POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA: A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Ferdinand O. Ottoh, PhD[1]
Olusola E. Akintola, PhD[2]

Abstract
The politicization of religion poses a significant threat to national security this is because of the violence that follows it. The paper argues that religious politicization tends to create disaffection among the people, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria. The motivation for this study is borne out of the emotional attachment various religious groups have in defence of their faith. It posits that inadvertently religion is a major factor considered by electorates in their choice of candidates in an election or for political leadership. Christian south would want to vote for a candidate from the region while the Muslim north would prefer a Muslim candidate. Therefore, religion has become an instrument for the polarization of the country instead of unifying the country. Religion is used consciously or unconsciously for the selfish interest of political leaders even when some of them are not strong in propagating their faith. They only find it convenient to use religion to capture political power. The paper argues that the politicization of religion in Nigeria is a negation of the principle of secularity as entrenched in the Constitution. This paper, therefore, offers a new perspective to analyze the politicization of religion and the threats it poses to national security. The method adopted is a pure analysis of the threats posed by the politicization of religion and reviewing extant literature. Secularity and securitization

[1] Dr Ferdinand O. Ottoh is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos. Email Address: vonferd@yahoo.com
[2] Dr Olusola E. Akintola is with the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning (National Planning Arm), Central Business District, Abuja, Nigeria. Email: pgmprince@gmail.com

theoretical framework are employed as they are discursive to give insight into the political process.

Key Words: National security, Politicization, Secularity, Security and Securitization.

Introduction

The practice of early Christianity in Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire in the Western world, placed emphasis on the separation of the Catholic Church from state institutions and governance (Brown, 1996 cited in Ellis and ter Haar, 2013). In other words, the political history of Europe saw the separation of religion and state, especially in Rome, during the periods of Reformation and European Enlightenment. But there was no conscious attempt to separate religion from politics. The idea of separation of religion from politics stems from State- religion dichotomy.

In our world today, religion and politics are dominating national discourse which goes to show their role in the political and social life of the people. 'Politics' is aimed at advancing common goods of humanity while religion is aimed at the preservation of man's spirituality. The meeting point between the two they have morality embedded in them. In politics, the end justifies the means because it is an endless quest for power, which is contrary to the issue of morality. Religion only helps in the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of politics. Thus, politics and religion are Siamese twins, therefore, inseparable. In other words, they are two sides of the same coin in the sense that politics allows power to flow between the visible material world to the invisible spiritual world through religion (Ellis and ter Haar, 2013). Despite the linkage between politics and religion, they are not identical and they cannot be no matter how they are manipulated. This is because the State is expected to equidistance from politics to be seen as impartial.

In Nigeria, religion has gained prominence in the political process and generated a lot of tension due to the infusion of religion into politics or vice versa. Christianity and Islam as two dominant religions are always in conflict with one another and have become

sources of political conflict in post-independence Nigeria. In other words, political conflicts revolve around the activities of these two religions. These conflicts are caused by competition for political power, in which religion is used as the focal point to win the sympathy of the members of the faith. The struggle for political power is seen within the religious lens thereby exacerbating ethnic contradictions that impact negatively on the relationship between the two religions. In the power struggle, religion is manipulated by political elites.

The appointment of people to political offices by President Buhari from 2015 to 2022 was tinted with inference and this breeds mutual distrust, discrimination and general insecurity. The thesis is that religion has created an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion to the extent that almost all national issues are reduced to religion. Nigeria's politics is characterized by religious acrimony and divisiveness which is dysfunctional for national cohesion and stability. The politicization of religion in Nigeria is a negation of the principle of secularity as entrenched in the Constitution. It does not allow for freedom of religion, equality and neutrality. This paper, therefore, offers a new perspective appropriate for the current political dispensation as religion has taken a centre stage in the choice of political leadership.

The politicization of religion has added to political polarization and religious divide which manifest themselves in all aspects of the country's national life. Religious institutions and preachers use religion to appeal to their members seeking political office. The religious leaders find it very convenient to use the platform to endorse members seeking political office. More often, the candidates invoke religious identity during electioneering campaigns to win the sympathy of the members of the same faith. Islam is seen to be embedded in politics. That is why today we can talk about political Islam concerned with the struggle for political recognition in Society (Afolabi, 2016). This makes religion a very strong variable in Nigeria's political process and cannot be ignored in policy making.

The fundamental problem is how to separate the Church from the State, which also implies the separation of the State from religion. This has continued to generate concern in the secular world. In the case of Nigeria, the attitude of the Nigerians towards one religion has made political engagement more problematic for a particular religion. For instance, the introduction of Shari Law in the Northern part of Nigeria generated a lot of controversies as the Christians living in that region considered the law as targeted against them. Most people see the introduction of Shari Law as political than religion.

Despite the linkage between politics and religion, they are not identical and they cannot be no matter how they are manipulated. This is because State is expected to equidistance from politics for it to be seen as impartial. Without necessarily engaging in the argument as regards the issue of secularity and the multi-religious nature of the Nigerian State, this paper uses the framework of secularity and securitization for elucidation of this discourse.

This paper contributes to the endless debate about the infiltration of religion into politics and its impact on national security. This justifies the use of the securitization framework to give insight into the danger of the politicization of religion. This is to draw the attention of Nigerian policy makers and political gladiators that some of their utterances have negative manifestations on national unity and cohesion. This study is aimed at changing the orientation of the people towards the negative perceptions of religion in politics and vice versa. This is a worthy addition to the literature on national politics that will further enhance the understanding of Nigeria's political process. To this end, the method of analysis of the threats posed by the politicization of religion brings to bear the qualitative character of the paper, especially the review of extant literature. Secularity and securitization theoretical analysis are discursive that give insight into the political process and threat perception of the politicization of religion.

This introductory section provides the central arguments of the paper. It follows with a review of extant literature and the theoretical basis of the work. The third section analyses threats posed by the politicization of religion to national security. The fourth part is the

implication of politicization on national security. The final section is the conclusion and recommendations.

The politicization of Religion and National Security: An Overview

The concepts of politicization, religion, and secularism are central to this discourse. In Aristotle's political lamentation in his famous work, *Politics*, says that man by nature is a political animal; and as a social being lives in a society where he finds fulfillment with other fellow men (Baker, 1995 in Enemuo, 1999). The complexity of the political environment requires it to be well-ordered and organized. It is recognized that the science of this complex structure of social relationships is the science of politics. Aristotle explains that every state is an association of people consciously or unconsciously formed to regulate human behaviour (Baker, 1995, in Enemuo, 1999). Thus, politics is the science of statecraft that aims at regulating society and citizens within the state. Politics is conceived as a way of organizing relations of power. Power, which is the basic ingredient of politics that men seek to acquire using religion. Here lies the issue of politicization which is simply an interference of the government in religious affairs and also the involvement of religion in political controversy. In other words, when political leaders use religion as a channel for the actualization of political aims it amounts to politicization. No doubt, when religion is enmeshed in political controversies it leads to the politicization of that institution.

Religion can be defined from different perspectives by scholars of diverse backgrounds – political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, etc. (Beyers, 2010). Political scientists define it from the angle of power and authority while others define it from their own world-view. Emile Durkheim sees religion as a common system of practices and beliefs among people which is built on sacred objects and practices that unite them into one single moral community of adherents (cited in Dawes & Maclaurin 2012). Religion is associated with a divine revelation to man through ritual, doctrinal, mythical, experiential, ethical, organizational, and the material (Smart 1996 cited in Dawes & Maclaurin 2012). It is seen as a social construct laden with mythical practices, and

participation in traditions like in the African society that is passed across from one generation to the other (Beyers, 2010). Religion and power are linked because religious practices seek some mystical power to convince their adherents of the efficacy of their belief. The people are meant to understand the forces of good and evil to enter into relation with the supernatural being which is worshipped and revered. Man through creative ingenuity draws upon the supernatural power, manipulate it and makes sacrifices to appease this supernatural being (Woodhead, 2011). It is the superior knowledge possessed by individual or groups that make them to exercise some form of influence and control over others. Thus, religion becomes a source of power and authority, which few utilize to dominate others through ignorance.

Religion and politics are closely related not in terms of mode of worship but in the influence, both have on the state and the political process, on the degree of political participation of citizens. Religion is fundamentally an instrument of integration and cohesion in the political system. Both perform the role of reordering how people live and how society functions. While religion regulates social behaviour for peaceful co-existence, politics helps to regulate people's behaviour and their beliefs within society (Zaben, 2012). Thus, religion performs manifest functions while politics play a latent function in the political system where both interacts. From a sociological sense, religion plays an integrative role and a tool to foster a sense of belonging in human society. Paradoxically, religion can be used as a divisive tool in a volatile political environment. Understandably, religion performs a functional role by enforcing the collective conscience of the society required for social order, stability, harmonious co-existence and human security (Egbefo, 2016).

Again, religious behaviours, attitudes, and actions are regulated through governance. Soriano, *et.al* (2018) submit that religious commitment encourages political participation when the members of religious groups are politically conscious and can easily be mobilized during elections to support their members of the same faith. In most cases, commitment to religious practices and beliefs can translate into political participation and political activism. However, religious

adherents can only become politically active if any political agenda directly affect their religious belief (Soriano, *et.al*, 2018).

The debate on the secularity of the Nigerian State continues to dominate the political space. Christianity and Islam are always at loggerheads as to which should be given more recognition in the State. For instance, Muslims have always argued in favour of the application of Islamic law as they believe that the Constitution is for Christians and the protection of Christians' interests. These are sources of tension in the polity. The Nigerian Constitution of 1979 recognizes three systems of law: the English Common Law, the Islamic law, and the Native law. The basis for the Muslims agitating against the application of Islamic law in Nigeria is that Islam is part and parcel of the State and therefore there is no separation between the State and religion (Yushau, 2009). The Christians argue that Nigeria is a secular State and should not adopt or apply Islamic law in Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution 1999 Constitution (as amended) clearly provides in Section 10 freedom of association of every citizen which includes the freedom of worship and to belong to any religious group without any encumbrance. By implication, it is clear that no religion should be adopted as a state religion in the country. This means there is the prohibition of State Religion in Nigeria and the authority of the state revolves around its 'secularism' in which the 1999 Constitution (as amended) is supreme and its authority is binding on all citizens through the length and breadth of Nigeria as stated in Section 1(1) of the Constitution. The argument of the Muslims is that Section 10 of the Constitution does not imply secularism rather it recognizes the multi-religious nature of the Nigerian State.

Multi-religious society means a political system in which no religion is superimposed on the others; it is a society where everybody has the freedom of worship, the state does not proclaim or promote a particular religion as a state religion to the detriment of other religions and (Yesufu, 2016). It is the politicization of the issue of the secularity of Nigeria State and disregard for the multi-religious nature of the state that continues to create tension and undermine national security. The

political elites are perpetrators of religious crises when seeking political power or losing it.

National security has to do with the extent to which a nation is secured and free from any internal or external attack. Walter Lippmann observes that a nation is secured to the extent it is not in question to lose values, life, property and liberty (Lipmann, 1943, in Egbefo, 2016). A nation is seen to be secure when it is seen not to be in danger from any form of threat either from within or outside. National security is the maintenance of the state's territorial integrity and at the same time ensuring the survival of the nation-state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy. Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo has declared that "the primary objective of national security shall be to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, advance her interest and to contain instability, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress and growth and improve the welfare and well-being and quality of life of the citizenry (Animoshe, 2006 *New Nigeria*, Monday, September 9th). National security indeed is freedom from hunger, or from threats to a nation's ability to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and interests, and enhance the well-being of its people (Gwarzo, 1998 in Egbefo, 2016).

National security is all-encompassing as it includes the political, economic, and social well-being of the citizens and not just only acquisition of weapons and military preparedness. Thus, any threat to either political, economic, or social aspects of the country poses a threat to national security. National security is the protection of the state, guaranteeing the defence of the country, the freedom, and well-being of its citizens, and its constitutional principles and values, and contributing together with others to ensure international security in compliance with its commitments undertaken (Egbefo, 2016). On basis of this assertion that we can link religion and national security. These two dichotomous concepts – national security and religion are deployed by the ruling class to oppress the people. It is just like ethnicity which the ruling elite uses when they are to capture political power and if it does not favour them, they securitize it. The same way religion is used

them to win the electoral vote and in the process, they manipulate it to the detriment of national unity.

The challenge in protecting the constitutional principle of the secularity of the State is the politicization of this provision in the Constitution as argued somewhere in this paper. These challenges, risks, and threats to national security emanating from religious politicization. For instance, the main challenge to the Nigerian State is the recurring religious politics that tends to undermine the unity of the country. It has remained a critical national question that has not been resolved.

Theoretical Explanation

Secularism is a political doctrine which is different from "Secular" and "Secularization" (Bilgrami, 2014). Secularism can be understood first, as the separation of church and state. Second, is that the state maintains a neutral equidistant from different religions in a multi-religious society. The basic principles of secularism are liberty of worship, equality of different faiths, giving each faith a voice to determine the shape of the society, ensure fraternal relations (Bilgrami, 2014). Secularization implies that religion should be a private affair and be removed from public life.

The theory of secularism can be traced to St. Augustine's "two kingdoms" view, which sees the goals of religion and those of government as separate. The State laws are to be obeyed by all while religion also maintains its own principles that guide the members. This explains why there is a separation between religion and politics. A critical look at civic moralities and religion reveals that the two do not clash except when the State interferes with religious activities. Bhargava (2004) argues for the separation and exclusion of the State from all religious matters and their practices, and other related matters mean that religion is excluded from the activities of the State. However, separation can also mean mutual exclusion. This means religion and the State exclude each other from the affairs of the other. This is to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of States and protect religious liberty (Bharagava, 2004).

A secular State can exclude religion from its own affairs without necessarily excluding itself from religious affairs; the State can a make policy for mutual exclusion by both; the State decide to be neutral with respect to all religious matters; and the State may adopt a policy of maintaining a distance with respect to all religions (Bhargava, 2004). A secular State maintains certain values – liberty of members of any religious groups, does not grant any preferential treatment to members of any religious community and individuals are free not only to criticize the religion into which they are born, but at the very extreme, to reject it and to remain without one (Bhargava, 2004). In summary, the two basic principles of secularism are the separation of Church and State and the State maintaining a neutral equidistance from different religions within a plural society (Banumann, 1999).

Discourse on the politicization of religion and its implication for national security can be understood from a securitization standpoint. The traditional security in interstate relations or intrastate relations is the maintenance of order which focuses on the use of force different from the analysis of securitization. Securitization is analysed within the framework of threat perception. The theory of securitization is a framework for studying the implementation of securitization and national security challenges which includes the politicization of religion. The major security issue is the survival of the state which may be threatened by various ethno-religious movements. Thus, the securitization model offers the most plausible explanation and framework on how to determine, why and by whom a specific matter becomes securitized (Emmers, 2007).

From the securitization framework, there are five basic components – military, economic, political, environmental and societal sectors of security threats (Buzan, *et.al*, 1998). These five variables may be threatened but more often the military sector is seen to be the focus which is not necessarily be the case because the other sectors in the security matrix are equally important. For the purpose of this discourse, our focus is on societal and political security that are closely related. In fact, all security issue is political. It is about the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give

governments and state their legitimacy (Buzan, *et.al*, 1998). Societal security is about large, self-sustaining identity groups.

The issue of religion is about the identity of a group that propagates or professes it and when the state attempts to influence an individual or group by using political structures to compromise this religious identity that will lead to a reaction from the group resulting in a threat to national security. Society can react to threats posed by the politicization of religion by engaging or creating religious crisis thereby moving the issue to the realm of politics or the political sector and potential military sector by the state declaring it a threat to its security agenda.

Political security is distinct from politics as it deals with the issue of threats to the legitimacy or recognition of either of political units or structures, processes or institutions. More fundamentally, it is about the organizational stability of social order(s) Buzan, *et.al*. 1998). Political security is a non-traditional military threat to the state's sovereignty which is not the focus of this discourse. As these scholars argue that all security issue is political and that all threats and defences are constituted and defined politically (Buzan, *et.al.*1998:141). It is in this regard that the politicization of religion is securitized as it is also a political act. When a political threat to the organizational stability of a state is threatened either through societal identity protection, or military means is used which brings the issue to the realm of politics.
Anything that threatens the religious idea of an individual or a group threatens the referent object which is the state. Existential threats to a state are those that ultimately involve sovereignty which is an essential attribute of statehood. Threats to state survival are threats to sovereignty (Buzan, *et.al.*, 1998). Anything that is seen to violate sovereignty either within or outside can be presented as a security problem.

Securitization of religion is a threat from within and not from outside. The traditional security hinges on national security which centred on the state as the referent object within the military sector. The assumption here is the realization that the state is the referent object and the guarantor of security, therefore anything that threatens it is taken

seriously. Buzan conceptualizes security to include regional, societal, and environmental and how people securitize threats (Appiaggei-Atua, *et.al,* 2017:328). Buzan further identifies critical issues that affect security such as political, military, economic, societal and environmental factors. The complex relationship among these five variables involves the individual, the society and the state. The argument is that security is simply the ability of the state and society to maintain independent identity and integrity against the forces of disintegration. In this case, the politicization of religion in the polity portends a great threat to the secularity principle as entrenched in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

When the issue of religion is brought to the fore in the choice of a candidate for the office of the president it tends to raise unnecessary tension in the polity. This justifies the issue of securitization as portrayed by the Copenhagen School of thought. The political violence that is often witnessed during elections is linked to religious identity question that justifies the use of force by the State to some level of order. The state uses force to deal with threats imposed due to the politicization of religion. The Copenhagen school's view of securitization describes security as 'speech acts' and this is why the politicization of religion is seen as an existential threat that requires emergency measures and justifies actions outside the normal bounds of political procedures (Buzan, *et.al,* 1998 in Appiagyei-Atua, *et.al,* 2017). Securitization is an extreme version of politicization which means that issues that have an impact on public policy requires taking decision such as the secularity of the state and can be securitized when it poses an existential threat necessitating emergency measures that justifies action outside the normal bounds of politics.

Political elites politicize religion as the basis of acquiring, maintaining and consolidating state power. They inadvertently do this by empowering ethnic militia groups to carry out violence in solidarity for losing out in the power game. The internecine violence struggle for power threatens national security requiring the state to use force to maintain order. Haacke and Williams (2008:775) assert that

securitization as a framework allows for an understanding of the discursive construction of threat agendas and responses.

Security threat is created through a process of securitization this is why politicians can turn political issue from the non-security related problem into security problems thereby confronting them through extra-political measures. What is termed 'speech act' simply means that by uttering 'security' something must be done. That is, by labelling something security issue that it becomes one (Waever, 2004:13). By stating that a particular referent object is threatened existentially gives the securitizing actor a right to adopt extra-ordinary measures to ensure the survival of the referent object (in this case the Nigerian state). The issue is now moved out of normal politics to the realm of emergency politics where drastic action is taken to prevent any form of political upheaval that will lead to the disequilibrium of the state. It is against this backdrop that we can assess the threats of the politicization of religion to national security.

Analysis Of Threats Of Politicization Of Religion To National Security

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has had many religious conflicts which have persisted into the 1990s and 2000s – the Kafanchan –Kaduna crisis of the 1980s and 1990s; the Maitatsine uprising in 1980 in Kano; 1982 Kaduna and Bubumkutu, 1984 Yola and 1985 in Bauchi; the Kaduna Sharia riots of 2000 and the Bauchi riots in 2001, as well as the 2001 riots in Jos. All these are associated with the politicization of identity–based conflicts on one hand; and the erosion of a sense of common citizenship, and popular disillusionment with local politics (Ikelegbe, 2005; Hutchful and Aning, 2004). These rising incidences of ethno-religious conflict can be linked to the infusion of politics into religion. The Zangon-Kataf crisis was a communal conflict overland but found expression in a religious differentiation (Gboyega, 1997).

Since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 there were cases of religious conflicts some of them were occasioned by desperate religious leaders and politicians to fan embers of religious fundamentalism for electoral contestation. Political parties and

candidates directly or indirectly connect religious groups to pursue an agenda perceived to promote and preserve their religious identity. These religious disturbances have continued interminably to undermine the peace and political stability of the country. The primary cause(s) is due to suspicion, lack of mutual trust and understanding and identity questions between Christians and Muslims.

Religion has been dragged into the electoral process. Muhammadu Buhari GCFR in 2003 was quoted saying that Muslims should not vote for Christian candidates as he had the ambition to contest the 2003 election. In 2011 after the presidential election, there was spontaneous violence when Goodluck Jonathan (Christian) won under the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) candidate, Muhammadu Buhari (Muslim) lost, and the Muslims in the north were not happy that the north ought to complete the eight years after the death of Umaru Musa Yar' Adua. That incident claimed many lives and property damage. The truth is that all the incidence of religious conflicts only serves the interest of political leaders by promoting their religious identity for the purpose of capturing political power.

Religious identity has become an issue in the security forces as related to appointment to the higher echelon. The fear of Muslim dominance continued to rise among the Christians. During Obasanjo's Presidency, the Muslims were apprehensive about the reversal from Muslim to Christian dominance of the security forces and state structures. It was reported that the government of Obasanjo have removed most of the Muslim commanders in the armed forces and replaced them with Christian officers (International IDEA, 2000:82, in Ukiwo, 2003). Under the current Buhari's regime, the government has been accused of lopsidedness in the appointment of service Chiefs. The service Chiefs are Muslims from the north which the Christians in the south saw as nepotism. What it means is that such an appointment was not based on competence, capacity and capability. In view of the daunting security challenges, the appointment was based on ethnic and religious inclination.

Sharia law is seen as a tool to enforce the Islamic religion on the rest of the country. This was politicized and almost threatened the peace and security of the country. The introduction of this law in twelve northern states that are predominantly Muslims deepened the longstanding animosity between Muslims and Christians in the north. The protest by non-Christians and the agitation among Muslims for Sharia further strained Muslim-Christian relations. The aftermath of the introduction of the Sharia Bill by the Kaduna State House of Assembly resulted in bloody clashes that claimed hundreds of lives in 2000 (Ukiwo, 2003). The consequence of this was reprisal attacks of Hausa/Fulani in some areas in the southeast – Aba, Onitsha and in the south-south region – Uyo as a reaction to the killings of their people in Kaduna (Ukiwo, 2003). The mass movement of southerners from Kaduna, Kano, and other core northern Muslim States to Jos, following the adoption of Sharia led to the bloody Jos riots of September 2001 which claimed more than 1,000 lives. The riot was linked to the appointment of a Muslim as the Coordinator of the Federal Government's Poverty Alleviation Programme (Ukiwo, 2003).

The activity of Boko Haram in the northeast can be linked also to imposing Shari law in Nigeria through violent means. The attacks on various state institutions by Boko Haram demonstrate how religion poses a threat to national security. Boko Haram is seen as the militant wing of northern politicians who are poised to discredit any government they consider not to be ruling in accordance with Islamic injunction. This was the way some sections of the Christian community in the southern part of Nigeria interpreted the activities of the Boko Haram sect during President GoodLuck Jonathan's administration. Boko Haram claimed to pursue justice through the enforcement of Sharia law which is a confirmation of religious activism.

The choice of All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential flag bear Bola Ahmed Tinubu of a Muslim Vice President, Kashim Shettimma for the 2023 election has generated a lot of controversies in the political circle by both political actors and other stakeholders within and outside the party. It is not a constitutional issue in the sense that there was no section that specifies how political parties should choose a

running mate for either presidential or governorship elections. The choice of a running mate depends on the presidential candidate who has the discretion to choose from any part of the country. Why it appears that it has become a Constitutional issue is because under Chapter 2, which is the Fundamental Objective and Directive Principle of State Policy, stipulates that the appointment of people should reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the same applies at the state level. By the Muslim-Muslim ticket adopted by the All Progressives Congress was seen as a contravention of this provision. The principle of federal character was to ensure social justice, equity, and fairness in Nigeria's federal system. The fear among the Christians is that if the APC candidate wins the election, then Christians would not be fully represented.

In a nut shell, all political controversies impact negatively on peace and stability of the country. The narrow mindedness or the mindset of political gladiators and religious bigots is that elections are for redistribution of power and cultural equality. The assumption among the groups is that elections afford them the opportunity to hold office and free them from the dominance of a group, therefore, the group would explore any identity either ethnic or religious. Ethnicity and religion are two major tools of mobilization and deployed for the acquisition and retention of power. It is the negative deployment of these tools that undermine national unity and cohesion and threaten national security.

Implications Of Politicization Of Religion For National Security

The issue is not that religion is politicized in Nigeria; the politicization of religion is popular around the world. Global beliefs and experiences have demonstrated that neither religion nor politics exists without each other (Afolabi, 2016). While the two might exist *pari passu* without any issue in other climes, the challenge is that the impacts of the politicization of religion in Nigeria are mostly negative. The implication of this on national security is rife. It negatively affects security architecture in the country because the two phenomena are selfishly personalized without proper understanding (Afolabi, 2016). This is

wreaking havoc on individual adherents of these religions and the country.

The politicization of religion breeds insecurity and engenders electoral violence. More often than not, electoral campaigns and voting in Nigeria are based on primordial religious sentiment. Muhammadu Buhari during the 2003 presidential elections, for instance, was widely condemned for his perception of religious matters (Umeanolue, 2020). This also worked against him in the 2011 presidential election as the majority of Nigerians perceived him as an advocate of the Sharia law and Islamic fundamentalism as he was quoted to have advocated that Muslims should not vote for non-Muslim candidates. This, and other religious factors, led to post-electoral violence in 2011 that claimed many Nigerians' lives.

It is becoming a herculean task to achieve national cohesion, due to the politicization of religion in the country. Elements of national disintegration are being reinforced through the politicization of religion because its manifestations have disengaged Nigerians from the state (Egbefo, 2016). The Nigerian state has become so external and oppressive to its citizens that the country rarely exists in their hearts and actions. It is difficult to separate religious issues from national security issues in view of the current development of criminality that goes with names terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, etc. made the country appear anarchical in nature.

Many studies and scholars have classified Nigeria as failed, failed or fragile state. The classification is derivable from the threats posed to Nigeria's national security which is the outcome of the politicization of religion in the country. The fragility or failure of the Nigerian state is consequent upon many religious-political crises. Egwu (2011) once argued that these crises further intensify the crisis of nation-building, democratization process and national security. Unfortunately, this has been the experience of Nigeria, especially since the return to civil rule in 1999. The incessant violence experienced across all the geopolitical zones in the country make Nigeria more fragile and insecure than it has ever been before 1999.

The level of national insecurity has begun to give Nigeria's allies concern. The international community believes that there is nowhere in the globe that religion and national security overlap clearly as in Nigeria (Weber & Turco, 2021). The concern and belief are not only out of the wanton killing of the terrorist groups operating in the country but also because of the many lives bandits, as well as kidnappers, have claimed. The nefarious activities of Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), bandits and kidnappers have made the United States (US) Government label Nigeria as a "Country of Particular Concern" (Weber & Turco, 2021:4). These groups are deemed not as a security issue for Nigeria alone but also for the US, the Lake Chad Basin region, West Africa, Africa as a whole and the whole world.

This has a boomerang effect on another form of national security. Due to the impact of instability caused by terrorism, banditry and kidnapping, food security in Nigeria is negatively impacted. The level of food insecurity in the country is alarming. The data provided by Ayinde, Otekunrin, Akinbode & Otekunrin (2020) indicates that the global ranking of the country is negatively increasing as terrorist activities are increasing. The data indicates that the country's ranking on Global Food Security Index (GFSI) was 86 (33/100 score) among 107 countries, in 2013. This went up in 2019 when Nigeria was ranked 94 (48.4/100 score) among 113 countries. Countries like Cameroon, Niger, and even Ethiopia, performed better than Nigeria. Despite the fact that Nigeria was rated the highest global producer of cassava, yam and cowpea in 2012, and is currently the global highest producer of cassava and yam (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2012; Ayinde, Otekunrin, Akinbode & Otekunrin, 2020), the country is still food insecure and depends majorly on food importation.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The politicization and securitization of religion have effects on state-ethnic relations from this study. This is because it tends to deepen the crisis of disintegration or dismemberment of the union. Even though Nigeria's Constitution did not recognize a particular religion, it has remained a central issue of disagreement that has been threatening the

unity of the country; political actors have a penchant to use it for electioneering purposes, that is, for winning votes from their supporters.

The Constitution allows every citizen freedom of worship in affirmation of the secularity principle. Unfortunately, the interference of religion in political affairs has continued to raise concerns. The argument is that the politicization of religion has contributed to the increasing nature of radicalization and extremism thereby posing an existential threat to the Nigerian State.

The implications of this to national security remain incontrovertible. It has affected national unity, cohesion, and peaceful co-existence. Thus, the politicization of religion negatively affects governance. More often, critical public policy decision making is subjected to parochial religious sentiments. The elites have found religion a veritable instrument to ascend to political power.

At the centre of the various religious disturbances is the government those facilities them either deliberately or otherwise. This is because no conscious attempt has been made to address or separate the government from interfering in religious affairs. This has far reached implications for the democratic rights of members of religious institutions to choose freely competent leaders.

It is therefore recommended that first, every religion should try as much as possible to inculcate in their members the tenets of their religion. There are basic principles of every religion which must be known to the adherents. One cannot claim to be practising a particular faith without knowing the principles guiding it. Second, religious leaders have a fundamental duty to ensure that their followers know what they preach in the public. More often they preach what other religions may consider to be infuriating or insulting to the human person and the faith they propagate. Christians and Muslims must be mindful of their utterances while preaching to avoid anything that would be misconstrued by others as heresy. Third, political leaders who are a member of any of these religion sect should not use the institution as a means of acquiring power but see it as a channel to ensure that their members teach according to the tenets of the faith. The issue of religion

must be isolated from politics or political partnerships. Fourth, there is the need for a well-coordinated and pragmatic strategy to limit the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that are in the hands of politicians and their supporters who use them to intimidate and harass opponents of other religions. Fifth, inter-religious dialogue must be encouraged and institutionalized to help to nip in the bud any religious crisis that will further engender national security. Sixth, political parties and politicians should dissociate themselves from preaching and playing identity politics for the purpose of resource control and political power at the centre instead of encouraging nation-building and integration for stability and peaceful co-existence.

References

Afolabi, O. O. (2016). Religious violence and national security in Nigeria, 1999-2011. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 42, 23-31.

Animoshe, D (*New Nigeria,* Monday, 2006, September, 9th) Introduction to Security and Insecurity Threats in Nigeria.

Appiagyei-Atua, K, Muhindo, T .M, Oyakhirome, I, Kabachwezi, E.K, & Buabeng-Baidoo, S.(2017).State Security, Securitization and Human Security in Africa: The Tension contradictions and hopes for reconciliation, 1 *Global Campus Human Rights Journal*, 326.

Ayinde I.A, Otekunrin O.A, Akinbode S.O, Otekunrin O.A (2020). Food security in Nigeria: impetus for growth and development. *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development*, 6(2), 808-820.

Baumann, G. (1999).*The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities.* New York: Routledge

Beyers, J. (2010). What is religion? An African understanding. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies,* 66(1), 1-8

Bhargava, R. (2004) Inclusion and Exclusion in South Asia: The Role of Religion, Human Development Report, Occasional Paper, United Nation Development Programme.

Bilgrami, A (2014) *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment.* London: Harvard University Press

Buzan, B, Waever, O and De Wilde, J (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.*

Dawes, G & Maclaurin, J. (2012). What is religion?: Identifying the explanandum. In Maclaurin, J. & Dawes, G. (eds); *A new science of Religion (first edition)*, New York: Routledge. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261216359_What_is_Religion_Identifying_the Explanandum; accessed 5th May, 2019.

Egbefo, D. O. (2016). Religion: an instrument for enhancing national security and harmonious existence in Nigeria. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion,* 20. 14-23.

Ellis,S and ter Haar, G (2013) Religion and Politics. In Cheeseman, N, Anderson, D.M and Scheibler, A (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of African Politics*, New York: Routledge Francis and Taylor Group.

Emmers, R (2007). Securitization. In A. Collins (ed.) Contemporary Security Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press .pp.109-125.

Enemuo, F. C. (1999). Approaches and methods to the study of politics. In Anifowose R and Enemuo, F. C. (Eds); *Element of politics,* Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution (as amended), Lagos: Federal Government Printer.

Gboyega, A (1997). Nigeria: Conflict Unresolved. In Zartman. I. W et.al (eds.) *Conflict Management: Politicising Violence in West Africa*. Washington. D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

Haacke, J and Williams, P.D. (2008) .Regional arrangements, securitization, and transnational security challenges: The African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations compared, *Security Studies,* Issue 17(4).pp.775-809

Hutchful, E and Aning, E (2004).The Political Economy of Conflict. In Adebayo, A. and Rashid, I (eds.).*West Africa's Security Challenges: Peacebuilding in a Troubled Region.* London: Boulder.pp.195-222.

IFAD (2012). *Annual report*. International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Ikelegbe, A. (2005). The Construction of a Leviathan; State-building, Identity-formation and Political Stability in Nigeria. In Fawole, W.A and Ukeje, C.(eds.) *Crisis of State and Regionalism in West Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA, PP.71-92

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) 2000

Ngwoke, E. (2001) *Politics and Religion: A Christian Perspective.* Enugu: Snaap press Ltd.

Okolie, A and Ikechukwu, U. M (2015) Securitization of Politics and Insecurity in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Experience, *International Affairs and Global Strategy.* Vol.36.

Onuoha, F and Ogbonanya, M (2020) Review and Analysis of Nigeria's National Security Strategy 2019. *Technical Report*, May. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.26902.57924.

Oluwaseun, A. O (2016). Regional Violence and National Security in Nigeria. *International Affairs and Global Strategy.* Vol. 42. Pp.23-31.

Soriano, J. D. Q, Adorable, G. D., Llenares, I. I. and Bernarte, R. (2018). Religious commitment and political participation among Filipino students in university-based religious organizations. *Prism*, 23(1), 1-12.

Tolstoy, L. (n.d).What is religion, of what does its essence consist? Retrieved from http://www.angelfire.com/planet/abejundio/What_Is_Religion.pdf; accessed 5th May, 2019.

Ukiwo, U (2003). Politics, Ethnic-Religious Conflicts and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 41 (1) p.124.

Umeanolue, I. L. (2020). Religious influences on politics in Nigeria: implications for national development. *Ogirisi: a new journal*

of African studies, 15, 39-157. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/og.v15i1.9s

Waever, O (2004). Aberystwgth, Paris, Copenhagen: New Schools in Security Theory and the Origins between Core and Periphery, Montreal: ISA Conference, March

Weber, T. & Turco, A. D. (2021). Why religious freedom is a national security issue. *Issue Analysis,* August Edition, No. IS18D01.

Woodhead, L (2011). Five Concepts of religion. *International Review of Sociology*. 21(1) 121-143.

Yesufu, M.L. (2016).The Impact of Religion on Secular State: The Nigerian Experience. *Studia Historae Eccesiasticae.* Vol. 42 (1) .http://dx:doi.otg/10.17159/2412-42651.20161255.

Yusau, S (2009).Can Muslims and Christians Live together Peacefully in Nigeria? The Muslim World, Hartford Seminary. Vol. 99, October.

Zaben, A (2012).The role of Religion in Politics. Retrieved from **http://www.digitaljournal.com/blog/17186 :** Accessed: 26th November, 2018.