



## Democracy and Pluralsim in Nigeria Understanding the Effect of the Muslim/Muslim Tickets in the 2023 Election

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### Abstract

This paper investigated the effect of flagging Muslim/Muslim ticket in the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Religion has emerged as a significant factor shaping political activities since the return of democratic governance in Nigeria. The 2023 presidential election witnessed the utilization of religions affiliation to mobilize voters, notably with the adoption of a Muslim-Muslim ticket by the All Progressive Congress (APC). This strategy aimed to align with religions inclinations, contrasting with other political parties who chose running mates from different religions background to demonstrate inclusivity. Drawing on the elite theory, the research validate the assertion that religion is a tool used by the elite to manipulate the people and dominate the country polity and its political framework. This is not unconnected with the facts that religion affects the choice of candidates and voting pattern. The age long practice and tradition in Nigeria over the years is that where a Muslim candidate is the presidential flag bearer automatically his running mates as the vice president must be a Christian, though not constitutionally written but has become the observable norms in Nigeria so as to ensure the pseudo unity. Data utilized in the study were derived from secondary sources. The study Suggest that for Nigeria to maintain our unity in diversity, the status Quo and the aged long tradition must be maintained for the time been. This is so because religions factor most especially in the contemporary Nigeria is too sensitive to be ignored as that will lead to political instability, anarchy and in extreme case, agitation for secession.

**Keywords:** Pluralism, Election, Muslim/Christian, Religion, All Progressive Congress.

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society with diverse cultures and religious believe cannot rule out religion in its political process this is so because the aforementioned is too sensitive to be jettison. Since independence, Nigeria opted for democracy as a system of governance to allow for mass participation to encompass all and sundry in the decision making process considering the pluralism and the demographic configuration of the country. Dahl (1956), believes that, under a true democracy, there must be government responsiveness to citizens on continuing basis. Nigeria, country sharply divided between Muslim and Christian cannot rule out religion in its decision making process, as this will result to political caters trophy. In order to avoid the already predicted collateral damage, Muslim/Christian's arrangement in almost all leadership strata has since been the tradition in Nigeria.

However, ahead of 2023 general election, the ruling, All Progressive Congress (APC) has deviated from the age long tradition of flagging Muslim/Christian or Christian/Muslim arrangement and rather throw their weight in support for Muslim/Muslim ticket to vieand occupy the highest seat in the country if theyeventually succeeded. Alas, this is considered a political suicide in the polity as it may subject the country into irreparable damage. President of Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN), Samson Ayokunle, advised against" Muslim/Muslim tickets, warning that such action" will lead to chaos" (Business Day, 2022). This development is received with mixed reactions and criticism most especially from Christians fold that already feel relegated to the background.If the ruling party continues in this direction, the possibility of conflict and crisis are inevitable. Estimations shows that, Christian religion make up around 45 percent of the total population with Muslim having slide number



over the former, by implication ruling out or sidelining this significant number will spell doom for the country.

In view of the above, this paper aims at examining the effect that will come with having Muslim President and Vice President as argued by the Ruling Political Party (APC) must especially, the flag bearer Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This work is further divided thus: the general introduction, concept clarification, and method of pairing Candidate for the office of president and Vice president since independence, the assessment of possible problems, suggestion and recommendation.

### **Concepts Clarification**

Democracy is without doubt the most popular form of government in the world today. The term democracy comes from two Greek words *demos*, the people and *Kratia*, rule. Bringing the two words together, they mean rule by the people. Democracy has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Abraham Lincoln of America, defined it to be "government of the people by the people and for the people" (Graham, 1986). Sartori (1965) for example, conceives democracy as "the power of the people and rule of the people". Democracy, as a system of government denotes a set of ideas, institution and processes of governance that allows the people to choose their leaders and also guarantees a broad range of civil rights. Democracy aims at maximizing individual rights by emphasizing popular sovereignty and equality in the society. In this article we adopted Appadorai's definition of democracy. Appadorai (1975) defines democracy "as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves".

Pluralism: is a political philosophy holding that people of different beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyles can coexist in the same society and participate equally in the political process. Pluralism assumes that its practice will lead to decision makers to negotiate solutions that contribute to the "common good" of the entire society.

Election: elections are a means of resolving political conflicts and as a consequence formation of a hierarchy of political priorities in search of the most widely accepted solutions. Elections are fought by parties, groups of like-minded individuals who contest seats on a predetermined policy. According to R.J. Johnston (1979), "The purpose of an election is to produce a parliament or equivalent body of representatives, and the electoral law defines the mechanism whereby votes are translated into seats in the parliament".

**Muslim:** The messenger of Allah said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the Solat (prayers), to pay the zakat, to fasting Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House If you are able to do so." He said: " You have spoken rightly", said Jibreel. (From Number 2 of "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadith).

According to the Quran a Muslim is one who has absolutely surrendered to Allah and his commands and believes in pure Tawhid (the oneness of God) that isn't tainted with any Shirk and this is why the Almighty has introduced Prophet Abraham as a true Muslim in the Quran.

**Christianity:** Christian" is a nickname that was given to the followers of Christ. The word "Christianity", therefore, means the religion of the followers of Christ at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Christianity has its root in the religion of Judaism and Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity. The word "Christian" is initially a nickname given to the followers of Jesus Christ.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There are contending theories in the evaluation of societal puzzles especially in political science but this research was guided by the elite theory. The major theme of elite theory is that a small influential minority holds and exercises power often at the expense of the majority. This minority, the "Elite" makes decisions that affect the entire society, leaving the majority with little to no influence. The theory suggests that power is concentrated in the hands of a few, who may be wealthy, politically connected and influential



(mills, 1956). Initially developed by Italian scholars between the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the elite theory became crucial in political science after World War II, tackling the substantial Question concerning “who governs even beyond formal or constitutional appearance and with a great impact on debate concerning democracy and its concrete functioning (Dahl, 1956). The purpose of elite theories is to find a scientific explanation of the fact that no matter when or where in every society, the majority of the existence resources economical, intellectual and cultural are concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals which use them to exercise power over the rest of the population. For some, elites are decision-makers of the society whose power is not subject to control by any other body in the society. For others, elites are the sole source of values in the society or constitute the integrating force in the community without which it may fall apart. Elites have been regarded as the chief threat to the survival of democracy. 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. Despite this, other writers have seen elite as the bulwarks of democracy, protecting it from the dangers of totalitarianism.

However, in connection to the above, the decision of the ruling party to settle for Muslim/Muslim ticket is purely the work of those who determine “Who get What, When and How” (Elites or the Oligarchies) this theory is relevant to the study because it explains how the elites who are few in the society take decision or formulate policy from the top and impose it on the majority of the masses who are the bottom of the ladder in the society.

Their decision taken by the (APC) to adopt the Muslim/Muslim is believed to be in the interest of the elite in that party probably, to help them win the election not minding the dangers at which the decision will have on the overall polity in the

country. The inability of ruling party to heed to demonstration and protest of the masses against this move demonstrate elite based agenda.

### **Democracy and Pluralsim in Nigeria: Understanding the Effect of the Muslim/Muslim Tickets in the 2023 Election**

Religious connotation has been part and parcel of Nigeria's politics right from inception, even though ethnicity and regional favoritism were more pronounced than religious colorations during the first and second republic in the country's political space. However, the third republic was remarkable and unique in the annals of Nigeria's politics as the outcome and the result of the presidential election conducted was a total shift from ethnicity, regionalism and tribal bigotry, alas, the acclaimed winner was denied his right to lead giving the annulment of the election before official announcement by its initiator. Despite the fact that the process has been with religious undertone, the strategy and method of the ruling ALL PROGRESSIVE CONGRESS is unprecedented devoid of any diplomatic stride in their decision of Muslim/Muslim ticket come 2023 presidential election.

In the second republic, religion also became prominent in party politics and electioneering processes. Kukah (1993) attributes victory of the NPN in 1979 election to what he termed as “high sense of political ecumenism”. This strategy according to him involves fielding candidate for elections from among the dominant religious group in a particular constituencies' prelude to the 1979 elections that the V- for – victory sign for the UPN represent polytheism. Hence the adoption of one raised finger by the NPN to signify monotheism. The above however is not to suggest that the NPN was the only party involved in the use of religious sentiments. Rather, all the five and later six political parties of that republic are culpable in one way or the other. At least, virtually all had their presidential candidates and running mates from different religious groups. This to a large extent is to gain solidarity on religious platform.



Consequently, the initial maneuverings for partisan advantage within and between the NRC and the SDP reflected complex and shifting patterns of alignments that do not directly reinforce or revolve around the Christian/Muslim divide (Suberu 1997). It is therefore not a surprise that in spite of the SDP's nomination of Chief M.K.O Abiola and Babagana Kingibe (both outspoken Muslims) as the presidential flag bearer and running mate respectively, the party still enjoyed an over whelming electoral support across Nigeria. Significantly, it is also observed that the SDP victory was national in scope. It was in two of the then 30 states, Sokoto and Kebbi that the SDP fail to obtain one-third of the total votes required in two thirds of the states in order to be elected. However, while it is difficult to discern religious affiliation of either the NRC or SDP, there were still some insinuations from some quarters. For instance, the role of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the whole electioneering process was unprecedented at various levels. In fact, the association was reported to have organized special prayers for Chief Michael Otedola, NRC governorship aspirant in Lagos state while priests and Christian students' organizations did extensive work for him as volunteer campaigners (Suberu 1997). In addition, CAN was reported to have sent a list comprising ten Christians from the north among whom they expect Chief Abiola to pick his running mate from (Birai 1996) eventually however, Abiola ended up choosing a Muslim running mate. Thus, in spite of the various insinuations, outcome of third republic elections greatly downplayed the relevance of religion in the electoral process. All the same, the republic was made moribund by its own architect, General Babangida who annulled the presidential elections. The inability of the general to chart a direction out of the impasse led to his stepping aside in August 1993 after setting up an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Earnest Shonekan. Resignation of Shonekan saw the assumption of power by General Sani Abacha, who also instituted a transition to civil rule programme that saw the emergence of five political parties. Much of the occurrences of this period have been well documented by Olurode

(2004). What is however significant for our purpose here is that, the various occurrences climaxed by the death of Sani Abacha are what help set the stage for and shaped the trend of the politics in the emergent fourth republic.

In Nigeria the relationship between religion and politics has been given various interpretations. In fact, Asaju suggests a politicization of religion in the body polity of the state. He relied heavily on the opinion of Theophilus Danjuma, which suggests that "religious fanaticism and favoritism have also been politically employed to polarize the people and sustain unhealthy tension of Nigeria" (Asaju 1990). This situation points directly to the fact religion has negatively affected politics. However, it should be noted that politics has equally affected religious thoughts, practices and beliefs in the country. It is not impossible these days to see the clergy and the laity engage in politics even within the church. In some case, politics has been reported to have influenced the appointment of key officers in the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

In spite of these negative trend, religion and politics interact effectively in the country worthy of note, however, is the fact that the state itself is "secularized" and its policies are supposed to be so formulated. This trend could be traced to Nigeria's colonial master's protestant political culture' wherein separation between the church and the state is encouraged. Further, the agitation of Nigerian nationalists for political independence was secularized. This does not suggest the secularization of the whole social institutions and virtues.

It will be self-deceit of the highest order to claim that in political and decision making process of the country absolute secularity is maintained. Given all the fact and data, despite the autocratic nature of elite in their approach to get whatever they want as at when due. Religious tolerance has been a potent factor in their decision making process since independence, one of the major strategies of the cabals in their deceitful means to sale their puppet as candidate to vie and occupy the highest position in the country is religious





propaganda of adopting Muslim/Christian or Christian/Muslim arrangement, this has over the years reduce the claim of (Secularity of Nigeria) to a mere theory that cannot be absolutely observe or practice. Though, with the exception of June 1993 election, the only democratic election ever conducted in Nigeria that relegated and down played religion with Muslim/Muslim ticket and won in a landslide victory. Even though not officially declared by the national electoral commission (NEC), there were speculation indicating a victory for Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), who defeated Bashir Tofa of the National Republican Convention (NRC) despite having a Christian running mate. Alas, the election was annulled by its originator and creator, the then, head of state Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. Successive democratic tenures except the above scenario, that could not survive even official announcement, there have been a balance religious consideration as observed by both Civilian and most Military regimes in the anal of Nigeria political process. Military regimes with the exception of Yakubu Gowon, Buhari and Aguiyi-Ironsi's administration respectively, that pilot the affairs of the country in the posture of Christian/Christian and Muslim/Muslim head of state and Assistant, all other regimes consider religious factor too sensitive to be ignored. For instance, we had Murtala/Obasanjo, Babangida and his two chiefs Ebitu Ukiwe and Augustus Aikhomu all Christians, Abacha/Diya and also the last military head of state that hand over power to Civilian government, Abdulsalam/Akhingbe led administration also portrayed Muslim/Christian arrangement, a strategy that has long been maintained before the unpopular decision by the ruling APC to declare Muslim/Muslim candidacy to vie and occupy the presidency. This decision has been considered as an aberration that will culminate into a collective doom which has since been advise to be withdrawn for our collective good.

This policy shift has been received with stiff condemnation even before formal declaration by some various concern groups and association, commentators, expert and analyst in the field of

politics. Groups such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Forum of Middle Belt Youth (FMBYP), Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN), The National Ethnic Nationalities Youth (NENYLC) to mention but few. For instance, Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Mathew Hassan Kukah on the 11th of July 2022, condemned the APC's Muslim/Muslim ticket describing it as reprehensible and a setback for national integration. Also in their bid to express their dismay, the Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN) on 19th of July 2022, express total rejection of Muslim-Muslim ticket, according to the association "Muslim- Muslim Presidential ticket insults the sensitivity of Nigerians and the Christian youths are saying a big No!" (Vanguard, 2022). Also in the same dimension, the North Central APC stakeholders reject Muslim – Muslim ticket as captured by (vanguard 2022). The association in expressing their grievance storm Abuja on the 9th of August 2022, to protest against the ticket. Likewise, the Nigerian Youths Coalition (NYC) stated that any such plan would amount to the APC "beating the drum of war" (The Guardian, 2022). In addition, the coalition of Arewa Forum for Good Governance (CAFFGG) argued that such arrangement would "increase crisis across the country" and that it should be jettison in the interest of equity, justice and fairness". (The Guardian, 2022). Furthermore, the Southern-Northern Progressives Congress (SNPYC) in a statement jointly signed by its national coordinator and national secretary, Nsebab Brownson and Bashir Aliyu Galadanchi, respectively, argued against the ticket and present the Candidacy of Boss Mustapha, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) for endorsement. (Leadership, 2022). This arrangement also led to resignation of many stakeholders and chieftain of the party including but not limited to the likes of Ishaku Abbo, lawmaker representing Adamawa North Senatorial District, Prince Tonye Princewill, a former governorship candidate of the party, Kenneth Okonkwo, a popular Nollywood actor, Daniel Bwala, a Special Adviser on Legal and Constitutional Matters to the Deputy Senate



President Omo-Agege and so many others. Other stakeholders maintain their membership but reject such arrangement in all ramifications, among which include Mr. Yakubu Dogara, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives. On the 29th July 2022, Dogara during his speech as the guest speaker at the APC Northern Christian Leaders Summit, argued that Muslim/Muslim ticket is a bad decision because it fuels inequality and breeds division which is counter-productive to collective aspirations for a united and prosperous nation. (Premium Times 2022). Babachir Lawal, Former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, also disagrees with APC's Tinubu/Shattima ticket, according to him on the 13th of July 2022, APC's Muslim-Muslim ticket is a disastrous error and satanic. (Vanguard 2022)

Despite total condemnation and outcry by individuals, associations, religious groups and even resignation of some stakeholders and chieftains of the party, a move capable of incapacitating the party, the flag bearer and his inner caucus turn deaf ear and pay no heed to the yearnings and fear of people as regards the potential rift that may come with it. The unwillingness of these cabals to listen to the cry and agitation of the masses is a clear indication that the movement is undemocratic and is meant to certify vested interest at the detriment of national unity. Agitation for secession: relegating and jettisoning religious undertone in occupying the highest seat of the nation is as simple as splitting the country into parts because the gesture has been a compromise right from inception in the sense that our coming together under single governance was not meant to favor us. First and foremost, the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates was designed to certify the interest of our colonial masters, we were forced to come together under single governance for easy exploitation of our resources by the colonialist. Our founding fathers never believed in the unity and togetherness of Nigeria, a scar that has since been inherited and transformed from generation to generation till present, but to God be the glory, despite this stigma, the unity and diversity of the country has been roughly maintained giving understanding and

compromise in policies such as zoning formula, national appointments and portfolios, equitable distribution of resources etc. To drive home a point federal character commission was created in that regard. Over the years, there has been a verbal agreement of zoning the presidential seat of the country even though unconstitutional, the scenarios have been maintained. In all the aforementioned, religion has been a key factor in determining Who Gets What; When and How; all these are done in a bid to maintain and foster our unity in diversity, alas, this compromise keeping the country together is about to be jettisoned by the ruling party's move in flagging Muslim/Muslim ticket to occupy the presidency. Yes, this is not first of its kind in the nation as similar arrangement has happened three (3) times in the military junta and once in civilian rule, the 1993 election that was annulled before official announcement, but was adjudged as the best ever conducted in Nigeria. The fact still remains that Nigeria of today is totally different from Nigeria of yesteryears, in the past ethnicity and regional politics was favored above religion but as it is today, the reverse is the case. As argued by Karl Marx "Religion is the opium of the masses" politicians have discovered that the cheapest way to manipulate people is through religious propaganda and to get it done, they have since employed the service of pastors and Imams as agents and intermediaries who misquote Holy books for their end means and the interest of their employers. Muslim/Muslim ticket may be the only option for Tinubu leading to his victory without any ulterior motive but giving the level of religious brigandage in the country, the tendency of secession and anarchy is certain as evidence from total rejection of the ticket by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other well-meaning Nigerians. The body warned against such move in a statement on the 10th of June by its national Secretary that Christian/Christian or Muslim/Muslim Presidential ticket in 2023 is a threat to the fragile peace and unity of Nigeria. (Punch, 2022). This assertion coming from the apex body of Christians is not unconnected with fear and suspicion they envisage of hiding agenda against the Christian, because the mind of an average believer in both



religion has been shaped in that direction and nothing will be done to erase it. The unfortunate insecurity situation in the country ranging from Boko Haram, banditry and farmer's headers conflict is most times interpreted by Christian as an attempt to get them incapacitated giving the fact that the perpetrators are adjudged to be mostly Muslim under the reign of Muslim as a President. With the above in mind, the Christian apex body, branches and other aggrieved party will do anything humanly possible to make it a tragedy.

**Threat to Political Stability:** The role of religious diplomacy in maintaining pseudo unity and political leadership of the country cannot be overemphasized, overlooking this rule is simply terminating the political stability enjoyed in the country since its return to civilian rule in 1999. While it is true that Islamic religion has the highest number of followers, it is also a recognized fact that Christianity as the second most populous religion in the country cannot be ignored in all ramifications, and it is against this background that the notion of Christian/Muslim or Muslim/Christian arrangement has since been adopted in occupying the presidency for equal representation and balancing in our commitment for united Nigeria till date. But a deviation which will no doubt spell doom for the country is about to be made giving the sensitivity, coloration and connotation of religion in the political space of the country. Without any iota of doubt, this dimension taken by the ruling party is perceived by the Christian as a plan coup against them and will adopt offensive strategy in defending their self and thereby rendering the government incapacitated by adding to the already security challenge bedeviling the country which will in turn affect the primary responsibility of governance that has to do with protection of life and properties of its subject. In the 80s and 90s, religious awareness and its sensitivity was not as visible as it is today, yet the move by Nigeria to join the Organization of Islamic Conference (O.I.C), recommended by both Buhari and Babangida regimes led to religious acrimony and political upheavals. The Federal government was advised against joining because such constituted a threat to the unity of Nigeria (Kukah, 1994). To the both Military head, economic betterment and

development was the major reason, but to the Christian is not without hiding agenda of Islamization of the country and any effort for detail explanation proof abortive, this was despite the fact that the two assistants to IBB were all Christian but the policy was seen by (C.A.N) and other Christian body as evil. In fact, even 1993 election in which religion was downplayed was not without religious coloration as the apex body of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was reported to have sent a list comprising ten Christians faithful from the northern part of the country among whom they expect Chief Abiola to choose his running mate from (Birai 1996).

**Anarchy:** Giving Nigeria's experience over the years, any attempt for religious superiority and manipulation by either Muslim or the Christ-believers will no doubt amount to civil unrest, political disorder and breakdown of law. Religion has become a potent political force that cannot be ignored in any matter of national importance be it foreign or domestic. A clear example is the acrimony, economic damage and number of deaths recorded in October 1990 when the Christian invited a German Christian preacher Reinhard Bonnke to Kano which was totally rejected by Muslim base on the fact that Ahmed Deedat a Muslim preacher was previously denied entry to preach in South Africa, a retaliation that resulted to a crisis that left behind a casualty of over 500 lives and millions-worth property (Adebayo 2010). In addition, is also the Maitatsine crisis of 1981, Kaduna Bulunkutu crisis of 1982, Jos crisis of 1994, Ilorin Muslim/Christian riots of 1987 to mention but few. This cited example is confirmation that religious negligence in the present day Nigeria means a total collapse of the entire system, what is surprising is the fact that both religion is foreign, alas, it is highly regrettable to note that even the Arabs traders and the Colonialist that brought the religion to us do not handle religious matter the way we handle them in Nigeria, as our case is terrible and unimaginable. Indeed, as Birai (1996) notes, ignoring religious undercurrent in Nigeria politics can only be done to the detriment of grasping the substance of some of the issues that have arisen in the history of its political development.





**Secession:** The unpopular decision taken by the ruling (APC) may subject the country to another civil war, a replica of Biafra war of (1966). Feeling of relegation and domination of a particular group over the other was one of the major causes of the war. Biafra war was not unconnected with the counter coup that led to the emergence of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon which was viewed by Lt. Col. Ojukwu and the generality of Igbo's as relegation and domination of Northerners which invariably is a threat to the very existence of the Igbos. The Igbos united under the leadership of Ojukwu and unanimously agreed to break up from the country. No wonder, Ekpou (1990), said that while politics is the beginning of war, war is often the conclusion of politics. With the above submission, if the ruling party succeeded in their plan and eventually the President and Vice President happen to be all Muslim, the followers Christ may agitate for the division of the country into part. In view of the above, couple with other tension that may come with it, the presidential flag bearer of (ALL PROGRESSIVE CONGRESS) and all his allies should jettison this move in the interest of one united Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria as a multi ethnic religious society cannot rule and eliminate religious consideration in its political process. Religion over the years has become a potent factor always taken into cognizance in flagging candidate for elective position most especially, within the realm of presidency. Nigeria as one of the most corrupt country is also regarded as the ninth most religious country in the world. Giving this Irony, relegating religion undercurrent will definitely trigger interfaith acrimony. This study concludes that the inability of the ruling party to let go of their decision of flagging Muslim/Muslim ticket to occupy the presidency, despite several criticism and protest by Nigerians both at home and diaspora expose the oligarchy conspiracy against the masses. Alas, this notion if materialized is but a time bomb that will destroy the nation.

### **Recommendations**

**Status quo Should be Maintained:** it is crystal clear, that even though with pretense, there exists mutual suspicion between the two major religions in the country. Our unity in diversity has not yet matured enough to embrace same faith ticket in the political leadership of the country as that will destroy the fragile unity and translate to civil unrest in the country. Present day Nigeria cannot be equated with the Nigeria of 1993 where such was tolerated without strict resistance and total condemnation. The entity now regarded as Nigeria was hitherto made up of independent nation states that was forcibly brought together by the colonialist to promote their evil agenda, the divide and rule tactics adopted, created mutual suspicion between and among Nigerians coming from different ethnic and religious group, and that was why the likes of Sir Ahmadu Bello, chief Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa balewa, Inamdi Azikwe etc. regarded as our founding fathers could not believe in the unity and togetherness of the country rite from day one. For example, according to Ahmadu Bello, barely two weeks after independence "We must ruthlessly prevent the change of power, we use the minorities in the north as a conquered territory and never allow them to have control over our future" (Pilot Newspaper, 1960).

In the same vein Awolowo once said " If rapid political progress is to be made in Nigeria, it is high time we were realistic in tackling its constitutional problems. Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression" also Tafawa Balewa speaking at the Legislative Council in 1948 said " Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one Country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious belief and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite, Nigerian unity is a British intention for the country". All these coming from our founding fathers indicate a very weak and fragile foundation for our togetherness and since then, not much has been done to strengthen the base of the unity, instead, the fragile unity keeps on deteriorating. With the above submission, for





Nigeria to maintain her pseudo unity, the status quo which involve regional and religious tolerance in leadership position most especially the presidency continues to be observed for the time been.

**The Verbal Agreement Should bBe Incorporated into the Constitution:** 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 the polity. This is to say that religion in politics has come to stay and religion shall continue to be relevant in the society. over the years, there exist verbal arrangement of zoning presidential slot and other key position in the country in a bit to manage the multi-plural, diverse country like Nigeria, with over 350 ethnic groups, this is done to protect our unity in diversity and to prevent overt domination of one religion and group over the other. The fact that this strategy has help in managing our fragile unity cannot be over emphasized. The move by (APC) to change this narration is therefore uncalled for and totally condemnable. To avert future reoccurrence of elite manipulation of the above principle, this paper recommend that the hitherto verbal agreement should be enacted as law

**Religious Leaders Should Refrain from Political Discourse:** In most cases, the utterances of self-acclaim men of God are more dangerous than the activities of Boko Haram itself. Government should, as a matter of necessity, regulates the activities of our clerics and handle religious matters with caution in order to prevent the recurrence of their negative input which serve as a great threat to our collective existence. In view of the above, the paper also recommends that Pastors and Imams who often make disparaging publication and negative utterances should be punish accordingly, exposing and punishing this evil men disguising as messiahs will save the country from a lot of mess. all things been equal, there is nothing wrong with having same faith ticket either from the Muslim or the Christian folk to occupy the presidency, but the polity and its atmospheric condition is not yet ripe for such, giving the fact that most religious

leaders have succeeded in manipulating religion to their advantage couple with the fragile foundation of our unity. In the present day Nigeria, religious leaders serve as the intermediary between politicians and their followers, in making sure their client and choosing candidate gain the favors and support of their congregant, the misquote scriptures which directly or indirectly led to mutual suspicion between the two dominant religion. As a result of the above, average Christian in Nigeria, do not trust Islamic follower and vice versa. To eliminate this mutual suspicion, governments most engage in a realistic awareness, reorientation, and enlightenment and inter faith programs that would foster inter religious understanding. Until then, same faith ticket free from civil unrest will remain an utopian aspiration. The sustainability of Nigeria unity lies in the fact that caution is always taken not to cause religious acrimony.

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