

The Mosque and the State House: Political Islam in Contemporary Nigeria since 1999

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Abstract: The unsuccessful attempt by Nigerian citizen, Mutallab to bomb a Detroit-bound plane from Amsterdam on the eve of Christmas in 2008 and the deportation of a group of Nigerian students from Malaysia in 2010 owing to terrorism-related allegation have attracted the attention of the world to Nigeria, which is the Africa's most populous country. Such events have been connected by the media with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which have culminated in the intensification of research and reporting on Islam and particularly on the relationship between politics and Islam. The searchlight of scholars and writers on this subject has been beamed on the Middle East and South Asian countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan both of which have been indicted by the Western media as safe haven for "professional terrorists" and "potential bombers." The negative image created for Pakistan was later aggravated with the killing of Osama Bin Laden in a military settlement in the Pakistani territory in May, 2011. The purpose of the present article is to examine the dimension of political Islam in Nigeria since the country's return to full democracy in 1999. The rationale for the paper's focus on this period lies in the fact that the period witnessed an unprecedented progress in the Nigerian Muslims' quest for political power, as Muslim scholars, leaders and personalities were elected into a handful of offices as state governors, commissioners, special advisers and other public functionaries which put them in a better stead to fulfill the long-felt need for the implementation of the Islamic legal system in their various states. The paper employs a combination of the historical method and analytic philosophy and concludes that political Islam is systematic in the northern parts of the country where it has yielded meaningful fruits whereas there is need for the systematization of the linkages between Islam and politics in the southern parts of the country.

Key words: The Mosque • The State House • Political Islam • Contemporary Nigeria • Return to Full Democracy • Muslim Linkages with Political Authorities

INTRODUCTION

There have been studies on the linkage between religion and politics in Nigeria. Notable among such studies are Bienen [1, 2], Clarke [3], Hunwick [4], Enwerem [5], Kukah and Falola [6], Falola [7], Marshall [8], Wakili [9], Adewanbi [10] and Sodi [11]. According to Onapajo [12], most of these scholars have only focused on the interaction between Islam and politics during the early political history of Nigeria. He however observes that the "dramatic and dynamic changes religion has taken in the contemporary global space which has further given much impetus to the phenomenon of religion and politics in the country and elsewhere" [13]. Yet he insists that notwithstanding the shift of the pendulum of research

towards "the question of the politicization of religion and religionisation of politics in Nigeria's new democracy,...it is duly observed that enough inquiry has not been advanced on this phenomenon in recent times" [13].

Nonetheless, it cannot be gainsaid that Nigeria, which had recorded a number of political, economic, religious and ethnic crises in the last ten years, has been connected with the global narrative on terrorism by the "Western Media which has dubbed the current outbreaks as something new, with a label, "Taliban style"[14]. Consequently, there was a contagious effect of the Western style of reporting Nigerian crises, on the Nigerian press itself where there is a proliferation of privately owned media organization some of which "were faith-based or had as their focus the defence of certain

religious faith” [14]. Many of such organizations were accused of “pitching tents; in relation to the region they are based or the religious faith they are assumed to be sympathetic to thereby constituting themselves into one of the principal locations for the propagation and representation of religious groups” [14].

It should be pointed out that the relevance of the foregoing to the central subject of the article lies in the fact that there has always been a deliberate attempt to connect even non-religious crisis in Nigeria, to the global narrative on terrorism (which has attracted the world attention to Nigeria) championed by the Western media. Accordingly, it has been observed that there has been questions asked whether all these conflicts are religious or they are caused by factors outside of religion [14]. For instance, the crisis in Plateau, as well as other religious conflicts in Nigeria, are hardly religious. Commentators, scholars and observers have argued that the main causes of these conflicts were often economic, political and or ethnic issues manipulated and labeled religious [14]. It is interesting to note that the communal clash that started in Plateau on 7 September, 2001 as a pre-planned and carefully executed project, which continued as a series of conflicts lasting nearly four years (2001 – 2005), is one of the violent experiences tagged “Religious Conflicts,” labeled “Taliban Style” and connected with the global narrative on September 11, 2001 attacks and terrorism, as noted by Falola [14]. One wonders whether it is not anachronistic to link the Plateau crisis which started on 7 September 2001 to the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, which were only recorded four days later on 11 September, 2001! Consequently, the current world focus on Islam as occasioned by the media with regards to the so called “terrorist attacks” and “religious conflicts” has stimulated interests in the understanding of the interplay of power and religion or, in specific terms, Islam and politics and other related issues, in the Nigerian context.

The need for such an understanding is better explained by the fact that political Islam has recently become a force to reckon with in many governments and oppositional struggles in various parts of the world especially North Africa and Southeast Asia. “New Islamic Republics have emerged in Afghanistan, Iran and Sudan. Islamists have been elected to parliaments, served in cabinets and been presidents, prime ministers and deputy prime ministers in nations as diverse as Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan and Yemen” [15]. Coupled with that is the fact that the world is increasingly feeling insecure owing to the

activities of various opposition movements which have been expressing their displeasure with regimes in Muslim countries and the West. This indeed is the face of political Islam in today’s world.

Political Islam in Nigeria since 1999: Although Islam has interacted actively with politics in Nigeria through the political participation of notable Muslim organizations in the country, the type of political Islam precipitated by the activities of such leading Islamic movements as the Muslim brotherhoods of Egypt, Sudan and Jordan, Jamaat-i-Islami in South Asia, the Refah Party in Turkey, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, al-Nahdah in Tunisia, Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine and Gamaa Islamiyyah and Jihad in Egypt, has not materialized in Nigeria. According to Esposito “the causes of resurgence engineered by such Islamic groups “have been religion, cultural, political and socio-economic with “issues of faith, politics and social justice – authoritarianism, repression, unemployment, housing, social services, distribution of wealth and corruption, intertwining as catalysts” [16]. Such resurgences as championed by such organizations have culminated in loss of confidence in several governments and Western-oriented policies and measures. The peoples distrust for such regimes and policies eventually stimulated protests and clamour for an alternative. Consequently, such slogans as “Islam is the solution” and “Neither West nor East” were generated and repeatedly orchestrated by the people.

There seems to be a general discomfort over the possible role of Islamic organizations in the political process in Nigeria. Such a discomfort is a product of the skepticism about the relationship between Islam and pluralism. “The fear is that if Islamic parties win in election, they will then do away with democratic institutions” [15]. This fear is reinforced by the fact that a number of Muslim organizations in Nigeria have employed violent means to express their disdain for the government and to pursue their aim of paving way for the emergence of an Islamic state. The Nigerian experience with regards to this type of interaction between Islam and politics is not dissimilar from the Malaysian experience where, according to Freedman “groups that have used violence or have said that they are preparing to use militant means to assert their interests tend to share certain common features: they feel that the state is illegitimate in its present form and so rather than “playing by the rules” and trying to assert their goals through regular political channels, they resort to violence” [15].

This is coupled with the fact that such Islamic organizations, which are largely militant in nature, “tend to feel victimized by regimes that they feel are more prone to protect interests of other groups (either other religious group or other Muslim networks), thus feel that violence is justified in rectifying injustices” [15]. A good instance of this is the Al-Zakzaky Militant Islamic group in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, such a clamour has culminated in the introduction by the Zamfara State Government in 2000 of Judicial reforms by expanding the jurisdiction of Shariah, in a manner that was later adopted by other state governments. [17]. Consequently, “ordinary Muslims across the eleven Northern States agitated and pressured their elected representatives and Governors via the ‘ulama to emulate the steps taken by Governor Ahmed Sani Yariman Bakura of Zamfara State” [17]. The fact that the introduction of Shariah in the Northern States was a product of people’s agitation and clamour was confirmed by Governor Adamu Muazu of Bauchi who, according to Wakili, described such a development as a satisfaction of the wishes of the people [18]. Similarly, Governor Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano described the implementation of Shariah as a response to the aspiration of Muslim electorate in all the Muslim majority states [18]. This product of the active interaction between Islam and politics paved way for active participation of notable Muslim organizations and individuals in the political process as well as in governance. For instance, a number of Islamic scholars and Muslim activists were appointed Commissioners or Advisers and special Assistants to the State Governors. Similarly, the Islamic scholars became central to the operations of the institutions and agencies charged with managing and overseeing the Shariah implementation such as the Shariah commission, Zakat and Hubsu Commission, Hisbah Board and the Shariah Implementation Committee, all of which are dominated by such Islamic scholars. Consequently, the experience acquired by the Islamic scholars and Muslim organizations in their struggle for the enthronement of the Shariah from 2000 to 2002 culminated in their increasing involvement and participation in the 2003 political process [18].

By this time, the Islamic scholars and Muslim organizations in some Northern States had become so organized that they were able to speak in one voice. For instance, they supported and openly campaigned for one of them, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau to become the Governor of Kano State under the platform of All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) during the 2003 General Elections. According to Wakili, their reason for endorsing and

supporting Shekarau was not unconnected with their belief that being an Islamic scholar himself, he would favour the adoption and implementation of the Shariah in the state [19]. Shekarau, too, has since his political victory in 2003, lived up to the expectation of his fellow Islamic scholars as he has since “placed all the three major institutions responsible for the implementation of the Shariah in Kano under the leadership of influential and respected ‘ulama, namely: Sheikh Ibrahim Umar Kabo, former University lecturer as Chairman of Council of ‘Ulama of Nigeria, Muhammad Sani Zahradeen, a Professor of Islamic Studies and former Vice-Chancellor of Bayero University as the Chairman of Zakat and Hubsu Commission; and Sheikh Yahaya Farouk Chedi, a lecturer in the Department of Arabic, Bayero University as the Commander General of the Hisbah Board [20]. That the various individuals constituting the membership of the governing boards of these agencies are leading Islamic scholars from various Islamic bodies speaks volumes about the nature of the interaction between Islam and politics in Northern Nigeria where constitutional democratic governments are underpinned by Islamic principles, driven by Islamic ideas and ideals and dominated by Islamic scholars who are consulted by the governors from time to time on issues bordering on policies and government activities.

Such an organized linkage between Islam and politics as experienced in the Northern states of Nigeria during the period under discussion has always been the outcome whenever and wherever “political Islam... challenged governments, policy makers and analysts both politically and intellectually over issues of leadership and ideology, modernization and development, pluralism, democratization and foreign policy” [21]. It is interesting to note that the kind of interplay of religion and power recorded in Northern Nigeria in the early 2000s coincided with the declaration of Prime Minister Muhathir of Malaysia in 2001 that Malaysia was an Islamic state although Muhathir’s declaration and subsequent pursuit of Islamization of government policies and institutions was aimed at out-doing “the main attraction of the strongest opposition party in Malaysia, the Parti Islam si Malaysia, PAS, the move has earned him some credit as a vehicle for the promotion of state-centred Islam and an avenue for the provision of “legitimacy to the party and the state in its quest for economic development and modernization” [22]. Prime Minister Muhathir insisted that Islam was the solution to his country’s problems and argued that modernization and development are not exclusive preserve of the West or Western oriented

system or institutions” Some of the policies adopted and machineries put in place by Muhathir in portraying Islam as the key to achieve modernization that was distinct from the West, have been enumerated by Freedman when he writes that:

Muhathir’s government spearheaded the creation of a network of Islamic banks, the Malaysia International Islamic University, Islamic Insurance schemes and the creation of the Hajj pilgrim fund. The regime also supported the creation of the Islamic think-tank, Institute Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM), to promote “progressive” Islamic views and the government helped restructure and boost the role of many Islamic institutions; the Islamic courts, shariah, the building of mosques religious schools and the increased request for Zakat collection and there was a huge increase in the number of religious officials and ulama working in the Prime Minister’s office... “the state religious bureaucracy was expanded and it came to regulate and restrain religious related activities” through the Islamic Development Department which was domiciled in the Prime Minister’s office [22].

Freedman’s words as quoted above graphically capture the nature of both the Malaysian and Northern Nigerian experiences of the linkage between Islam and politics in the early 2000s, albeit with some differences.

Conversely, however, the interplay of Islam and politics in Southern Nigeria during the period was not of the same nature. Unlike the North, Southern Nigeria was (and is still) far from metamorphosing into a centre of Islamic politics. The gulf between secular leaders or intellectuals and Islamic scholars grows wider on a daily basis with regards to the quality of scholarship and engagement with analysis of issues and policies. Accordingly, there have not really been varied scholarly, critical, creative and informed patterns of modernization and differing interpretations and implementations of Islamic principles and provisions. According to Esposito “the advent of an alternative Islamic activist elite reflects new realities in the Muslim world”... owing to the fact that ‘Islamic movements, both moderate and extremist, have proliferated and become agents of change’ [22]. Esposito writes further of Islamic movements that are committed to the advancement of political Islam:

They establish modern political and social organizations and embrace advanced means to disseminate their message. Most function within civil society as social and political activists and provide

leadership in politics and the professions... at the same time, a minority of extremists use violence to threaten the stability of many regimes and have extended their global reach...[21].

The two types of Islamic movements described above are present in Northern Nigeria and have, to varied degrees, contributed to the promotion and entronement of political Islam. Contrarily, neither of such groups is present in Southern Nigeria. The greatest achievements of Muslim organizations in the South comprise public lectures, building of mosques, schools and probably hospitals. There however is little evidence of an organized linkage between them and the government excepting, of course, when they invite some state commissioners or political officer holders to a Ramadan lecture, fund-raiser, or unsolicited special prayer for the state, or conversely when a distinguished Islamic scholar leading a notable Islamic organization is invited to lead an opening or closing prayer or partake of some sumptuous meals prepared for Ramadan *iftar* at the State House or residence of a politician who may not necessarily be a practicing Muslim. While Islamic resurgences have paved way for the emergence of Islamic scholars and Muslim activists on the political scene and in governance in Northern Nigeria, their Southern counterparts have as their ultimate ambition appointment to the membership of the State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, invitation to a Ramadan *iftar* gathering at the State House or a sponsorship slot to hajj or ‘*umrah*’.

While political Islam, as noted earlier, flourished and yielded fruits for Muslim organizations and individuals in the North during this period, their Southern counterparts were busy pursuing private and selfish interests in the name of Islamic struggle. For instance, when the decision of the Lagos State Government to return all mission schools to the various religious bodies who are their original owners became controverted and generated public comments and debates, the National Council of Muslim Youths Organization (NACOMYO) in Lagos State wasted no time in capitalizing on the development to organize protests, hold press conferences and make releases in the name of the Muslims. Consequently, the Council secured an audience with the State government which dialogued with the Muslim activists through its then Commissioner for Home affairs and Culture, Alhaji Musiliu Obanikoro. The outcome of it all was the approval by the then State Governor, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, of the appointment of one of the leaders of

the Muslim body into the Lagos State Pilgrims Welfare Board. The leadership of the Muslim body has since been protecting the annual hajj sponsorship slot that now accrues to it from such appointment. This is how far the Southern Nigerian Muslims have gone in their linkage with political authorities.

This explains why there has not been any significant progress in political Islam in Southern Nigeria where politicians have continued to play on the intelligence and capitalize on the political insensitivity of Muslim organizations and their leaders, by creating the impression that the interest of the Muslims are being adequately protected whereas in fact the reverse is the case, as all is but a political gimmick to which Muslim organizations and their leaders have fallen prey as such strategies have only been employed to win Muslim votes during elections, for the advancement of the political ambition of the politicians involved. Such a situation is similar to what President Suharto of Indonesia did during the last 12 years of his rules as “he turned to Islam both personally and politically” by talking about and practicing Islam, allowing and promoting the creation of Islamic banks, giving broader powers to Muslim courts, putting an end to the prohibition on wearing the Jilbab in schools allowing Islamic newspapers and television programmes to be published and aired and increasing the fund of religious schools [22].

Some Islamic organizations and scholars were quick to realize that Suharto was not really sincere about his pursuit of Islamization projects and was only seeking “to cultivate a loyal Islamic following as a way of perpetuating his power and as part of an overall strategy of divide and rule where he favoured some groups over others. Accordingly, such Islamic groups and individuals distanced themselves from his administration and rather laboured for the enthronement of democracy and Muslim values outside the new Order regime [22]. There also were other groups which opposed Suharto and declared themselves as such thereby “laying the seeds for future militancy and fundamentalist goals of achieving an Islamic state” [22]. Yet there were others who cooperated with him for political gains. The position, attitude and disposition of the groups in the last category bear some commonalities with the nature of the interaction of Islam and politics in Southern Nigeria, where there is hardly a Muslim organization reputed for having distanced itself from a regime or political dispensation, or known for having declared itself averse to a political administration or rule, on the basis of Islamic principles.

The active involvement of Islamic scholars in governance since the introduction of Shariah in the North in the 2000s as noted earlier, culminated in their increasing involvement in subsequent political process. So, in the 2007 General Elections Muslim organizations, through their leaders, did not equivocate in expressing their view. Wakili has sampled their views for analysis in his study where he notes that the ulama generally view Islam and democratic politics as compatible [18]. Wakili articulates the imperatives of ulama’s participation in politics by stating that “the El-Zakzaky’s group has repeatedly argued that the solution to the crisis facing the Nigerian Muslims lies in the overthrow of the existing secular state and its replacement with an Islamic state” [18]. Among the common denominators in the contribution of the Northern ‘ulama to the 2007 political process is their emphasis on the need the Muslims to vote for credible candidates. For instance, all the notable Sunni Islamic scholars in Kano State mobilized voters for Governor Ibrahim Shekarau while all the Tarigah and Izala scholars campaigned against him. Northern Muslim groups and their leaders also played a significant role after the release of the election results in 2007. Whereas a group of Islamic scholars who monitored the elections in parts of Niger State rejected the announced results on the grounds that such results did not reflect the people’s wish such leading Islamic scholars as Dr. Ahmad Gumi and the Sheikh Sufyanu Abdullah “called on Nigerians to accept and urged that the way forward was for all Nigerians to pray for the newly elected leaders to be God-fearing in the discharge of their responsibilities [18]. The intervention of leading Northern Islamic scholars became imperative owing to the fact that what took place in Nigeria on April 14 and 21, 2007 “were not elections, but violent selection and imposition of unpopular candidates against the popular will of the electorate” [18].

Such roles as played by Northern Islamic scholars during the 2007 elections were not dissimilar from those played by their Southern counterparts. However, it should be pointed out that while they, too, played some role in pacifying the aggrieved electorate and candidates after the announcement of the results, they were not as vocal as their Northern counterparts, in mobilizing voters for credible candidates and in pursuing general voter enlightenment during the electioneering. In fact, notable Southern Islamic scholars were not known to have taken clear-cut positions from candidates or political parties as they were ready to pray for and pronounce in favour of any politician or political party that was ready to patronize them, regardless of his religion or its ideological persuasion.

However, there was a renewed zeal in the use of religion for political gains in the electioneering that paved way for the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as Nigeria's president in 2011. This political development has been graphically captured by Onapajo [12] where, relying on Suberu [23] he writes:

Religion again featured prominently in the political process that informed the emergence of the circumstantial presidency of Jonathan in 2010 and the general elections that followed in April, 2011. It began with failed attempt of Olusegun Obasanjo to unconstitutionally prolong his regime in a process dubbed the "third term agenda" in 2006. As a result Obasanjo was left with no choice than to quickly arrange for a successor that would better protect the legacies of his regime. Taking into consideration a "gentleman" agreement of power rotation between the North and the South in his party-the PDP, his best choice was a relatively corrupt-free and disciplined northern Muslim-Umar Musa Yaradua- who had successfully served as a two-term governor in Katsina State. In an election categorized as the most controversial in the political history of Nigeria, Yaradua emerged as the president of the country in April, 2007.

Onapajo further argues that Yaradua's state of infirmity in "acute heart disease-pericarditis" prevented him from fulfilling his obligations as president of the country and that that development paved way for the appearance of his closest aides on the political scene as they continued to run the country in their own way owing essentially to the fact that they were not willing to hand over power to a Christian southerner, Goodluck Jonathan who incidentally was the then Vice-President [12]. Onapajo maintains that the aftermath of the political scheming of the "influential aides" of the ailing president was that "a Saudi Arabian hospital was strategically chosen as the best place- an Islamic country- where the 'presidential' secret could be perfectly concealed" [12]. It is interesting to note that such an arrangement turned out fruitful "as the Saudi Arabian authorities on religious solidarity proved supportive of Yaradua and his government in his last days while receiving treatment at the hospital despite series of local and international pressures on Riyadh" [12].

In the 2011, electoral process however, the Northern Islamic scholars and Muslim organizations were not as vocal as they were in their earlier dispensations. Four presidential candidates were most formidable in the 2011 electioneering, namely the incumbent President Goodluck

Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a Christian; former Head of State, General Mahammad Buhari of the congress for progressive Change (CPC) a Muslim, former Head of Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) a Muslim and former Governor of Kano State, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), also a Muslim.

The interplay of religion and politics became rife and glaring during the electioneering. In this connection, Onapajo alludes to the experience of the Chief Imam of a central mosque in Sokoto, in northern Nigeria who was arrested alongside his students by the police for "defacing the posters of Jonathan in the daylight in February 2011 prior to the elections in April." The Imam showed no remorse and regretted not his action, as he, as reported in *Sunday Trust*, 6 March [24], 2011, said:

I am not regretting my action at all. I think I have succeeded in passing my message because what I did was to make Nigerians and the world know that we the people of Sokoto are not with President Jonathan, we are not supporting his candidature because he has violated the zoning arrangement that favours the Northern part of the country

Onapajo juxtaposes the above scenario with another of similar nature among Nigerian Christians when he alludes to a leading Pentecostal pastor, Paul Adefarasin of the House on the Rock Church in Lagos, who was quoted as having argued before a mammoth congregation of his followers that the political system "had for long been dominated by the Muslims and there was the need for them to go all out for a Christian presidential candidate in the 2011 election." [12] Onapajo alludes to the *PM News* of November 15, 2010, where the incident was reported:

Adefarasin said that the polity has been Islamized for so long and Christians must wake up and pray against it. (To him) 'Nigerians used to be the most educated people in the world until the likes of Abacga and Murtala Muhammed came and scattered our educational system to slow down the South so that the North can catch up, instead of speeding up the north' [25].

There also were other candidates that were not as strong as these four. By the time the election results were released the influence of religion and ethnicity was noticeably felt. For instance, the Christian candidate, Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP, won overwhelmingly in

the Southeastern and Southsouthern parts of the country which are predominantly peopled by Christians. He also had a considerable share from the votes cast in the four other geopolitical locations especially the Southwest and some parts of the North. Similarly, the Muslim candidate of the CPC, General Muhammadu Buhari won overwhelmingly in the Muslim North but could not win considerable number of votes among the predominantly Christian citizens of the Southeast, Southsouth and even the Southwest where the Christian candidate had secured electoral victory.

In a similar token, the Muslim candidate of the ACN, Mallam Muhu Ribadu earned considerable number of votes in every geopolitical zone in the country and even took the lead in the Southwest which is the political stronghold of its founders and promoters especially former Governor of Lagos State, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu and all the serving Governors of the six Yoruba states. Also, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau of the ANPP, an Islamic scholar with considerably large political followership in Kano and its environs where, as noted earlier, he had been Governor for eight years, shared of the votes of the electorate from Kano and its neighbouring states. Details of the results showing the number of votes won by each of the candidates in each state, as presented by Reuters in Abuja on April 17, 2011, may be provided in Table 1.1 below:

Professor Niyi Akinosho of Temple University graphically captures the interplay of religion and politics with regards to the current political dispensation in Nigeria as ushered in by the above results and the general implications of the results, when he writes that:

In pursuit of their goal to capture the presidency, Northerners rallied around Buhari. Ironically for him, this Northern move was among the major factors that led some Southerners to vote for Jonathan. The outcome was the maximization of identity politics on both sides with Buhari emerging as a Northern Fulani Muslim candidate and Jonathan as a Southern Ijaw Christian candidate...Critics ...view Buhari as a fundamentalist Muslim, who only used Pastor Tunde Bakare as a running mate to douse suspicions about his Muslim fundamentalism. His persistent support for the enforcement of Sharia law and the claim by Northern youth protesters that they did not want an “unbeliever” as president could only deepen such suspicion [26].

Table 1.1: April 2011 Presidential Election Results in Nigeria

	PDP	CPC	ACN	ANPP
ABIA	1,175,984	3,743	4,392	1,455
ADAMAWA	508,314	344,526	32,786	n/a
AKWA-IBOM	1,165,629	5,348	54,148	2,000
ANAMBRA	1,145,169	4,223	3,537	975
BAUCHI	258,404	1,315,209	16,674	8,777
BAYELSA	504,811	691	370	136
BENUE	694,776	109,680	223,007	8,592
BORNO	207,075	909,763	n/a	n/a
CROSS RIVER*	605,057	3,715	4,808	2,314
DELTA	1,378,851	8,960	13,110	2,746
EBONYI	480,592	1,025	1,112	14,296
EDO	542,173	17,795	54,242	2,174
EKITI	185,009	2,689	116,981	1,482
ENUGU	802,144	3,753	1,755	1,111
FCT	253,444	131,576	2,327	3,170
GOMBE	290,376	495,898	n/a	n/a
IMO	1,381,357	7,591	14,821	2,520
JIGAWA	491,252	663,994	17,353	7,676
KADUNA	1,190,179	1,334,244	11,278	17,301
KANO	440,666	1,624,543	42,353	526,310
KATSINA	428,392	1,163,919	10,945	6,342
KEBBI	369,198	501,453	n/a	n/a
KOGI	399,816	132,201	6,516	16,491
KWARA	268,243	83,603	52,432	1,672
LAGOS	1,281,688	189,983	427,203	8,941
NASARAWA	408,997	278,390	1,204	1,047
NIGER	321,429	652,574	13,344	7,138
OGUN	309,177	17,654	199,555	2,969
ONDO	387,376	11,890	74,253	6,741
OSUN	188,409	6,997	299,711	3,617
OYO	484,758	92,396	252,240	7,156
PLATEAU	1,029,865	356,551	10,181	5,235
RIVERS	1,817,762	13,182	16,382	1,449
SOKOTO	309,057	540,769	20,144	5,063
YOBE	117,128	337,537	6,069	143,179
ZAMFARA	238,180	624,515	17,970	46,554
TOTAL	22,060,737	11,992,580	2,023,203	866,629

The election results as presented above “appeared a political battle between Muslims and Christians as Jonathan and Buhari signified the major contenders of the presidential elections” [12]. Relying on TheNews of May 2, 2011, Onapajo further enumerates that “the outcome of the elections clearly confirms...a voting pattern significantly determined by religion and ethnicity...as Jonathan had a landslide victory in the Christian dominated areas of the North otherwise known as the Middle-Belt region” [27]. Onapajo interprets this as earning him a landslide victory after winning 23 states in the country and polling 22, 495,187 votes’ and an outright rejection “in the Muslim’s ‘Core North’ where Buhari swept all the votes in its 12 states including Sokoto, Zamfara, Niger, Kano, Kebbi, Katsina, Bauchi, Kaduna, Jigawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe” [12]. The implication of

the foregoing is obviously that religion featured prominently in the April 2011 elections in Nigeria and determined most of the outcomes of the elections. Although this experience is not unprecedented in the political history of Nigeria, it has never been as rife as it was in the 2011 electioneering.

Consequently, the Christian candidate was declared winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the chairmanship of Prof. Attahiru Jega. The announcement caused crisis in some Northern states and Muslim majority settlements in Bauchi, Kastina, Kano, Kaduna and others where the protesters rejected the results and alleged rigging and other electoral malpractices as they insisted that the results did not reflect the wish of the electorate. Hundreds of lives and properties worth several millions of Naira were destroyed by the protesters who were predominantly Muslims. Among the casualties recorded in the post-election riots were no fewer than ten fresh graduates from various Nigerian institutions of higher learning who were corps members on National Youth Service in the Northern states where the violence had erupted. They were reportedly killed brutally by the protesters, who were challenging the presidential election results announced in April, 2011. Consequently, the three aforementioned Muslim presidential candidates distanced themselves from the Christian candidate declared winners as they all shunned his formal inauguration in Abuja on the 29th of May, 2011 [28].

CONCLUSION

This paper has made an analysis of the linkages between the Mosque and the State House since the period of Nigeria's return to full democracy in 1999. It examined the nature of the interaction between religion and power in the country from the period to the date of writing the article. It justified and juxtaposed some of the political interventions of religious bodies in the country during this period with some of the political experiences recorded by their counterparts in other countries especially where Islam has been accepted as a force to reckon with in politics and democratization, such as Malaysia, Indonesia and others of similar political orientation. The paper also enumerated the notable political events of post-1999 Nigeria and articulated the implication of such events to the Muslims as well as their responses or reactions to them. The paper also analysed the electioneering of April 2011 with regards to the presidential race and underscored the role of religion in

the new political dispensation. The analysis in the paper found that religion has always been a major factor in the political process in Nigeria and illustrated this with the interplay of Christianity and Islam on the political scene in the country as well as the crises that greeted the announcements of the election results in some parts of the country. The paper concluded that while political Islam has yielded fruits in the Northern parts of the country, there is need for an organized political enlightenment for their Southern counterparts with a view to enabling them contribute more meaningfully to democratization or the political process in their domain.

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