

Religious Pluralism and the Balance of Power: An Analysis of Socio-Political and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the dynamic interplay of religious pluralism, specifically focusing on Islam and Christianity, within the socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative method that was anchored on sensitivity theory of religion. The study explores the multifaceted influences of these religions on the balance of power equilibrium and their impact on the nation's development. Theoretical frameworks such as the Sociological theory of religion and Sensitivity theory are employed to analyze the complex relationship between religion, social values, economic growth, and political involvement. The findings highlight the pervasive role of religion in shaping the nation's political discourse, social values, and economic stability. The conclusion emphasizes the positive impact of religion on the balance of power equilibrium in Nigeria, underscoring the need for tolerance and dialogue to harness the benefits of religious diversity.

Keywords: Balance of power, Socio-political, Economic growth and Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, in every ramification, is a pluralistic society. To be specific, there is religious pluralism in the country as there are adherents of Islam, Christianity, African and several others. There is also ethnic pluralism, there are Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and several others, all of them belonging to a common nationality that is known as Nigeria [1]. Apart from this, each of these tribes has its own culture. All these differences make life interesting and challenging to the various religious groups [2]. With regards to the issue of socio-political and economic growth people tend to bury their cultural differences and work together as a team in order to develop the country regardless of cultural and

religious differences. To this end, the researcher carried out a study on the analysis of the balance of power in Nigeria socio-political and economic growth in Nigeria. This was done in three stages. The first was definition of terms. The second stage was focused on Religion in the Balance of Power Equilibrium on Socio-Political and Economic Development in Nigeria. Here, the study will expose the contributions of each of two religious groups (Islam and Christianity) in the socio-political and economic growth of Nigeria. The third was anchored on sensitivity theory of religion. The study was discussed, concluded and recommendation made based on the findings.

Religion

Religion is characterized by functional and dysfunctional element, most especially in Nigeria; it is also admitted that it deals with abstract things, that is, conception of God is intuitively mediated quite unlike science which has a conceptual knowledge which centers on sense perception. Religion, just as its dysfunctional aspect has functional aspect as evidenced in morality, justice, truth, economic development, educational and social

services which it can render through its various institutions. These functional aspect is the balance of power in Nigeria Socio-political and economic growth leads to the benefit of the nation's development, when religious dialogue, tolerance is given its due place. Multiplicity in religion is the fate of Nigeria and therefore tolerance and dialogue must be an antidote to reap the benefits of these religions.

Christianity

The word Christianity was first used at Antioch in Syria where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians, meaning the followers of Christ. According to [3], the origin and the basic beliefs of

Christianity were stated in the Apostles Creed. It affirms that Jesus Christ is the son of God and God sent Him to the world to die for the redemption of mankind. The Christian population includes Roman

Catholics who constitute the largest denomination of Christians in the country. Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterians, Baptists Lutherans. There is in Nigeria a growing number of evangelical and

Pentecostal Ministries, Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's witnesses' and a host of other white garment churches [4].

Islam

Islam as one of the world religions was founded in the 7th century A.D by Mohammed Ibn Abdullah who received a call from God to restore the worship of God to the people. Islam in Nigeria is predominantly Sunni. There are also sects like

Ahrnadiyya, Sanusiyya and Quadriyya. There are groups that aim at propagating Islam like Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) and Supreme Council for Islamic Affair (SCIA) [5].

Religion in the Balance of Power Equilibrium on Socio-Political and Economic Development in Nigeria

Religion belongs to social relations and as such should have something to contribute in the search for sustainable economic, social and political development in Nigeria. Economic growth responds positively to the extent of some religious beliefs [2]. Drawing from [4], [5], argues that economic development leads to secularization not only of individuals but also of political and social institutions, including the churches themselves. Their basic argument is that explanations of economic performance should go beyond narrow measures of economic variables to encompass political and social factors. The influence of religion on the people is fundamental to their social values, economic growth and political involvement. It has become an important factor in political discourse [6]. In addition, the influence of religion is not only limited to politics but its poweraffects economic prosperity, social relation, educational advancement, and the psych of the society. [2]. These submissions are not farfetched in Nigerian system, the two dominant religions under investigation have strong influence on their adherents from cradle to death. [1]. Submitted, that Islam is a way of life, which dictates the political ideology and practice in any Islamic society. It is therefore, believed that Islam is a total way of life. Likewise in Christendom, Jesus Christ proclaimed, "I am the way and the truth and the life"(John 14:6). It is the belief of Christians that only by accepting Jesus, His teachings and imitating His course that one can only have peace. The basic teachings of the two religions under investigation, determines political interest, economic development and social values of the adherents in any society. [2] cited in Ruby noted that the survey conducted by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life from may June 2006 explained that 76% of Christians say that religion is more important to them than their identity as Africans, Nigerians or members of an ethnic group. Among Muslims, the figure that chose religion as their most important factor stood at 91%. This shows the power inherent in religion and the value people place on it. [5]. Nigerians ab initio are religious people, whose lives and surroundings are believed to be under the control and mercy of the gods. These suggest why every politician tries to

identify with one religion or the other for support into power. It was observed that "no one can aspire to, or hold political office in Nigeria without pretending to be religious" [7]. It becomes clear why most politicians and political parties rally around religious leaders, churches and mosques for support. Notably, is APC in respect to 2019 general election, sent both Muslims and Christian delegates who visited churches and mosques for support on behalf of their Presidential aspirant (President Muhammadu Buhari) a Muslim. One of the churches visited in Enugu is the Catholic Adoration Ministry headed by Rev. Father Ejike Mbaka. . A religious leader wields enormous power over their adherents and influences their political leadership choice in elections. Hence, every political party in Nigeria tries to carry the religious leaders along.

Religion has been a major determinant of social values. Nonetheless, it explains the reason for massive support of adherents to their religious leaders or representatives when laws of a state is challenged for going against their religious belief and culture, like laws relating to abortion, alcohol, employment, sex, birth control, and ownership of a child, same sex marriages and change of sex. By 2008, it was observed that the contraceptive prevalence rate was only 15 percent. The bivariate analysis indicates a strong effect of religion on the use of contraception over time, which was confirmed by the introduction of control variables in the multivariate analysis [8].

Again, the economic developments of Nigeria are influenced largely by religion. The sociologies noted, the influence of religion interprets the economic stability of a nation. Religious injunctions abhor looting of properties, evil gain and obtaining without work. The Bible discourages laxity when it says, "Our friends, we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to keep away from all believers who are living a lazy life and who do not follow the instruction that we gave them.....while we were with you, we used to tell you, whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat." (2Thessalonians3:6-10).The Bible commands Christians to work hard and close the unemployment gap, those within the work force are

to contribute to society by choosing to work rather than being idle and build devils workshop in the body. "Believers! Do not devour one another's possessions wrongfully; rather than that, let there be trading by mutual consent. You shall not kill

yourselves. Surely Allah is ever Compassionate to you"(Quran 4:29). However, religions spur the society to work hard and earn accordingly. If these cultures are followed there will be peace in the society and investors' interest will not be shattered.

Theoretical Framework

From the moment problems are discovered, theories are therefore developed for a logical explanation of what is happening. Theory according to [9], helps the analyst to situate their narration of the conflict. This is why theory serves as a guide and compass for any articulated knowledge. Many scholars and academia have propounded different conflict

situations depending on the school of thought to which they represent. In this undertaking, some theories are adopted to better our understanding and knowledge of Religion as a panacea for ensuring peace in Enugu State, Nigeria: study of Islam and Christianity. In this study, we shall employ Sociological theory of religion, Sensitivity theory.

Sensitivity Theory

This is a comprehensive, psychological theory of religion. The theory emphasizes that people are attracted to religions due to felt needs. It suggests that there are 16 basic propensities in man that influence the psychological appeal of religious behavior. These desires include: power, independence, curiosity, acceptance, order, saving, honor, idealism, social contact, family, status, vengeance, romance, eating, physical exercise, and tranquility. Steven Reiss, the author of this new theory says that:

study published in 2000, Reiss found that religious people expressed a strong desire for interdependence with others (mostly Christians), but those who are not religious, however, showed a stronger need to be self-reliant and independent. The study also showed that religious people valued honor more than non-religious people, which Reiss suggests as a reason many people embrace religion to show loyalty to parents and ancestors. According to Reiss, people embrace those aspects of religious imagery that express their strong psychological needs and deepest personal values. For him, "People who have a strong need for order should enjoy ritualized religious experiences, whereas those with a weak need for order may prefer more spontaneous expression of faith. Reiss emphasized that the theory addresses the psychology of religious experiences and has no implications for the validity or invalidity of religious beliefs. Applying this theory to the study, it becomes significant base on the fact that it reveals that all human beings embrace religion for a number of reasons. Such that the theory makes all to be sensitive in motivating basic desires to seek peace with other religion and a practical approach of their adherents in ensuring peace wherever they found themselves.

These basic human needs – which include honor, idealism, curiosity and acceptance – can explain why certain people are attracted to religion; why human beings, God's images express psychologically opposite qualities, and the relationship between personality and religious experiences [10], [11], Questia Selected Preview", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>, retrieved October 22, 2018, 2.50 p.m.).

Reiss' research suggests that the quest for independence is a key psychological desire that separates religious and non-religious people. In a

Application and Relevance of the Theories to the Study

Applying the sociological theory of religion in the context of this study, it pinpoints the trends responsible for religious influence on the economical and political class struggle and how the capitalist have managed to use religion for their selfish gain at the expense of people's principle belief of religion. The prime purpose is perhaps positive/negative. The tune of this study is positive which is based on loyalty to bring about healing, economic development, political stability, love and peace if well managed. The following scriptures confirm this: You yourselves know very well that you should do

just what we did. We were not lazy when we were with you. While we were with you, we used to tell you, "Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat,"(2thessasonians 3:7& 10). Thus applying sensitivity theory to the study, it becomes significant base on the fact that it reveals that all human beings embrace religion for a number of reasons. Such that the theory makes all to be sensitive in motivating basic desires to seek peace with other religion and a practical approach of their adherents in ensuring peace wherever they found themselves.

Discussion on the Findings

From the above exploration, the study shows that religion affects the balance of power equilibrium in the sociopolitical and economic development in Enugu State, Nigeria to a positive high extent. The finding is in line with [12], [4] and [5] argued that economic development leads to secularization not only of individuals but also of political and social institutions, including the churches themselves. On same note, [2] asserts that the influence of religion is not only limited to politics but its

In conclusion, this research underscores the significance of religious pluralism in Nigeria, examining its impact on the balance of power in the realms of socio-political and economic development. The study reveals the integral role of Islam and Christianity, the two dominant religions, in shaping the values, political discourse, and economic stability

power.....affects economic prosperity, social relation, educational advancement and the psych of the society. [9], opined that the influence of religion on the people is fundamental to their social values, economic growth and political involvement. It has become an important fact in political discourse. It is inferred from their submissions that both religions under investigation has strong influence on their adherents from the beginning of life to the end of life.

CONCLUSION

of the nation. The findings suggest that embracing religious dialogue and fostering tolerance are essential for leveraging the positive contributions of diverse religious beliefs. Ultimately, the research emphasizes the need for a harmonious coexistence of religious communities to propel Nigeria towards sustained socio-political and economic progress

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