

The Muslim-Muslim Ticket and National Integration in Nigeria

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Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/rjhlsid.v6.i1.22

Abstract

Nigeria is a heterogeneous society with diverse ethnic groups, cultural institutions and religious groups. The country adopted federalism as a system of government not by accident but as a way out to help the state takes care of its complexities and peculiarities. The country for years has been practicing a joint and a balanced representation between the two dominant religion and the geo-political zones in both the military and civilian administrations. Muslim – Muslims ticket is a representation that both the president and the vice president are chosen from the same faith; Islam precisely. It was first tried in 1993 but the election was annulled. It re-appeared in the 2023 election and the political party that ushered the model manipulated religion, applied divide and rule thesis and hide under the cover of capability to justify its action. The study being non-experimental research adopted a survey research design. The data of the study were generated from documentary facts drawn from array of both published and unpublished materials (Text books, Journals, Newspapers, internet materials, etc.). The study found that the Muslim – Muslim ticket will not augur well for the peaceful co-existence of the country; it will deepen mutual distrust. The study found that the practice was a manipulation of religion by the political elites to satisfy their personal aggrandizement. The study also found that a precarious society like Nigeria is not ripe to adopt such a model and the insistence on its practice will be a serious setback to national cohesion. The study recommends that representation should be balanced along ethnic and religious line, the need for a precise and clear definition of secularity in Nigeria constitution, the need for inclusive government, among many others.

Keywords: *Muslim-Muslim Ticket, Balanced representation, National integration, Manipulation, Religion*

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Background to the Study

Nigeria is a plural and heterogeneous society with diverse ethnic and religious groups. The country has over 300 ethnic groups and over 500 spoken languages. The official language in Nigeria is English. The country borders the republic of Benin, Chad Cameroon and Niger Republic (Ali & Tidy, 2004). Nigeria is the populous black nation and the most populated country in Africa. In Nigeria, the most populous and politically influenced ethnic groups are: Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv and Fulani. These major ethnic groups also have diverse minor groups with different languages, cultures and lifestyles (Cinjel, Chujor & Kachi, 2018).

Besides the multi-ethnic nature of ethnic groups in Nigeria, the country is divided along the line of religious practices and the most common ones are Christianity and Islam (Otite & Albert, 2001). Majority of Nigeria Muslims are Sunni and are mostly concentrated in the northern region of the country while Christians are predominant in the southern part and in the Middle Belt Region. Apart from these two-dominant religious, there are followers of diverse traditional and indigenous religions (Muazzami, 2001). In the Islam alone, there are divisions such as Sunni (the predominant group), *Safi*, *Mahdi*, *Shia*, *Quadiriya*, *Tijaniyya*, *Amadiyah*, and the *Mahdiyya*. The Christian faith falls into two, the Protestants and the catholic. The protestant church is enormous in its division unlike the catholic. The Catholic Church for long is monolithic oriented in its practices (Cinjel & Chujor, 2017). The country is located between latitudes 4^o, 20^o and 14^o North and between longitudes 3^o and 20^o and 14^o, 30^o East. Nigeria has a geographical space of 923, 768 square kilometers, with a coastline of over 700 kilometres and a distance of 1, 040 kilometres straight from the coast to the Northern limits, consists of great diversities of vegetation, ecological, economies and occupation. The swampy mangrove on the coastal areas changes to evergreen rain equatorial Forest and thins off into savanna grassland and desert like conditions at the northern limit (Otite & Albert, 2001).

As from 1914, colonial legislative and administrative arrangements were used to bring together the erstwhile independent nations and peoples as one entity; a term being called amalgamation. In 1939, the southern protectorate was split into the west and the East, and in 1947, under the Richard constitution, Nigeria was made a Formal Federation of three regions- North, West and East (Oyedirin, 2007). This remained through the 1960 independence constitution until 1963 when the Mid-west region was created out of the Western Region. As a result of subsequent demands for more political administrative units under the military regime which began in 1966, twelve states were created in 1967, nineteen in 1976, twenty-one in 1987, thirty in 1991 and now as from 1996 to present time, thirty-six states. There are also 774 local government Councils with different jurisdictional areas (Cinjel & Kachi, 2018).

Religious and ethnic group's identity for long has been a serious issue in Nigeria. The country has witnessed 8 coups, 6 successful and 2 abortive coups. The causes of the coups are mostly linked to either sentiment of favouring one identity or the domination of one identity over the others. The country witnessed a civil war that spanned from 1969 to 1974 and besides that there were several religious riots. The notable ones are: Kano riots (in

1982,1991,1995,2003,2007), Kaduna riots (in 1087,1992,2000,2002,2007,2011), Bauchi riots (in 1991, 1994,2000 and 2001), the Jalingo riot of 1991, Pokiskum riot of 1994, Plateau riot (in 1994,1996,2001,2003,2007,2011), Borno-Maiduguri riots (in1995, 1961,2005,2006), the Jigawa riot of 1993 and 2006, the Adamawa riots (in 2004, 2005,2006) and many others (Moses, 2015). More so, there were several conflicts along ethnic identities and the prominent ones are the *Tiv-Jukun*, *Chamber-Kuteb*, *Ife-modakeke*, *Igbo Ora*, *Mwaghavul-Ron* and many others (Oyewole, 2003).

The social structure of the country is inherently prone to generate conflicts from the diverse ethnicity religious and cultural interest and from the political and economic necessities of survival, as individuals and as identifiable autonomous social groups struggle for advantage. It is in an attempt to mitigate the challenges which has made the social structure to be fragile the Federal government had introduced several policies and programme – the NYSC, the unity schools, the schools exchange programme, Zoning and rotation, Federal character principle, Quota system, proportional representation in the house of representative, equal representation in the senate, the National Mosque, the National Ecumenical Centre, the Pilgrim Board, among many others. The essence of these policies and programme were to promote national unity and integration but despite all these, there were several conflicts along ethnic, religious and cultural divide (Cinjel & Chujor, 2017).

The Muslim-Muslim ticket is an arrangement in Nigeria where the presidential and vice president candidate of a major political party are all from the Muslim faith. The ticket for long has never been observed in the country because of the different religious and ethnic identities. The country's constitution defines the country as a secular state but all activities of the state and its institutions are conscious of the varying identities. The idea of picking a ticket from a singular religion in the democratic practices of Nigeria started in 1979 when Obafemi Awolowo (a Christian) aspired along with chief *Umeach Philip* (a Christian) and *Nnamdi Azikiwe* choses professor *Ishaya Audu* as his running mate (Cinjel, Ndan & Chenge, 2015). It was severely criticized and it was one of the factors that gave advantage to Shehu Shagari and Alex Ekweme who later won (Johnson, 2013). The Muslim-Muslim ticket appeared in the 1993 election in which *Moshood Abiola* (a Muslim from the south) and *Babangida Kinkibe* (a Muslim from the north) contested under SDP and won but the result was nullified. Historical records on governance in Nigeria also shows that the country augur well under a balanced ticket than when it is on a singular or unbalanced ticket. Out of the 17 leaders the country had witnessed, only 3 violated the balanced principle (*Ironsi & Babafemi Ogundipe*, *Yakubu Gowon & Joseph Akinwale*, *Muhammadu Buhari & Tunde Idiagbon* and the current administration; *Bola Tinubu & Kashim Shetima*). The remaining 14 observed the joint Christian-Muslim or Muslim-Christian combination. Record on ground also shows that none of the three (3) that neglect the practice ended well (Anderson, 2016).

In 2022, the APC presidential and vice-presidential candidate came from a similar faith. There were lot of outcry and protest to reverse the decision by civil societies, labour organizations and coalition of religious groups but all to the contrary. There were several debates and argument on the *Muslim-Muslim* Ticket and its implication on national

integration but the party stocked to the idea. The party kept hiding under the country's constitution that defines the country as a secular state. The All People Congress (APC) justified their action to credibility, competence and capability. This very statement provoked the Christians' minority in the northern states and the Christian Association of Nigeria. The like of *Dogara, Babachir, Jang, Dariye*, among many others Challenge the decision and sees it as a spit on the Christians in the North. The CAN challenges the party to define the criteria it used to see the credibility, competence and capability from the other divides. The election was conducted and campaigns were done along religious and ethnic identities. The atmosphere during the election campaign was tensed, apprehensive and there was deep division along ethnic and religious identities. It is on this note that this study intents to investigate the Muslim-Muslim Ticket and the challenges it may pose on national integration in Nigeria (Emerson, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

All the constitutions that were used and the present operative one defines Nigeria as a secular state. Despite the definition, Christians and Muslims differ sharply on the practice of secularism in Nigeria. The country is a member of *OIC* and most state in the northern part of the country governs base on Sharia laws. The Christians counterpart on the other hand sees the pronouncement of secularism as something akin to atheism. The state apparatus for years is not sincere in the practice of secularism as it is defined in the constitutions; it mostly seeks legitimacy through the manipulation of religion. For long, it has been spending billions of dollars on pilgrimages and many religious functions. In an ideal secular society, religion does not have any sway on governance; emphasis is built on competence, merit, capability and result. This is only typical of mature democratic societies (England, France, U.S.A., Russia, etc.) where primordial sentiments are not attached to governance and its functionaries.

In a primordial and amature democracy like Nigeria, separating religion, ethnicity and regional division is a herculean task. Sentiment has polarized virtually every sphere of state. This is why there will always be tension whenever there is a detachment away from these factors. The tensions and the fragile nature of the state was what often lead to a balanced ticket along religion, ethnic and regional division (zoning, rotation, Muslim-Christian ticket, Christian-Muslim ticket, etc.). It has been argued for a long time that Nigeria should move away from these accommodative processes. Some said that they divided rather than unite. The challenges are that in the situation of tension and distrust across ethno-religious and regional grouping, national unity is not supposed to be cannot be jettisoned. There is nowhere in the world that there is federalism without consociation; it is practically impossible to have a federalism where component units are equal or homogenous. Every society designs its means of managing its diversity. Most economically and politically advanced federation – Switzerland, India, Belgium, Canada and even the United States have institutional means of responding and managing diversity. Nigeria can therefore not be different. Nigerian situation, from the foregoing is precarious and therefore more has to be done. Trust must be established before those concessional and accommodative mechanisms are dissolved. The risk of deepening division is definitely there but it is better handled through proper management of the diversity in the country. Balancing of power and representation is not about eradicating

centripetal issues that divide, they will always be there, it is about managing them; create a level of understanding, bridging existing gaps and strengthening the centripetal forces for sustainable peace and development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posited to guide the study:

1. In what ways can the Muslim-Muslim ticket jettison Nigerian national integration?
2. To what extent has the issue of credibility attached to the Muslim-Muslim ticket will help to promote national integration in a precarious society like Nigeria?
3. To what degree will the political maturity that is said to be achieved from the adoption of Muslim-Muslim ticket would not deepen division across religious divide in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the Muslim-Muslim ticket and its effect on national integration in Nigeria. The study specifically seeks to:

1. Examine the Muslim-Muslim ticket and its effect on National integration in Nigeria.
2. Assess how the emphasis on credibility attached to the adoption of Muslim-Muslim ticket would help to promote national integration in a precarious society like Nigeria.
3. Ascertain how the political maturity that is said to be achieved from the practice of Muslim-Muslim ticket will not deepen division across religious divide in Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. The Muslim-Muslim ticket will have no significant effect on national integration of Nigeria.
2. The place of credibility linked to the adoption of Muslim-Muslim ticket would not help to promote unity in a precarious society like Nigeria.
3. The political maturity that is said to be achieved as a result of the practice of Muslim-Muslim ticket will not deepen division across religious divide in Nigeria

Conceptual Review

a. Balanced Representation

This is a process in which all interest and identity are accommodated and recognized in decision making of a state. It is a situation in which all identity (ethnic, religious and region) in a plural society is involved in a governance of a state. Its essence is to strengthen unity and national cohesion. It is also a strategy for diversity management in heterogeneous society. It is into three (3) forms and these are:

- i. **Muslim-Christian Joint Ticket:** This is an arrangement where the president is a Muslim and the deputy or the vice president is a Christian. It was practiced in Nigeria during the First Republic, Second Republic, in 1976 to 1979, 1986-1991, 1993-1998, 2007-2010, 1998 to 1999 and from 2015-2023.
- ii. **Christian-Muslim Joint Ticket:** This is an arrangement in which the president is chosen from the Christian faith while the deputy is a Muslim. It was practiced in

Nigeria in 1999-2007 and 2009-2015. The arrangement has been observed right from the independence of Nigeria. It was only during the reign of Yakubu Gowon, Ironsi and the military administration of Muhammadu Buhari that it was ignored.

iii. Zoning/Rotation of Presidency: This is also another arrangement that is employed in Nigeria to enhance the practice of balanced representation. It is a situation in which the presidency is zoned or rotated between the two hemispheres of the country (North and South). It is not defined in the constitution but it categorically stated in the constitutions of political parties in the country. The essence of the arrangement is to promote integration and national unity.

(b) Diversity and Diversity Management

The word diversity has two derivatives – the French and the Latin. In French, it was derived from the word “diversitas” and in Latin, “diversus” and they all denote “diverse”. The word is synonymic to wordings such as variety, assortment, multiplicity, range, mixture and array. It is a quality of being varied. It is a quality of varied things. Diversity within the gamut of the state is a situation in which a certain state has varied ethnic groups, religions, customs, cultures, traditions and many more. It is a situation in which a state is heterogeneous, plural, mixed, and dissimilar and has various groups with different background.

Diversity management is a situation in which the pluralities, the differences and dissimilarities in a group are muddle through, handled and integrated. It is a situation where the interest of diverse groups in a heterogeneous society are integrated, harmonized and fare by the state. Johnson (2013) defines it as a situation or ability to bring about or sustain diverse interests of different groups in a society.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that diversity management is:

- (a) A process of managing various differences and different interests in a society
- (b) The stabilization of the variations- ethnic, religious and resources
- (c) The sustenance of various interest
- (d) Common in plural and heterogeneous society

(c) National Integration

The concept has several definitions by several scholars; the definitions are sumptuous like the several scholars. According Bello (2018), it is the process of promoting a sense of national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people with different socio-economic background. In the same direction, Johnson (2013) sees it as the harmonized co-existence of diverse social groups. According to Onwasoanya (2009), it is the process of creating awareness of a single identity by people from different groups. It is a situation where the entire people, groups and different organization in a country by coming together as one. It is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizen of a country; it means that though the individuals belong to different languages, all of them recognise the fact that they are one. The importance of promoting national integration cannot be overstated. It is the only thing that can ensure peaceful co-existence, cohesion and stability in a heterogeneous society

History of Balanced Representation in Nigeria

1. The history of balanced representation is as old as the history of the country. Right from the independence epoch, the representation in governance was balanced across region, ethnic and religious groups. In 1960, the country started with a parliamentary system of government and the leadership of the country was shared across the diverse ethnic groups, religions and regional divisions. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the Prime Minister (a Muslim and a northerner) and Nnamdi Azikiwe (from the south and a Christian) was the Head of State (Anderson, 2016).
2. The Azikiwe and Tafawa Balewa administration was toppled in 1966. The Ironsi administration came and changed the narrative. Ironsi introduced unitary system and also chose a Christian from the southern part of the country as his deputy, Chief of staff supreme headquarters (Babafemi Ogundipe). The administration was toppled by a bloody coup and Gowon emerged as the next President (Egwu, 2001).
3. The administration of Gowon suspended the unitary system and resorted to a federal system. The administration also deviates a little from the principle of balanced representation. Gowon picked his deputy (Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters – Joseph Akinwale from his faith (Christianity) but from the southern part of the country. Religion was not balanced but regional interest was balanced. The administration was toppled in 1976 and Murtala administration came on board (Egwu, 2001).
4. The Murtala administration respected the balanced representation principle. The Deputy of Murtala was Obasanjo Olusegun, a Christian and also from the southern part of the country. Murtala was killed in a bloody coup and his Deputy in person of Olusegun Obasanjo took over the mantle of leadership. He sustained the balanced representation principle and led with a Deputy that is a Muslim (Shehu Yar'adua) and a northerner. The Obasanjo administration handed over governance to a civilian administration that ushered Shehu Shagari (Cinjel & Chujor, 2017).
5. The administration of Shehu Shagari also sustained the principle of balanced representation. The Deputy of Shehu Shagari was a southerner (Alex Ekwueme) by regional definition. The administration adopted the Muslim-Christian ticket to further sustain the principle of balanced representation in the country. The administration was toppled in a bloodless coup and Muhammadu Buhari emerged as a new Head of State (Cinjel & Chujor, 2017).
6. The military administration of Buhari deviated from the spirit of balanced representation during their reign. The President was a Muslim and a northerner. His Deputy Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters – *Tunde Idiagbon* is a Muslim and also from the north; though some spectators see Kwara as a political north (pseudo) and a south-west by geographical definition. The administration was toppled in 1986 and Babangida took over the mantle of leadership (Hartshorne, 2006).
7. The Ibrahim Babangida administration returned back to the principle of balanced representation. Ibrahim Babangida is a Muslim and also a northerner. The Deputy of Ibrahim Babangida was *Augustine Aikhomu*, a Christian and a southerner by regional definition. Ibrahim Babangida handed over to an interim government after he has annulled the 1993 election. The Interim Government (IG) was led by Ernest

Shonekon. The administration was toppled on 27 November, 1993 and Sani Abacha emerged as the new Head of State (Bello, 2018).

8. The administration of Abacha also adhered to the principle and the spirit of balanced representation. The Deputy (Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters), Donaldson Oladipo Diya was a Christian and also from the south-western part of the country. After the demise of Abacha, Abdulsalami Abubakar emerged as the new Head of State (Bello, 2018).
9. The administration of Abdulsalami also sustained the spirit and principle of balanced representation. The Deputy of *Abdulsalami* was *Okhai Michael Akhigbe*; a Christian by religion and a southerner by regional orientation. The administration handed over to a civilian government and Chief *Olusegun Obasanjo* was elected and his Deputy was *Abubakar Atiku*. He ruled for eight years and handed over to Musa Yar'adua in 2007.
10. Musa Yar'adua led the country from 2007 to 2009. He passed away after an illness. His Deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian and southerner from Bayelsa took over and chose Namadi Sambo as his Deputy. Goodluck ruled the country from 2009-2015. He handed power to Muhammadu Buhari after he was defeated in a keenly contested election in 2015.
11. Buhari emerged and ruled with a Deputy, Yemi Osibanjo; a Christian and southerner by regional grouping. They re-contested in 2019 and won. The Buhari administration handed over power to Bola Tinubu in 2023.
12. Bola Tinubu, a Muslim came on board in 2023 and his Deputy was also a Muslim but from the north. The ticket raised a lot of contention in the country. The All Progressive Congress (APC) that brought *Tinubu-Shettima* kept defending the decision and justified their negation of the adoption of balanced representation to credibility, capability and effectiveness. The party also stated that it is a sign of political maturity and it does not go against the country's constitutional provision.

Table 1: Balance Representation in Nigeria

S/N	System of Government	Leaders	Religious & Balancing	Regional Balancing
1.	Parliamentary	Nnamdi Azikiwe & Tafawa Balewa	Christian-Muslim	South-North
2.	Military	Aguiyi-Ironsi & Babafemi Ogundipe	Christian-Christian	South-South
3.	Military	Yakubu Gowon & Joseph Akinwale	Christian-Christian	North-South
4.	Military	Murtala Mohammed & Olusegun Obasanjo	Muslim-Christian	North-South
5.	Military	Olusegun Obasanjo & Shehu Yar'Adua	Christian-Muslim	South-North
6.	Presidential system	Shehu Shagari & Alex Ekwueme	Muslim-Christian	North-South
7.	Military	Muhammadu Buhari & Tunde Idiagbon	Muslim-Muslim	North-North
8.	Military	Ibrahim Babangida & Augustine Aikhomu	Muslim-Christian	North-South
9.	Interim Government	Ernest Shonekon	Christian	South
10.	Military	Sani Abacha & Donaldson Oladipo Diya	Muslim-Christian	North-South
11.	Military	Abdulsalami Abubakar & Okhai Michael Akhigbe	Muslim-Christian	North-South
12.	Presidential System	Olusegun Obasanjo & Atiku Abubakar	Christian Muslim	South-West
13.	Presidential System	Musa Yar'adua & Goodluck Jonathan	Muslim-Christian	North-South
14.	Presidential System	Goodluck & Namadi Sambo	Christian-Muslim	South-North
15.	Presidential System	Buhari Muhammadu & Yemi Osinbanjo	Muslim-Christian	North-South
16.	Presidential System	Bola Ahmed Tinubu & Kashim Shettima	Muslim-Muslim	South-North

Source: Researchers' Survey, 2023

The table above is the summary of the system of governments that were practiced in the country, the arrangement of leadership, religions and regional balancing. Historical records as it is presented in the table below shows that Nigeria has practiced parliamentary system only once and operated military system 8 times. The country has practiced presidential system 6 times and experiences interim government once. On the issue of balanced representation, out of the 16 different administrations the country has witnessed, only 4 administrations deviated along religious balancing (2 Christian-Christian and 2 Muslim-Muslim arrangements). Along the path of regional balancing, only two of the administration deviated from the balancing pattern.

Historical records also show that all the administration that chooses to ignore the arrangement in the past did not end well; they were toppled by military coups. There was arrangement in 1979 where Nnamdi Azikiwe picked Professor *Ishaya Adu* (Christian-Christian) and Awolowo Obafemi picked *Umeadi Philip* (Christian-Christian arrangement) in their respective party but they all were defeated because of the aforesaid factors. In the 1993 election, Moshood Abiola and *Baba Gana Kinkibe* aspired in SDP under Muslim-Muslim ticket and won but the election was nullified (Otite & Albert, 2004).

Nigeria is a plural society, defined by several cultural – institutional diversities of many ethnic and religious groups. Christianity is predominant in the south and the middle-belt while Islam is predominant in the north and south-west. The country has over 350 ethnic groups and many dialects. The country is complex with behaviour and relationships of individual and groups determined by the imperatives of cultural, ethnic and religious symbols and strategic institutions. The different people are predisposed to conceptualize scarce political and economic resources and the access to them in divergent ways through their own coded lenses (Otite & Albert, 2004).

The differences and division have made the social structure of the country inherently prone to generate conflicts from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural interest; and from the political and economic necessities of survival, as individuals and as identifiable autonomous social groups struggling for advantage. All over the country, ethno-religious conflicts have been prevalent. In fact, since 1980s, ethnic and religious violence have become a recurring decimal. There is virtually no state out of the 36 states that conflicts of this nature have not reared its ugly head (Bello, 2018).

Although power sharing or power rotation has remained a contentious issue in Nigerian politics; it has proven to be a viable way of ensuring inclusiveness and a shield against ethno-religious or sectional imbalances. Some of the principles were clearly defined in the constitution while some were not. The 1999 constitution (operative) creates room for principles of concessions and power-sharing such as Federal Character, appointment of Ministers of the Federation on the indigene identity, proportional representation in House of Representative, equal 3 seats of Senator across all the states. These principles are enshrined in the 1999 Constitution but in practice, some have been distorted, manipulated or partly ignored. The 1999 Constitution is silent about power rotation/zoning and joint ticket among the two dominant religions. The Constitution has not said anything about it; it sticks to the principle that the state is a secular society. The issue of zoning and ticketing were only defined in the Constitution of political parties. Section 20 and Section 33 of the Constitution of PDP and APC aptly provides for zoning and rotation. Issues of balancing along religious lines were not clearly stated (Bello, 2018).

It has been debated for a long time that the country should remove away the accommodative processes and effectiveness. Some scholars were of the view that the power balancing principles divide rather than unite the ethnic and religious groups. Some radical democrats went further to see it as a sign of political immaturity and backwardness (Moses, 2015). The serious questions that we need to ask ourselves is that, is the country ripe for this? The answer is obvious; a state that is divided along ethnic and religious and possess massive distrust across ethno-religious or regional divides must consociated power and resources. This is why the decision to adopt a federal system was not by accident; it was deliberate and designed to respond to the diversity of the country. There has never been federalism where power, resources and representation are not balanced among different identities. The system in Nigeria cannot be different. Nigeria, right from its conception, is precarious and therefore must be observed (Moses, 2015). The situation may look different in mature democracy but it

took them time to reach to that level. It was not done in haste; trust was built and established among the diverse identities before these concessional and accommodative mechanisms were dissolved. In a situation where there are massive distrust, social structures are fragile and tension is high, non-balancing or consociating of power will deepen divisions, unity and disintegration (Elekwe, 1989).

Theoretical Framework

Manipulation theory is adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. It was propounded by Yusufu Bala Usman and was further developed by scholars such as – Egwu (2001), Osaghae (1991), Tyoden (1997), Kukah (2007) and many others. Usman (1989) asserts that in whatever normative context manipulation is placed, it means essentially: Controlling the action of a person or group without that person or group knowing the goals even being aware that the form of the control is being exercised on them at all.

The definition shows that there can be no manipulation without two personalities – those who conduct the manipulation and those that are being manipulated. It is evident that an essential precondition for any manipulation to succeed is the ignorance on the part of those who are being manipulated. Many people in Nigeria find the usage of the ignorance provocative because they see it as being brainwashed and hypnotized. This is why they remain oblivious of the agent, goals, purpose and method of manipulation. The scenario is worsened in Nigeria because anything wrapped in religious garment neutralizes even the hardest skeptics. The manipulators groups have enough of the doers and therefore cloak or in the words of Tyoden (1987):

Cover themselves with religious... distinguishes in order to further entrench divisions among our people, slow their awakening at any cost; even the unity of the country, for which so much has been sacrificed. The manipulators used religion to produce a people with high personal morality; a great sense of duty and obedience in order to render them docile or harmless so that they can get away with their machinations. This has produced a population whose understanding of God's providence leaves much to be desired. As people keep staggering from one crisis to another, they have come to accept that all are predestined and no human being can do anything to avert them. The masses are always quick to dismiss any wrong doing by the elite as an inevitable will of God or Allah. This can only be understood against the background of Nigerian religiosity.

Tenets of the Theory

- a. Two personalities must be involved – manipulator and the victims
- b. The manipulators use strategies on the ignorance of the victim
- c. The strategies work on object which can be religion or ethnicity

Nigerians are very religious people. In Nigeria as in much of Africa, the atmosphere is intensely religious resulting in the religionization of almost everyone; otherwise you look like an outcast. The unfortunate state of things has contributed to making religion the hope of most, if not all people. Bob James (1997) observed that for most Nigerians, their religious

convictions are their most cherished assets. For them, it is a matter of life and death. Kukah (2007) states that Nigerians could be compared to the Biblical Athens. He suspects that St. Paul walks round any part of the Nigeria today, he would most probably say about them what he said of the Athenians, namely “I perceive in every way that you are very religious people”. Oriku (1999) in the same direction observed that:

Nigeria is one of the most suffocating religious countries in Africa – no, not exactly that religion, but a country that indulges in conspicuous piety. Religious craze has become more frenzied and deity matter of course, you must not only be seen as belonging to religious, you must also be overtly, actively, religious, flamboyantly devout, you must be churched, and in a certain areas mosqued.

The notion of secular state is just a mere constitutional pronouncement in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has never remained neutral whenever it comes to religious issues. The Sharia was used in the 2000s for political ends and there is no year that the country would not spend billions of dollars to send its citizens on pilgrimages. The Nigerian politicians who happens to be the elites and the manipulators knew that religious is a very sensitive issue in the country. They know that the country is polarizes along ethnic and religious divide and they are also aware that accommodative mechanism was paramount in the sustenance of unity in the country. There is no way the country can stand without balancing of power and resources. The constitution appeared to be silence on zoning and balancing ticket; politician relied on the gulf to be defending their actions.

In a true sense of the word, the present government that was ushered by the APC knew that the Christians in the north were few and in order not to lose the vote to other parties, they must pick a Muslim candidate; this make the ticket to be Muslim-Muslim in order to secure much vote and be victorious. The party hides on religion and the ignorance of the people to exploit that avenue. Instead of coming out and to tell the society that Muslim were much in the north than the Christian and exploiting the religion will give them victory than the other; they used manipulative statement like credibility, capability, experience and political maturity to be victorious. They care less of the aftermath effect and how it would deepen division among ethnic and religious groups.

Research Methodology

Being as a non-experimental research design, the study employed a survey research design and a cross sectional research design precisely. The choice of this method was predicated by the nature of the data and the fact that the design will enable the study to identify the relationship between the independent variables (demographic) and dependent variables (situational factors). The population size of the study is six (6) states that were chosen from the six (6) geo-political zones i.e. a state is chosen from each of the six geopolitical zones. The states are: Gombe, Kaduna, Plateau, Cross River, Enugu and Oyo. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 2: Population Distribution

Geo-political Zone	State	Population
North East	Gombe	3,623,462
North West	Kaduna	8,324,282
North Central	Plateau	4,400,974
South West	Oyo	7,512,855
South-East	Enugu	4,396,020
South-South	Cross River	4,175,020
Total		32,432,691

We used Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) of sample size determination to determine our sample size which is 420. The samples were distributed using random and stratified techniques. Bourdley proportional formula was used to distribute the sample size to the clustered areas and this can be seen in the table below.

Table 3: Sample Distribution

	States	Scientific Determination	Allocation
a.	Gombe	$\frac{3,623,462}{32,432,691} \times 420$	47
b.	Kaduna	$\frac{8,324,282}{32,432,691} \times 420$	108
c.	Plateau	$\frac{4,400,974}{32,432,691} \times 420$	57
d.	Oyo	$\frac{7,512,855}{32,432,691} \times 420$	97
e.	Enugu	$\frac{4,396,098}{32,432,691} \times 420$	57
f.	Cross River	$\frac{4,175,020}{32,432,691} \times 420$	54
	Total		420

The questionnaire that was used for the study consisted of closed ended items and it was set on the 5-point Likert type scale. Results of reliability test carried out on the said questionnaire was a Cronbach's Alpha Index (CAI) of 0.81, which was considered appropriate for the study. The respondents of the study were selected using simple random sampling technique which used law of chance as the pre-determined set of criteria to select the respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

420 questionnaires were administered and only 400 were retrieved. The Table below shows the questions, responses and presentation.

Sample Questionnaire and Responses

Table 4: Muslim-Muslim Ticket and National Integration in Nigeria

S/No	Questions	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
1.	It deepen division along religion line	800	50	5	35	10	400
2.	It has encouraged ethnic politics	300	50	10	20	20	400
3.	It negate federal character principles	350	20	2	8	20	400
4.	The weak pronouncement of balanced representation in the constitution aids it	300	50	10	20	20	400
5.	It negate principle of inclusivity	350	30	0	10	10	400
6.	Muslim-Muslim ticket is good in a precarious society like Nigeria	350	30	0	10	10	400
7.	It will encourage hegemony (domination of one group over others)	350	30	0	10	10	400
Usage of Credibility as Justification for Muslim-Muslim Ticket and National Integration							
8.	The justification of credibility is politically incorrect (tactless)	360	10	10	10	10	400
9.	It is a subterfuge by political elite	360	10	10	10	10	400
10.	It create fear in the minority in the north	380	5	5	5	5	400
11.	It is a divide and rule play to win election	380	5	5	5	5	400
The Political Maturity in the Muslim-Muslim Ticket and National Integration							
12.	It affects political legitimacy	370	10	10	5	5	400
13.	It affects democratic participation	370	10	10	5	5	400
14.	It affects democratic consolidation	350	30	0	10	10	400
15.	It lay the foundation for religious politics	370	10	10	5	5	400

Table 5: Questionnaire Responses: Presentation Percentage

S/N	SA	A	SA+A(x)	D	SD	D+SD(Y)	U	Total
1	300	50	350(87.5%)	35	10	45(11.3%)	5(1.3%)	400
2.	300	50	350(87.5%)	20	20	90(10%)	10(2.5%)	400
3.	350	20	370(92.5%)	8	20	28(7%)	2(0.3%)	400
4.	300	50	350(87.5%)	20	20	40(10%)	10(2.5%)	400
5.	350	30	380(95%)	10	10	20(5%)	0(0%)	400
6.	350	30	380(95%)	10	10	20(5%)	0(0%)	400
7.	350	30	380(95%)	10	10	20(5%)	0(0%)	400
8.	360	10	370(92.5%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
9.	360	10	370(92.5%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
10.	380	5	385(96.3%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
11.	380	5	385(96.3%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
12.	370	10	380(95%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
13.	370	10	380(95%)	5	5	10(2.5%)	5(1.3%)	400
14.	350	30	380(95%)	10	10	20(5%)	0(0%)	400
15.	350	30	380(95%)	10	10	20(5%)	0(0%)	400

Hypotheses Test

Regression analyses were conducted to determine the effect of Muslim-Muslim Ticket on national integration in Nigeria. We used Boron and Kenny (1986) model. The model has four separate steps; each step was briefly highlighted to give a good picture of how the analysis was

done. On the first step, simple regression analysis was performed to predict effect of Muslim-Muslim Ticket on National Integration. In step two, another simple regression was conducted to ascertain the effect of the usage of credibility as a yardstick for Muslim-Muslim Ticket on national integration. At the third step, the third simple regression was conducted on the ploy on political maturity after Muslim-Muslim ticket and national integration in Nigeria. Finally, multiple regressions were carried with the entire variables. The SPSS results of the four steps have been presented below.

- a. **Step One (1):** Based on the simple regression conducted, the model summary gives us a correlation coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R^2) of $R = .421$ and $R^2 = 1.73$ were found respectively. The R^2 value implies that 17.3% of the variance could be attributed to X. Regarding the coefficient table of the step – 1 regression not provided here to conserve space, the unstandardized and standardized coefficients recorded Beta values of .419 and .331, indicating a shift in Y corresponding with the same value, for every marked shift in X. The T-value of 14.234 is significantly different from zero and well over 1.96, $p < 0.005$. In the same vein, the result reveals a significant relationship between X and Y.
- b. **Step Two (2):** The second simple regression that analyzed x and y, a correlation coefficient of $R = .534$ and a coefficient determination of $R^2 = .285$ was recorded. This suggests a variance of 28.5% explained by x in the regression analysis. Moving to the coefficient table, the unstandardized and standardized betas were 0.322 and R^2 of 304 accordingly. The T-value is less than 0.05. This confirms that x predicts M in this regression.
- c. **Step Three (3):** In line with Boron and Kenny 1986, step 3 of this analysis regressed y against m. The output was $R = .269$ and $R^2 = 0.72$. This suggests a weak correlation and a variance of 26.9% and 7.23% respectively. Furthermore, the analysis recorded an unstandardized beta of .343 and a standardized beta of .248. In addition, the t-value was 7.920 and the p-value was .001. The significant p-value of the result depicts that x predict y in the analysis. The table below presents simple regression values from step 1 to 3.
- d. **Step four (4):** In keeping with rule of this method, step 4 is carried out only after establishing significant relationships in previous steps. Having done that, the research proceeded to the last, which is a multiple regression. The multiple reveals an R-value of .580 and R^2 value 0.335, showing a good correlation among the variables used for the solution. In addition to this, the ANOVA table of the output shows a significant relationship of $f(2, 180) = 7.644$, $p = .001$. All the beta values were found to be significant as shown in the table below.

Table 6: Result of Simple Regression from Step 1-3

Outputs	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Coefficient (R)	-0.421	0.534	0.296
Variance (R ²)	0.173	0.285	0.070
Adjusted variance (R ² adj)	0.201	0.269	0.087
Unstandardized coefficient (Beta)	0.418	0.333	0.344
Standardized coefficient	0.331	0.301	0.249
t-value (f)	14.234	17.110	7.930
Sig-value	0.030	0.022	0.001

Table 7: Result of the Multiple Regression of Step 4

Outputs	X	M
Coefficient R	.582	
Variance R ²	.337	
Adjusted Variance (R ² adj)	.370	
Unstandardized coefficient (Beta)	.443	.429
T-value (t)	8.923	.372
Sig – value (p)	.000	.002
ANOVA f-value	2.289	
ANOVA p-value	.001	
Df	(2.185)	

Findings and Discussions

The weak definition and application of the secularism and the secular status of Nigeria as defined in the 1999 Constitution is one of the holes that created room for unbalanced representation in the country. Secularism means exclusion of religion on public affairs. Secularism is the belief that religion and religious bodies should have no part in political and civil affair or in running public institution. It also provides for the neutrality of government in matters pertaining religion. Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution clearly states that “the government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as a state religion”. This is the only provision of the Constitution that explicitly offer ground for secularity of the country. The word 'secular’ is not practically spelled in a clearer term and politicians hide under the gulf to be interpreting it in such a way that it suits their actions. Section 38(1) explicitly states that:

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 private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

This is a contradiction of Section 10 of the same Constitution that defines the country as a secular state. Section 260 to 279 also provide for the practice of Sharia Court; their headship (*Grand Khadi*) and practice in Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) and at the state level. A Sharia Court of Appeal is a court but a court in Nigeria that handle Islamic religious law that governs aspects of day to day life for the Muslim in addition to religious rituals. The court provides

followers with a set of principles and guidance to help them make important decision in their lives. There is nothing absolutely wrong with the creation of the court but why is it that the Christians do not have ecclesiastical court to handle canon laws? It is because of some of these loopholes in the constitution that the Christians kept calling for modification. In the national conference of 2015, Bishop of Kafanchan Diocese – *Joseph Bagabori* who represents the Christians in the north central brought up what he described as unfair treatment of the Christians and Christianity. He submitted at the plenary session that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that claimed to be secular was skewed to favour one religion over the other and thus called for its correction or reverts back to real practice of Section 10 which provides for secularity. His submission was equally supported by Pastor *Bosun Emmanuel* who in his claim stated that the 1999 Constitution and precisely its Preamble and the Third Schedule No. 8 (a and b) advocates for justice, equity and fairness has mentioned Sharia (the law for the Muslim) 75 times, *Grand Khadi* (the leader of the Sharia court) 54 times, Islam (the religion of Muslims) 28 times, Muslim (the adherer of Islam) 10 times and has not mentioned Christian, Christianity and the ecclesiastical court and judges. In 2003, political elites in the northern part of the country capitalize on the weaknesses of the weaker secular pronouncement by the constitution to implement Sharia law. 12 states out of the 36-state implemented it despite the prohibition of the adoption of state religion in Chapter One (1) and Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). It appears that the dodge in the Constitution is in three (3) phase. First is the provision for secularism in Section 10. Secondly is the avocation for the practice of religion as it states in Section 38 and thirdly, the provision in Sections 260 and 275 and the agitation by the other faith.

Another hole that is practiced is during swearing in and the undertaken of the oath of office. All public elected officers and appointees of the office must do the function along with a religion book of his or her faith when secularity aptly implies exclusion of religion in public affairs. Apart from the flaws that were obviously buried in the 1999 Constitution, the political elites are not honest and sincere in their practice of the secular definition of the state. Nigeria is a country at the bottom of the economic ladder and for years has been topping the poverty chart. According to World Bank in 2016, it is the new world poverty capital, according to World Poverty Clock, it is the second to the last in 2017 and 2018, and among the top five (in 2019, 2020 and 2023) spend billions of dollars sending its citizens on pilgrimages (to Mecca, Jerusalem and the Vatican City) for the leaders to please their religious constituencies. What a contradiction? This is why it is difficult for the country to be secular as it allegedly stated in the Constitution and Nigerian political elites have never been truth to the spirit of the Constitution by remaining neutral; they often hide under the flaw in the Constitution, the state of despondency in the country and use religion as a pretext to hoodwink the ignorant masses; making them easily gullible thus becoming raw material for religious and tribal conflicts.

Religion is an emotive tool and it is mostly used by the politician to achieve their political ends. Religion is not a bad thing but the Nigerian politician uses their antics and machination to deceive the gullible masses. The Muslim-Muslim ticket is one of those strategies that the Nigerian politicians manipulate. Abdu (2010) says that they often manipulate religious identity in competition for political power and privileges. He went further to state that the

politician whom he called the political elites capitalize on existing inequality and differences and claim to address them. Their divide and rule strategy have found wide acceptance among a population that has always been the victims of their manipulation. Apart from their unguarded and manipulative utterances during political campaigns and social gatherings, they use even religious leaders to students and ordinary masses as active agents for their mischief. Bala Usman (1989), one of the major proponents of the arguments posits thus:

The real basis of the manipulation of religion today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria the fundamental aspect of our reality; that is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed. And this is to cover themselves with religious and ethnic disquiets in order to further entrench division among our people, slow down the awakening at any cost, even the unity of our country for which so much has been sacrificed (1989:23).

The Nigerian Constitution is not straight and direct on its position on zoning and balancing of representation. The constitution has not mentioned zoning and balancing of representation in a precise term as it ought to. Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) states:

The composition of the Government of the Federation as any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.

The Constitution did not mention balancing of ticket among identities in the country but advocate that it should be done in such a way that it will promote national unity and loyalty. The same Section made reference to the application of federal character which the third schedule, Part 1 Section 8(1)(b & c) empowered the commission to work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly. It states that the Commission has power to:

Promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principle of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all level of government.

The politicians often used the weak pronouncement in the constitution and the pseudo power of the commission to perpetuate its motive. Legitimacy refers to the acceptance and recognition by citizens of a country the right of their leaders to govern. A leader is said to be legitimate if he or she comes to power through constitutional mean, free and fair election, popular support and wider scope of political participation. The Muslim-Muslim ticket that ushered the *Tinubu-Shettima* administration has a weak legitimacy. A cursory of the result shows that legitimacy was weak. All the aspirants won 10 states each. The person that was declared winner won with 8.79 million and also failed to win the FCT which the constitution precisely defined as “and” (a conjunction that in a grammatical term means a must). The 8.79 million votes is from a total vote cast of 24 million. This shows that 14.6 million did not vote

the candidate that won. Using a political arithmetic to gauge, the 8.79 million represent 36.6% of the total vote cast while 14.6 million represent 63.39% did not vote the candidate that won. This is a clear indication that legitimacy is poor and a bad signal to the country's democracy, national cohesion and integration.

Another issue that was unraveled in the course of the study was that, the polity of the country was heated during the 2023 election. The Muslim-Muslim ticket did not only deepen division along religious lines but has polarized voters along ethnic, religion and regional lines. The labour candidate (Peter Obi) was seen as the candidate of the Christians and a candidate from the east. It is because of this label that he won almost all of the Christian dominated states, his ethnic enclave and region. The candidate of the PDP won his region and almost all the Muslim dominated states in the north. The APC won almost all the states in the west and a state in the north courtesy of his running mate. The candidate of the NNPP also won his state. The few states that were allegedly declared as won by a candidate outside his region and religion were: *Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Kogi States*; and their validity were questioned and challenged. The Muslim-Muslim ticket is not the best for the country. The country must balance and share power for it to remain a united nation. The power balancing has proven to be a viable way of ensuring inclusiveness and a shield against ethno-religious or sectional balance.

The fusion of religion identity and politics is another issue that was uncovered in the course of the investigation. The Muslim theology has no room for any division between religion and politics. Historical record shows that there is hardly a Muslim society that is governed devoid of Muslim theology. The Christians in Nigeria see it as the fusion of religion on governance and that is why they differ sharply on this and it has been a major source of tension in the country. The Muslims in the country will not see anything wrong with the country in joining OIC and AIO. They may not see anything wrong with the Arabic inscription on naira notes, the motto of the military, the establishment of Hajj Commission and the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies. An average Christian in Nigeria will never agree to that; he or she will see it as a move to Islamize the country. It is because of the diverse view that the country has different lenses and perception on the Middle East crisis (the Christians are supporting the Jews while the Muslim are supporting the Arabs). The country is already polarized along ethnic and religious divide and practices. The adoption of ticket that does not cater for the dominant religions and the non-practicing of zoning/rotation can only help to worsen and deepen the division in the country. This will also have severe consequent for national integration.

The Nigerian politicians are not only manipulators but are schema who knew how to play their card and have it. The Constitution of the major parties in the country APC and PDP, etc. we're not designed in ignorance of the precarious nature of the country. The parties are aware of how sensitive religion is in the country; they deliberately ignored the provision for balancing along religious line and the zoning as it should be. In practice and in the Constitution, the country has six (6) geo-political zones but when it comes to politics, the zones were redesigned into two (2) hemispheres (North and South). The Constitution made

provision for zoning but on north and south basis and not the six geo-political zones inscribed in the constitution.

Conclusion

Religion as an identity is about solidarity and setting of boundaries between those who are considered to be believers and those that are not. This deals with issues of sentiments, feelings and norms that may be as a result of shared experience. Religious identity is used to create a sense of order, meaning and hope as counterpoint to the insecurity of everyday life or to what may be perceived as an unjust social work. This identity can also bring distress and insecurity to those whom their groups are excluded.

Nigeria is one of the countries in the world that is known with religious and religious activities. The landscape of the country is saturated due to multiplication of religious movement and the intensification of their activities. The deteriorating social and economic situation in Nigeria despite its oil wealth as well as other natural resources is no longer hidden to anyone of conscience. The harsh economic condition in Nigeria as in most third world countries is responsible for the ignorance and confusion, making the masses easily gullible and thus become raw materials for political elites who have created the state of despondency and hopelessness. The political elites in Nigeria for long have been using religion as a pretext to hoodwink the ignorant masses not for the furtherance of the truth but to fulfill their selfish ambitions. They often used the divided and rule which they know will work to deceive the masses. It is the manipulation that has penetrated inside the country's social, economic and political structure and has made the country fragile and prone to ethnic and religious conflicts.

Recommendations

- a. Country with massive distrust along ethnic and religious divide does not need an unbalanced representation (Christian-Christian, Muslim-Muslim, North-North, South-South). Power must be consociated to take care of the differences. The adoption of federal system was not deliberated and designed to respond to the diversity of the country. There has never been a federated state without consociation. Maturity and trust must first be built before these concessional and accommodative mechanisms are dissolved.
- b. The principle and policy of equitable power sharing should be deepened at all level of government and should not be mere constitutional pronouncement.
- c. To reduce the constitutional definition and interpretation of issues linked to balanced representation (secularism, indigene, settlers, etc.) and are easily susceptible to the manipulation by the politician, the principle should be made justifiable to allow those aggrieved to seek judicial redress.
- d. What is required to provide a political structure and institutional framework to contain the divisive character of ethno-religious demands and identity in a transition that will put away a politics of exclusion, all identities should be recognized and be carried along.

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