

# RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON POLITICS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

The phenomenon of religious politics in Nigerian is an obvious one. In political aspects such as style of governance, policy formulations and the electoral process in Nigeria, religion has been a strong determining factor. However, the influence of religion on politics in Nigeria could be both positive and negative. In other words, as religion enhances national development, so also it could be counterproductive. This paper critically discusses the influence of religion on Nigerian politics especially in the post-independence Nigeria, with emphasis on the implications for national development. This study recommends ways of ensuring the sustenance of the positive influence, as well as tackling the challenges of the negative influences. In practising politics in Nigeria, adherence to religious moral values and observance of Nigerian constitution which makes provision for freedom of religion are necessary for achieving national development. The paper concludes that if the recommendations are practically observed, religion will cease to be an agent of disunity and backwardness in Nigerian nation.

## **Introduction**

Religion has been a dominant factor in Nigerian politics especially in this post-independence era. In whichever way one sees religion, the fact cannot be denied of its interaction with politics in Nigeria. The obvious interplay between religion and politics has attracted the reactions of scholars and what seems the consensus of such reactions is the ambivalent role of religion in the growth, development, and survival of the Nigerian nation (Kukah, 1993, 1995; Kasfelt, 1994; Enwerem, 1995; Kukah & Falola, 1996; Falola, 1998; Loimeier, 2007; Nmah, 2007; Imo, 2008; Marshall, 2009; Adebani, 2010; Sodiq, 2009; Onapajo, 2012; Obiefuna, 2018). Accordingly, it is not a small question to ask in which way religion involves itself in

political realm for on this depends to some measure how much value Nigerians attach to their faith. This is to say that the impacts of religion on Nigerian politics could be both positive and negative.

This paper therefore aims at showing the influence of religion on post-independence Nigerian politics and the implications for national development. In this attempt, religion is presented as two sides of a coin, with positive and negative implications for national development. The paper also made recommendations on how religion can be used to improve the political life of Nigerian nation.

To have a better grasp of the topic of this paper, some key words need to be clarified through their definitions. Hence, terms worthy of clarification are religion, politics and development. Religion has been defined by many scholars from different purviews. Ugwu (2002) defines religion as “faith and practices involving the relationship between mankind and what is regarded as sacred” (p. 2). In a more comprehensive manner, Merriam (1980) sees religion as:

The outward existence of God... to whom obedience, service and honour are due, the feeling or expression of human love, fear or awe of some superhuman and overruling power, whether by profession of belief, by observance of rites and ceremonies or by the conduct of life. (p. 250).

According to Iwe in Nmah (2007), religion may be defined from four basic points of views namely: subjectively, objectively, morally and institutionally. Subjectively defined, religion is man’s natural and innate consciousness of his dependence on a transcendent supra-human Being and the consequent natural and spontaneous propensity to render homage and worship to him. Objectively, religion may be defined as a complex or configuration of doctrines, laws and rituals by which man expresses his loyalty to a transcendental Being, God. On the other hand, it is defined morally as a virtue in a person, an enduring quality, a habit, which disposes him who has it to pay, steadfastly and well, the depth of honour and worship that he owes to God. Subsequently, religion may be also defined institutionally as possessing its own definite system of beliefs, system of activities and system of values, like any other social institution. For the

present study, the definition of religion given by Obiefuna (2018) will be adhered here. Obiefuna sees religion as, “a phenomenon in human society. It is part of life [but] which shapes the traditions of society - marriage, politics, education (formal and informal), economy, law and health as social institutions” (p. 10).

According to Hornby (2000), politics has to do with “the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society” (p. 899). Etymologically, politics refers to the art of governing a city. Iwe in Nmah (2007) defines politics as the process of adjustment and inter-play of power and interest within the public life and affairs of a society on national and multi-national levels. According to Dahl in Okafor (2007), politics has to do with who gets what, when and how. The very decision to support a particular religion or set of principles in a society as opposed to an individual is a political decision. Politics is essentially about good governance and primarily involves the structuring of power for achieving some articulated goals.

Development has been defined variously by scholars. Rodney (1981) sees development as many-sided process in human history, which at the level of the individual implies increased skill, discipline, responsibility and material well-being. In common parlance, development describes a process through which the potentials of a nation are enhanced until it reaches its stable position. It is a process of allowing people to meet their own aspirations. Hence, the sharpening of human abilities and the productive organization of nation’s mentality are of utmost importance for development because the agents and beneficiaries of development are the humans of a given nation. Nwana in Obi (2009) says that “development is the harnessing of available resources by a people for the realization of their major objectives, solving their major articulated problem without deliberately creating new problem situations” (p. 63). Alao (1991) also defines development as:

A multi-objective process designed to achieve among others, the eradication of poverty and disease, the liberation of the individual, increased productivity within a balanced

ecosystem, justice and equity, individual freedom and social security, cultural buoyancy, and the stable society. (p. 3)

National development is a vital issue hence it has always engaged the attention of every citizen and government of Nigeria. Development, therefore, is a multiple process through which a nation may attain growth, change and stability in all facets of existence.

### **The Place of Religion in Nigerian Nation**

Nigeria as a nation is religiously pluralistic. Apart from the three major religions, Christianity, Islam and Traditional Religion, there are several others competing for relevance and recognition. In spite of this reality, in theory, Nigeria is a secular state. This has been indicated in the constitution since independence. For the purpose of emphasis, the word, secular, is derived from the Latin word '*Secularis*', which means temporal. It is taken to mean 'of or relating to worldly, as opposed to sacred things or having no particular religious affinities'. Secularism, as a doctrine, rejects religion. It maintains that religion should have no place in civil affairs and civil rules should have no interest in religion. Thus, a secular state is a state where religious communities have no recognized role in politics and no formal relation to the state. This is different from a theocratic or a religious state where religion determines what happen in the state.

As stated in section 10 of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, "the government of the federation shall not adopt any religion as State Religion". Therefore, in policy formulation, governance, and other governmental activities, religion should not be an issue. By implication, every citizen has a right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Section 38 is categorical, that:

1. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom (either alone or in community with others and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

2. No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony, or observance relates to a religion, other than his own or a religion not approved by his parents or guardian, and
3. No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination.

The constitution further emphasizes that national integration shall actively be encouraged. Accordingly, discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic, or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited, while national ethics shall be Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, Social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-reliance, and Patriotism. Also, membership of political parties is opened to every citizen irrespective of his place of origin, circumstances of birth, sex, religion, or ethnic group.

From the foregoing, the religious policy in Nigerian constitution can be understood, theoretically. The legal provisions are made in order to ensure that citizens enjoy religious freedom and that the state or government does not affiliate itself or show preference for one religion. The principle 'live and let live' is held and the contribution that religion can make to the life of citizens are recognized, hence the belief in religious tolerance. However, it is a fact that religions are potent brotherhoods; displaying rather efficacious acquired family relationships on earth. Little wonder Takaya (1992) says:

Like exclusivist clubs, cliques, or cults, members offer each other unmerited help, favours and considerations. This is what makes the politicization of religion most objectionable in a multi-faith society like Nigeria because the objectivity of "brothers" in public offices are likely to be blurred by religious considerations in serving a heterogenous community. (pp. 111-112).

Politicization of religion is a natural outcome of a multi-religious society like Nigeria. This can only be avoided by preventing the conditions that gave rise to it.

### **Manifestations of Religion in Nigerian Politics**

Religion has been a potent factor in Nigerian politics, thereby threatening her secularity. Religion manifests in various aspects of life in Nigeria, however, what is interesting is that caution has always been taken not to use religion to cause problem. This is done by making sure that no religion is overly preferred or neglected. For example, at public gatherings such as political rallies and national gatherings, it is either prayers are not offered at all or they are offered by leaders or functionaries of the recognized religious. In this case, if the opening prayer was said by a Muslim, a Christian will say the closing prayer, and vice versa. This is a way of preventing conflict, which may snowball into violence. On the issue of public holidays, Christianity and Islam are adequately taken care of as work free days are observed during their festivals. But, in the history of Nigeria, no public holiday has been declared for traditional festivals by the Federal Government. Though no official reason has been given, one is noticeable. The traditional religion is segmented and invariably, there is no common interest. Festivals are celebrated locally and many of them could last for a week or more and the times they are observed vary from one community to another. For this reason, there are no specific days or times as obtained in Christianity and Islam. More importantly, it has never been seriously impressed on the government, especially at the federal level, to declare public holidays for the celebration of these festivals. It follows that not so many people could proudly associate themselves with African Traditional Religion. The religion is highly segmented, localized and not universal. Also, as said by Mbiti (1976), zeal for evangelism manifesting in membership drive is not its attribute. Prior to the arrival of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, traditional religion was firmly rooted. It is, therefore, ironical that Christianity and Islam are now more recognized than the traditional religion.

Religious organizations have never pretended not to be interested in the affairs of the country as they are, for prayers are

offered for leaders and the country as an entity. These prayers are both solicited and unsolicited. Sometime ago, the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, enjoined all Nigerians to be praying for the nation (Asemota, 2019). While we are not condemning this, one is concerned about its constitutionality. This request did not appeal to the sensibility of those who believe that most of the problems confronting Nigeria are man-made. The states of health of the former president, Yar'dua, and the current president, Buhari, engaged the services of many religious personnel, who consistently prayed for their quick recovery. It was reported in the news media, shortly before the death of President Yar'dua, that some renowned clergy men visited him even when the then acting President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, did not have free access to him.

Another way of understanding the erosion of secularity in Nigeria is the establishment of the Pilgrim Welfare Boards by Nigerian governments. The implication of this is that government now has serious influence on pilgrimage and a great deal of public fund is expended yearly to run the Board. Moreover, the government, at different levels, has sponsored pilgrims to Jerusalem and Mecca, which has made the exercise to be an appendage political activity. According to Onwubiko (2010):

The two dominant religious organizations viz: Christian religion and Moslem religion have held both the federal and state governments on the jugular veins to be committing unimaginable amount of scarce public funds to sponsoring their adherents to the yearly pilgrimages abroad. Since the blackmail to sabourtage government if it fails to sponsor pilgrimages gained ascendancy, federal and state governments have been contending with the needs of these religious organizations and their leaders. (p. 137-138).

This development questions the spiritual relevance of pilgrimage. Concerned Nigerians will be gaping in wonder if the amount of public funds committed to the yearly religious pilgrimages of the two religious organizations is made public.

Also, the building of the central Mosque and Christian Center in Abuja was supported by the government, while in various

Government Houses, there are either a Chapel or a Mosque or both, depending on the prevailing religious situations in the states concerned. These structures are maintained by public funds. This shows that there is indeed a budding politico-religious culture in Nigerian politics. The country, though officially and problematically secular, now features religious rituals in public offices, institutions and functionaries. Churches, mosques, Chapels, priests, Emirs, prayers, etc compete with one another in government houses, institutions and functions.

One religious issue that has, for a long time, been a subject of debate and discord in Nigeria is the question of Sharia, the Islamic legal system. Ngwa (2002) explains that the issue of Sharia took a political dimension with the setting up of the Constitution Drafting Committee (C.D.C) in 1976 as part of the efforts to return the country to civil rule. In the draft constitution, the Moslem members of the committee wanted to make the Sharia law as part and parcel of the Nigerian constitution. When the Constituent Assembly began to deliberate on the proposed constitution, Sharia was prominent, as there were divergent views in respect of its adoption, or non-adoption. Expectedly, many Muslims were in support while Christians were antagonistic. Some were indifferent, but the debate continued and a walk out was staged by many Muslim members of the Assembly, but this did not halt it. On the recommendation of a sub-committee, the controversial provision was deleted. This was not the end of Sharia in the politics of Nigeria, as it was featured during subsequent constitutional conferences. Nwolize (1989) reports that there was a move by the Buhari government to forcefully and secretly amend section 10 of the 1979 constitution to insert Sharia law as Federal law in 1984. The Buhari government with the support of some Northern governors got some government officials to draft an amendment to the section of the constitution. The draft was awaiting its recommendation to the Supreme Military Council when the Buhari government was overthrown on Aug. 27, 1985.

Furthermore, there are some fundamental principles underlying religious factors in the electoral process in Nigeria. One of such is how religion often determines the choice of flag

bearer/running mate for the posts of the president and governor in some states. This is done to ensure that the interests of adherents are protected. Where this principle is adopted, there is usually a Muslim/Christian or Christian/Muslim ticket. Thus in 1979, the National Party of Nigeria (N.P.N) adopted a Muslim/Christian ticket while the Unity Party of Nigeria (U.P.N) did not take religion into consideration, hence its adoption of a Christian/Christian ticket (Ayantayo, 2009). Perhaps, Chief Awolowo saw this as one of the reasons why he lost, he chose a Muslim from the North as his running mate in 1983. Even some military regimes recognized religion as a factor in governance. For instance, the Murtala/Obasanjo era was a Muslim/Christian ticket and Obasanjo, upon becoming the Head of State, chose a Muslim as his deputy. Both Abacha and Abubakar maintained the status quo as they picked Diya and Akhigbe (Christians) as their second in command, respectively. During civilian regime, the Obasanjo/Atiku regime was Christian/Muslim. Yar'dua/Jonathan was Muslim/Christian, Jonathan/Sambo was Christian/Muslim. and the current regime of Buhari/Osibanjo is Muslim/Christian. In subsequent political dispensations, religion has been a sensitive factor in choosing principal officers at the two levels of National Assemble. These instances show that political parties and administrations recognized religion as a factor in governance.

It is also an issue that voting and campaign, in some cases, are based on religious sentiment. In this case, religion could be used to either canvass support for a candidate or dissuade the electorate from voting for him or her. This is why some Christians will not support Muslim candidates and vice-versa. In 2003, Major General Buhari, of the All Nigerian Peoples Party, was criticized for his stand on religious matters and this, no doubt, worked against his political fortune. As a perceived advocate of the Sharia law and fundamentalist, he was quoted to have said that Muslims should not vote for Christian candidates. This could contribute to the reasons why he lost the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that religion could be a dangerous factor in an electoral process.

After conducting elections in Nigeria, during swearing in ceremonies, the oath of office is administered on whoever is elected or declared as such. The main thrust of the oath is the promise to act faithfully and in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In doing this, the help of God is solicited. Though religious leaders are not given specific roles to play when the oath is being administered, the mention of God's name, coupled with the holding of scripture or any religious object, is enough to establish the invocation of the divine.

It must be understood as a chance of occurrence that states like Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi and Kano, among others, have never produced Christian governors. In 2010, the issue of swearing in the then Deputy governor of Kaduna State, who is a Christian, as the governor of the state generated crisis in the state when the then governor of the state Namadi Sambo was adopted by president Goodluck Jonathan as the vice President of Nigeria. The questions that come to mind at this juncture are; of what relevance is religion in the choice of candidates? Does religion determine the level of competence and performance of a leader? Unarguably, Nigerians do manipulate religion for their selfish ends in ensuring electoral victory. Ironically, this does not guarantee good governance. The recent happenings in the country, especially the Boko Haram attack, herdsman crisis and recurring ethno-religious violence in Northern Nigeria, among others, suggest the strong influence of religion in Nigeria.

### **Implications of Religious Influences on Nigerian Politics for National Development**

The influence of religion on Nigerian politics has both positive and negative implications. The implications can be considered as follows.

#### **Positive Implications**

The positive influence of religion on politics enhances national development. In this sense one expects religious ethical values to manifest at every point of influence. This means that religious people have a duty to abide by the ethical teachings, inherent in their religions and such, will provide good leadership and

obedient followership. Religion provides mankind with moral values by which to live. According to Nnadi (2004), "... religion is often used to subvert political needs and aspirations of the ruling class.... Religion if positively used promote the political life of any society" (p. 113). Every religion, whether Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion, etc, has moral values which regulate and harmonize human life. In Exodus 20 of the Christian Bible, there is an outline of the Ten Commandments which guide the behaviours of Christians in the society. In the same way, Islam and African Traditional Religion (A.T.R.) have rules, which their adherents must obey.

No religion condones immorality. Highlighting the function of religion as a provider of moral values, Mbiti in Nmah (2004) says, "It is religion which tells what is right, and what is wrong... religion enriches people's morale for the welfare of the individual and society at large" (p. 177). Adherence to religious ethical values is imperative for all religious practitioners. Interestingly, Nigerians are one of the most religious people in the world. Therefore, as posted by Omoregbe (1998) there is a need to live a moral life because it is commanded by God. Failure to do this will be counterproductive in the matter of national development.

One expects a credible electoral process in a religious community, like Nigeria, if the rules are obeyed. Religion, being an agent of social control, helps to keep with the norm, of the society, which is the real basis of politics. As affirmed by Adeye (1988):

Religion breeds an ideal heart in man to be conscious of the need to have a clean heart. By this, he will grow to have a philanthropic or patriotic thought before venturing to lead or represent his people in government of the state. In another words, religion will prepare the mind of man to be a good politician who will constantly fall back upon his religion to guide him. The teaching or threats of religion are expected to guide him to be able to lead his people aright as a politician with fear of God in him. He will never consider himself first, rather he knows that he is the servant of the electorates. (p. 165)

Without mincing words, a hitch free election will produce legitimate leaders who will govern with the fear of God; and obedient followers. Achieving this will solve problems, such as political instability, violence and insecurity, maladministration, retardedness of growth and development, and international stigmatization and apathy politics, which apparently are by products of electoral malpractices. Johnstone (2001) corroborates this view that:

What one believes, with respect to that which is good, true, and desirable as well as what God intends for people and society, could be expected to influence the choice one makes in the political arena. That is, religion should affect people's voting pattern. (p. 103)

Another expected, positive input of religion in politics is adherence to the oath of office. In this case, political leaders, having invoked God when the oath is being administered, will rule with the fear of God. We must be cognizant of the fact that every content of the oath is a guarantee for good governance, if imbibed. In practice, the positive implication is hypothetical as religious moral values have not impacted governance in Nigeria since independence. Whereas, none of the rulers, past or present, has claimed or claim not to be religious. What has been experienced is the manipulation of religion, the effects of which, on national development, are discussed as follows.

### **Negative Implications**

The influence of religion on politics has, at various times, threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria. For example, the issue of the Sharia Court of Appeal almost brought the Constituent Assembly to an abrupt end in 1978, given the walk out that was staged by some Muslim members and the antagonism of non-Muslims. This wouldn't have arisen if the secular/pluralistic nature of the country had been respected. Religious crises have further worsened inter-ethnic animosity. The Kaduna and Jos ethno-religious crises displaced many people who had settled in the northern part of the country for many years as it became necessary for them to relocate. That some parts of Nigeria are not safe for all citizens is divisive

and this cannot guarantee sustainable development. Also, the adoption of Sharia law by some state governors almost terminated the National Youths Service Corps scheme, which, for many years, has been a major intergrading and unifying factor. The reason was that many southerners did not want their children or relations to be posted where they would be forced to obey Islamic law. The tension was doused when the general public was assured of their safety. The killing of some Corp members serving in the North is another way of understanding this issue.

No society can grow in the atmosphere of religious violence which, more often than not, has political undertone. It should be mentioned that the 2008 and 2010 Jos crises started as a political war and it later took ethno-religious dimension in which several lives were lost. The cancellation of the Miss World Pageant, that was to be hosted by Nigeria, could have been averted in a country where the constitution is adhered to in a religious matter. All these have economic implications on individuals, states, and the country, as a whole. Many people in the south do not see reason why taxes collected on businesses, prohibited by the Sharia law, should be used to develop states that operate it.

Still, on the economy, one may not be wrong to conclude that public money expended on religious matters, such as pilgrimage activities, places of worship in government houses, and other public places, could have helped the ailing economy. What about several public holidays declared yearly for religious festivals? People are definitely paid for the work that is not done. More often than not, public money is donated by political leaders to religious organizations as a subtle way of silencing those who may be critical of the activities of the government of the day. This is why Familusi (2010) says, "Any government that is more concerned about sponsoring people to Mecca or Jerusalem at the expense of pressing matter that can enhance development, is an insincere government" (p. 166).

The level of commitment of those who use religion for their selfish interest cannot be determined. Sacrificing merit on the altar of religion cannot be beneficial. Both Christian and Moslem politicians have failed in Nigerian politics since they cannot blend politics with religious values. Unfortunately, religion is often used to

cause confusion or woo or pacify the electorate in Nigerian politics. It is funny that these people would likely lose the elections as Chris Okotie had done in the past. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo also played religious politics when he was the civilian President to the detriment of the masses. According to Ugwueye (2009):

During Obasanjo's democratic administration, the link between religion and politics was very glaring from the vast use made of the Christian religion by the ruled and the ruler alike. Unfortunately, it was done, for the most part, for selfish interest, not for real religious reasons. (p. 253).

True democracy is dependent upon free, fair and credible election, a situation whereby the electorates are free to elect their leaders. The elected leaders will in turn sustain the rule of law, which is the benchmark of any true democracy in a civilized society. Many of them are simply after what they stand to gain. Moreover, where people vote on religious sentiment, mediocre leaders are most likely to emerge and, when this happens, growth and development will be retarded.

The negative impact of religion in Nigerian politics is increasingly manifested in the nation. Every political process in Nigeria has religious undertone. The civil service, appointment to important positions in the government, and the entire body politic of the nation are seriously influenced by religious prejudice. Many Nigerians are now refusing posting or transfer to some parts of the country because of the manner religion is being handled in Nigeria. This ugly situation continues hampering national development in the country.

### **Recommendations**

From what has been experienced in Nigeria and as established in this paper, absolute secularity is not achievable because of the unavoidable interplay between religion and society. This is to say that religion in politics has come to stay and religion shall continue to be relevant in the society. What can be done in view of this reality is to utilize the benefits accruing from it so as to enhance

development, which has been elusive in Nigeria since independence. On this note, we recommend adherence to religious moral values by both leaders and the led. This is imperative because they all have responsibilities to discharge in ensuring good governance and these responsibilities are implied in religious ethics.

There is need for religious liberty though this is recognized by the constitution which describes the nation as a secular state. Every religious group should help to encourage religious freedom whereby everybody will be free to seek the truth without any coercion or inhibition. This freedom of religion was realized very early by the United Nations and was consequently enshrined in the fundamental human rights charter. Absolute religious liberty in Nigeria is therefore, a challenge to all the religions being practised in Nigeria. Religious leaders of the three major religions in Nigeria must seek ways and means to forge forums for mutual understanding, collaboration and dialogue independent of government interference and political manipulation.

Government should, as a matter of necessity, handle religious matters with caution in order to prevent the recurrence of violence. Any country or society that is caught in the web of religious violence cannot experience social stability, unity and integration, which are necessary conditions for national development. More importantly, the Constitution should be religiously adhered to, while manipulation of religion should be avoided by all stake holders. Also those who are found guilty of using religion to destabilize the society must be made to face the wrath of the law according to the severity of their offences. A major problem in Nigeria is non application of rules of any kind. This is why many people commit religious crimes with impunity. At this point, it is suggested that the judiciary should be given every necessary incentive to play its role fearlessly. The issue of immunity clause or sacred cow should not arise because the rule of law stipulates equality.

It has been noted that much money is expended on government's interference in religious matters at all levels and this has always affected the ailing economy. The government is advised to stop using religion as a political tool by way of sponsoring people on pilgrimage with public funds. If this trend continues, the

economy will not grow; hence, no meaningful development can be expected. As a matter of fact, money spent by the government to finance religious pilgrimage will be more useful in the area of job creation and sincere poverty alleviation.

### **Conclusion**

This article has established that there are religious influences on politics in post-independence Nigeria. These religious influences have both positive and negative implications for the development of Nigerian nation. Without mincing words, the role religion could play in Nigerian politics is limited by the individual's orientation and the nature of the society. In spite of these limitations, religion continues to influence political decisions of successive governments of this country. This suggests that religion and politics could relate effectively in Nigeria, but the benefits suggest that religion and politics could relate effectively in Nigeria, but the benefits that could be derived from such relationship depend solely on the sincerity of those who are engaged in the practice of these phenomena. However, in Nigeria, this interaction has often generated negative impacts, but politicians and adherents of religious faiths need to recognize the right of individuals to freedom of religion. It is on this ground that the foregoing recommendations were made. If all these are observed, religion will cease to be an agent of disunity and backwardness. Thus national development will no longer be a wishful thinking and Nigeria will have an enduring democracy.

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