter-religious crisis in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the interplay of politics, ethnicity and religion particularly from the first to the present fourth republics in the conduct of state affairs has shown that the interaction of the trio is not just alien to Nigerians. Perhaps, this may be in the expectation that such fusion may translate the choruses of unity in strength into reality. I share to some extent this belief in according sense of belonging to all Nigerians irrespective of your ethnic and religious inclination but, not on the altar of mediocrity. For Kura (2010:36), the general outcome of the interplay of politics, religion and ethnicity is the intensification of numerous ethno-religious struggles in Nigeria. And this intensification can be seen as the main source of on-going discrimination, subordination and domination in this country (Kura, 2010:36).

The inherent problem with the interplay of the three concepts has been the inability of the successive Nigerian governments since the political independence in 1960 to successfully establish a clear cut relationship and limitation between religion, ethnicity and politics in Nigerian nation-state as obtains in the United States of America from which democratic experiment was adopted. No doubt that the faulty foundation the British colonialists bequeathed to a pluralistic country like Nigeria has some negative impacts. The unsolicited 1914 amalgamation of northern and southern protectorate for administrative convenience not minding the Muslim dominated Northern region groomed under Sharia legal order as their article of faith and the Southern counterpart that were mentored and nurtured under the British Secular regime.

#### **4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopted two theories; General systems theory and the instrumentalist theory. General system theory propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1901-1972 an Australian biologist. It holds that a social institution is made up of interacting component parts which must conform to internal and external forces of the complete system (Bertalanffy, 1968). It attempts to explain political phenomenon or society using system construct akin to human physiological setup. The idea is that society is composed of different parts, working together to produce a harmonious system. It has such words like stability, harmony, integrated, interdependence,



**Table 2: 2019 State Election results declared by INEC.**

STATES	APC	PDP	REGISTERED VOTERS	TOTAL VOTES CAST	TOTAL VALID VOTES	REJECTED VOTES
EKITI	219,231	154,032	899,919	393,709	381,132	12,577
OSUN	347,634	337,377	1,674,729	731,882	714,682	17,200
FCT	152,224	259,997	1,335,015	451,408	423,951	27,457
KWARA	308,984	138,184	1,401,895	486,254	459,676	26,578
NASARAWA	289,903	283,847	1,509,481	599,399	580,778	18,621
KOGI	285,894	218,207	1,640,449	553,493	521,016	32,480
GOMBE	402,961	138,484	1,385,191	580,649	554,203	26,446
ONDO	241,769	275,901	1,812,567	586,827	555,994	30,833
YOBE	497,914	50,763	1,365,913	586,137	559,365	26,772
ENUGU	54,423	355,553	1,935,168	452,765	421,014	30,049
NIGER	612,371	218,052	2,375,568	896,976	851,937	45,039
JIGAWA	794,738	289,895	2,104,889	1,149,922	1,106,244	43,678
EBONYI	90,726	258,573	1,392,931	379,394	359,131	20,263
KADUNA	993,445	649,612	3,861,033	1,709,005	1,663,603	45,402
OYO	365,229	366,690	2,796,542	891,080	836,531	54,549
ADAMAWA	378,078	410,266	1,959,322	860,756	811,534	49,222
BAUCHI	798,428	209,313	2,453,512	1,061,955	1,024,307	37,648
LAGOS	580,825	448,015	6,313,507	1,156,590	1,089,567	67,023
OGUN	281,762	194,655	2,336,887	605,938	564,256	41,682
ABIA	85,058	219,698	1,793,861	344,471	323,291	21,180
EDO	267,842	275,691	2,150,127	599,228	560,711	38,510
BENUE	347,668	356,817	2,391,276	763,872	728,912	34,960
IMO	140,463	334,923	2,037,569	542,777	511,586	31,191
PLATEAU	468,555	548,665	2,423,381	1,062,862	1,034,853	28,009
KANO	1,464,768	391,593	5,391,581	1,964,751	1,891,134	73,617
KATSINA	1,232,133	308,056	3,210,422	1,619,185	1,555,473	63,712
TARABA	324,906	374,743	1,777,105	741,564	712,877	28,687
CROSS RIVER	117,302	295,737	1,512,915	444,046	421,901	24,145
AKWA IBOM	175,429	395,832	2,119,727	605,140	578,775	26,365
BORNO	836,496	71,788	2,319,434	955,205	919,786	35,419
DELTA	221,292	594,068	2,719,313	882,254	829,762	52,492
BAYELSA	118,821	197,933	923,182	335,856	321,767	14,089
SOKOTO	490,333	361,604	1,895,266	925,940	871,891	54,049
KEBBI	581,552	154,282	1,802,697	803,755	756,605	47,150
ZAMFARA	438,682	125,423	1,717,128	597,224	578,437	18,785
RIVERS	150,710	473,971	3,215,273	666,585	642,165	24,420
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,191,847</b>	<b>11,262,978</b>	<b>82,344,107</b>	<b>28,614,190</b>	<b>27,324,583</b>	<b>1,289,607</b>

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Via VON, 2019

## **6. Discussion of findings**

As at wednesday February, 27, 2019, the All Progressive Congress (APC) had won state elections in Borno, Gombe, Bauchi, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ondo, Nasarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara state. While the closest contender People's Democratic Party (PDP) clinched Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Plateau, Rivers, Imo, Oyo, Taraba and FCT, Abuja.

Looking at the results in the table 1& 2 above, states won by the All Progressive Congress (APC) in North Eastern and West states are mostly Muslim dominated states such as Borno, Kano, Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. The voting pattern in these states were highly influenced either by religious cleavages, ethnic consideration or both. Some states won by APC in South-South/South West states such as Lagos, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, Edo, Ogun are Christian dominated states with similar social cultural and ethnic background which is at variant with their APC counterparts in North East, West and Central. What played out in these states was the influence of party interest. Religious and ethnic considerations was jettisoned and party interest in those states prevailed. With the exception of Kaduna state which the dominant religion is debatable.

On the other hand, states in the South-East and South South with the exception of Edo were won by the People's Democratic Party. Although People in these nations have their ethnic and socio-cultural peculiarities, they are Christian dominated states. It could be deduced that religion and ethnicity did not play any role in people's voting pattern in the two regions rather what they commonly referred to as "Federal Government neglect and the level of insecurity in the Country seem to have influenced their voting pattern in the state. Many voters in South East and South-South sees APC as "Buhari personified" hence APC's abysmal performance in the recently concluded presidential election.

The result of the presidential election followed the same pattern which shows that votes were cast along ethnic and religious lines in 2019 General election. A cursory perusal over the results in Table 2 above shows clearly that the Muslim dominated states of the Federation had overwhelming support for the President who is a Muslim while result from other states especially from South-East and South-South recorded low support. The two zones supported Atiku-Peter Obi ticket and the reason is obvious. Peter Obi is from South-East and that might have accounted for the massive support that came from Eastern zone. To this end, it is believed by many Nigerians that religion and ethnicity influenced the voting pattern in the South-East and South- South-South region of Nigeria.

## **7. THE EFFECTS OF RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND POLITICS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

In a multi-ethno-religious and socio-cultural differentiations like Nigeria, the concerted efforts expected from the citizens as well as Governments should be to enforce the dictum of unity in diversity principles for strength as in India, America and China. The researcher's worry has been expressed by Akinade (2002) cited in Omilusi (2015:12), thus:

Nigerians are passionately questioning whether their country should remain united as one entity. Some argue that they should seek a federal solution to Nigeria's problems based on several autonomous regions while others wish to jettison the colonial borders altogether and create new states. Incendiary strife between Christians and Muslims has added more weight and credence to the secessionist agenda.

Many prominent religious leaders have taken positions by their outright alignment to political candidates, not necessarily at the national level, but in many state. In the past couple of months, mosques and churches have turned into campaign grounds where politicians besiege in search of "blessing" and clerics openly giving directives to faithful to cast their votes for certain candidates some clerics have even gone to the extent of involving the wrath of God of followers who failed to heed to their directive (Hamza et'al, 2018).

The political elite in Nigeria have always used religion and ethnicity as a tool of exploitation to achieve selfish socio-economic ends, while politically deploying religious fanaticism and favouritism to polarize the people and sustain unhealthy tension in the country. To date, public officials use public funds as an instrument for political patronage, thereby eroding the democratic tenets. The spillover effect has been the preponderance of ethno-religious and politically motivated assassinations and kidnapping cases across the country. Nevertheless, Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world. Religion is often employed among politicians, policy makers and religious leaders, as a determining factor in who gets what, when and how, in public and private offices and, a major influence on policy direction of government. Omilusi (2015) attest to the fact that the intrigue and nuances that usually go into this process, more often than not, lead to a compromise of public interests by the religious stakeholders and political gladiators, especially after elections (Omilusi, 2015).

Political elites are the sole source of values in the society or constitute the integrating force in the community without which it may fall part. The political elites have been regarded as the principal threat to the survival of democracy in Nigeria. Their existence has been taken to be the very denial of democracy. Elites which have exceptional access to key positions in the society or which appear to wield control over critical and crucial policies disproportionate to their numbers can understandably seem to be living contradictions of the notion of government by the people and for the people. As it is in Nigeria to date, religion and ethnicity remains a useful political instrument for gaining political power. It has been keenly observed that whenever a politician loses an election he or she will also resort blame game such as "I lose election because they don't want us to be there". Ake (1996: 31) cited in Omilusi (2015) gives a clear distinction between the ruling class and the government. He avers that both are related but also distinct in a very concrete way:

The ruling class is in power while the government is only in office. The government is the small group in charge of the major institutions of the state, particularly the legislative and administrative machinery. The ruling class is all power centered - political, cultural, religious, and economic that constitute the existing political domination (Omilusi, 2015).

Duru, (2012) narrates how the ruling class includes all the powerful traditional leaders, the major religious leaders, the higher ranks of the coercive institutions such as the military, the police and the judiciary, international capital and the wealthy protecting it from the dangers of totalitarianism (Duru, 2012). Religion generally supports social norms, reassuring the people that their ways are right and their cause is just; for religion has become part and parcel of society and has been reported to be the focal point of cultures. In the Nigeria context, for instance, one cannot doubt the seriousness of the faith and the commitment of most Nigerians in their religious beliefs.

Danjibo (2012) traces the background of divisiveness to the faulty foundation upon which Nigeria was laid. He asserts that one of the innovations of the Littleton's Constitution was the introduction of federal system of government in which autonomous entities were given powers to operate on certain issues (Danjibo, 2012). However, regional autonomy only gave each of the three dominant ethnic – Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo regional control in their respective regions (Dudley, 1989; Ikime, 2000; Osaghae, 2003; Mamdani, 2003; Sklar, 2004).

The Littleton's "Federal Constitution" engendered ethnic and regional politics which weakened and threatened national integration and social cohesion, but also engendered and facilitated majority domination of the numerous minority groups in Nigeria. It is equally imperative to recall that, the 1914 Lord Lugard Amalgamation- constitutes another unforgettable defective foundation upon which Nigerian state was laid irrespective of socio-cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds. Another divisive politically motivated arrangement was the emergency of three major political parties in the post-independence era; Northern People's Congress (NPC) facilitated both religious and political interest of Northern region, Action Group, for the political interest of Yorubas in the Western region; and National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) that spearheaded the interest of the Eastern region under the three major nationalists: Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1964/5 general elections. This political arrangement signalled another conviction in the minds of many free thinkers and political commentators that, there is nothing so unique or special about Nigerian's unity in diversity as well as the need for national integration. To the researcher, these three historical epochs constitutes the greatest setback towards national integration of which two headed dragon of ethnicity and religion remains the most prevailing threat to Nigerians unity (Danjibo, 2012: 136).

At independence, the politicians were mainly interested in dominating their regions and the government at the centre without any recourse to finding lasting solution to Nigeria's most unresolved problem which practically revolved around the question of integration, equity, justice and fairness (Falola, 1990; Kukah,1999), Kenny, 1996 ; Suberu, 2004,and Ilesanmi, 2001). Kastfelf (1994) in Danjibo's work attest to the prevalence of religion in politics in Nigeria when they admit that, religion has and will continue to play a very sensitive and influential role in Nigeria politics. The 2005 political reform conference under Olusegun Obasanjo is one of the testimonies that lend credence to the above assertion. The Muslims in the North threatened to embark on a jihad if Mr. President refuse to address what they called "the unfair religious representation and three major Islamic groups: the Jamaatil Nasril Islam (JNI), the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (SCSN), and the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) went to the extent of examining the composition of the executive committee of the Conference. They argued that, out of the 393

delegates, the Christians were 233 while the Muslims were 160 and that the appointment of Justice Niki Tobi and Reverend Father Matthew Hassan Kuka as Chairman and Secretary respectively was an invitation for a Jihad in Nigeria. In the same vein, the voting pattern in Nigeria goes along ethnic and religious lines since 1964/65 general election in Nigeria (Danjibo, 2012)

The outcome of this unabated anti-democratic practice has at best generated ethno-religious and politically motivated killings and by extension, deepened suspicious, hatred amongst ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. By implication, development can only take place in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. Nigerian state has gone too many steps backwards due to the incessant but avoidable conflicts occasioned by ethno-religious conflict. Such violent conflicts are thus: 1979/1980 Maitatsine violent in the North which claimed 4,177 people, Kafanchan, Kaduna and Zaria crisis of March 1987 caused by a clash between Christians and Muslim at Kafanchan over the misinterpretation of Koran by a Christian preacher. This claimed untold lives and invaluable property, 1982 crisis in Kano where Anglican Hausa Church at Fegge quarters took a decision to build a bigger church within its walled premises which the majority of Muslims around the area felt it is too close to their Central Mosque and heaven was let loose. The 1988 U.I. Chapel episode when some Muslim fundamentalists attempted to burn down the wooden status of the risen Christ at the University Chapel after the construction of new Mosque on the Campus and Muslims claimed the effigy of risen Christ was facing the Mosque. What of 1990 Katsina Shiite movement that protested against the unity in Nigeria in full glare. Under the micro level of ethnicisim and/or intra-ethnic tension/conflicts that caused untold loss of human and material resources of the country, the following are worthy of mention: Effik versus Ibibio Umuleri vs Agulere (territorial conflict) Cross River vs Akwa Ibom (resource based) Ife vs Modakeke territorial conflict (Danjibo, 2012).

The implication of these divisive conflicts is the increasing ethnic agitation for self-determination. Few of such movements are: Oodua People's congress (OPC) Ijaw, Ogoni Survival movements, Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB), Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF). The foundation on which Nigeria stood and the apparent lack of commitment to address injustices that tend to divide us has been the bane. In the light of this, national integration and peaceful co-existence efforts of many peace lovers yielded no positive result with the interplay of politics, religion and ethnicity. It is a known fact that, the expectant strength in diversity, given the abundant human and material endowments available in a country of over 400 ethnic nationalities has been elusive due largely to the incessant ethno-religious and politically motivated crises.

In addition, the age long perception and derogatory remarks among the major ethnic nationalities constitute another worrisome division in Nigeria. For instance, Yoruba ethnic extraction calls Igbo Omo-ajekuta (people that eats solid or hard food without water) or "Omokobokobo" (people that worship money). Igbo people calls Yorubas "Ngbati mgbati people or "Ndi ofe mmanu" (people who cannot eat without excess palm oil) while Hausa/Fulani extraction calls Igbo "Kwari" (pests). All these derogatory remarks passes wrong/negative impression about us in Nigeria to the unsuspecting and innocent younger generation.

## **8. Conclusion and recommendations**

The interplay of religion, ethnicity and politics unchecked in a heterogeneous country like Nigeria is antithetical to Socio-economic and political development. To this end, there must be political will on the part of government to set its priority right by redefining the limitations of the three concepts in order to allow for socio-economic and political re-engineering.

For meaningful development to take place in Nigeria, the component parts should uphold moral values, social justice and fear of God as epitomized in Church-state approach to conflict management. The role of religion in fostering moral values, openness, fear of God, tolerance and forgiveness, should be supported by Nigerian Government to allow for the institutionalization of the hitherto value system. Such values are important for the development of sound economic and democratic political systems which should be the article of faith in all religious institutions in Nigeria. In the same vein, the National Assembly should come up with a legislation prohibiting political appointment based on ethnic and religious consideration. There is urgent need to outlaw federal character and quota system arrangement in the selection of political office holders to allow for competence and professionalism that is sine-qua-non for sustainable economic growth and development.

The last but not the least, is the need to down play religious fanaticism, ethnic bigotry and undemocratic dispositions by Nigerian political elite as it obtains in the developed Countries such as; United states of America, United Kingdom and Canada. We should not be more Catholic than the Pope or more Islamic than the Sheik.

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