



Vol. 3, No. 2 – **IN THIS ISSUE** – April 2024



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Volume 3, Number 2, April 2024

Published by

Klamidas Communications Ltd
No 42 Ajose Adeogun Street, Utako District, Abuja
Tel: (+234) 08033370200
Website: <https://klamidas.com/gojar>
Email: gojar@klamidas.com
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in partnership with

The Division of General Studies
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Anambra State, Nigeria

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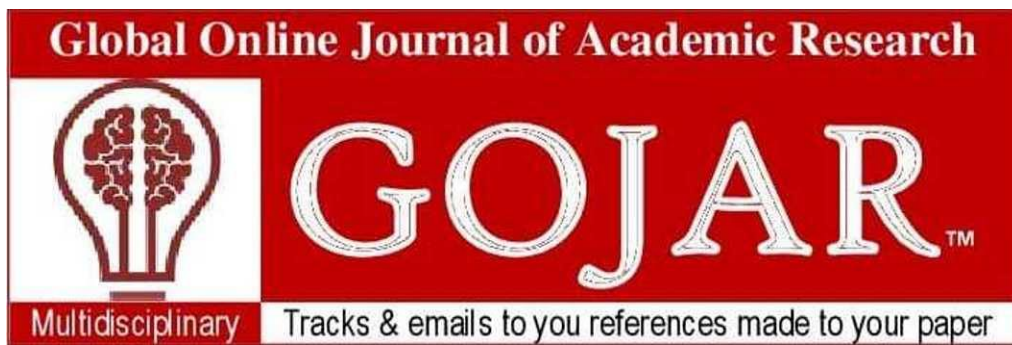
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Exposure to Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” Viral Video on Social Media and its Influence on Audience Perception of His Economic Policies

By

Casmir U. Obiakor & Chinonso C. Adikuru

Abstract

President Ahmed Bola Tinubu of All Progressives Congress (APC) while making his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023, as he was being sworn as the new president of Nigeria, said “Let the Poor Breathe”. The statement became a popular sound bite as this video went viral on various social media platforms. With the economic policies of President Tinubu, especially the removal of fuel subsidy and floating of Naira against the dollar which have led to inflation, there is a growing concern as to whether Tinubu actually wants to let the poor breathe. This research work, among other objectives, investigates audience perception of Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” comment which went viral on social media and how the comment influences people’s perception of his economic policies. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was used to study 60 purposively selected participants among Anambra State civil servants at the State’s Secretariat, Awka. The study was anchored on the Reception and Perception theories. The result showed that respondents were well exposed to the “Let the Poor Breathe” video and their main sources of exposure were WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook. The study also found that respondents had negative perception of the comment, seeing it as a mockery of the poor after his economic policies of fuel subsidy removal and floating of the Naira which led to inflation in the country. The respondents see President Tinubu as being insincere towards the poor as his harsh economic policies have worsened the condition of the poor in Nigeria. The study recommends that President Tinubu should introduce short-term policies that will reduce the hardship faced by many Nigerians, including the poor, in addition to palliatives he has promised to give to the poor.

Keywords: “Let the Poor Breathe” viral video, exposure, social media, influence, perception, economic policies.

Introduction

For most observers, the significance of the mass media for public policymaking arises from the fact that the media shape public opinion, thereby forcing political actors to respond to popular preferences (Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2007). The mass media in the political process has changed fundamentally from playing the role of a rather passive conveyor of messages to discharging the duties of a political actor in its own right. As a large body of literature suggests, the media is now taking an active part in the public representation of politics by shaping the agenda of political discourse and by contributing their own preferences in political controversies (Bennett & Entman 2001; Voltmer & Koch-Baumgarten, 2007).

The mass media in every democratic society is established as an important organ of information sourcing and dissemination, provision of electoral education, surveillance, social enlightenment and mobilization (Oshega, et al., 2017). Thomas Jefferson, former American president, avers that since the basis of democracy was the opinion of the people, if it were left for him to decide whether his country should have a government without the mass media or mass media without a government he would choose the latter (Akinfeleye, 2008). The above statement further emphasizes the vital role of the mass media in the democratic process. The power of the new media, particularly, in the area of timely dissemination of information is a trend that has gained global acceptance and is now indispensable in every serious communication activity. Applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as user-generated content websites or blogs, provide new ways of disseminating political information (Heblich, 2016).

Agba & Ogri (2016) summarize the role of the mass media in a democratic process by stating that, during political campaigns, the media are used extensively by competing candidates and political parties to canvass for the electorates' votes and supports. They further state that the electoral umpire and concerned government agencies also use the media platforms to educate the electorates during elections. Also, the media carry messages about events that reflect positively or negatively on government and other actors in the political arena (Agba & Ogri, 2016). These functions of the media make them bridge the yawning gap between the government and its citizens to facilitate growth and development of Nigeria's nascent democracy. In contemporary times, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to have a functional electoral process without the mass media.

The mass media plays a crucial role in creating development awareness through transferring information to the audience and exchanging thoughts. Through agenda-setting function, the media conditions society's vision and understanding of sports and provides a narrative that exerts a didactic influence on the concept of sports and physical education (Marín-Motín, 2008; Puertas-Molero, Marfil-Carmona, Zurita-Ortega & Gonzalez-Valero, 2019). It plays an effective, instructive and leading role in development, awakening public consciousness and raising public awareness by spreading novel ideas through information dissemination. This makes it possible for people to understand trend of events in their surroundings and premise decision making regarding personal and social issues on clearer and more updated information (Kumari, 2019). This also helps individuals get familiar with their social responsibilities, especially for development. Furthermore, media messages are developed according to criteria of topicality, objectivity and simplicity, which aim to produce a message with the widest reach possible (Sherwood & Nicholson, 2017).

Studies show that mass media are promising channels for providing information that potentially influences behaviour of audiences on a large scale (Xavier *et. al.*, 2013; Liu, 2020). Social media are channels and messaging apps that are very effective in dissemination of information. Social media, as a concept, was first coined by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty (Beetseh, Olise & Tor-Akwer, 2021). Social media platforms have been described as places for adding or editing information or a web which allows people to make use of digital tools to create, change and publish dynamic content (Okike, Terna & Beetseh, 2019; Tor-Akwer, 2019).

President Tinubu of All Progressives Congress (APC) while making his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023, as he was being sworn as president of Nigeria, said "Let the Poor Breathe". In his maiden speech on Democracy Day on June 12, 2023, President Tinubu made what sounded like two impressive sound-bites which tended to give the impression that he would be a people-friendly leader. He told Nigerians: "I share your pains" with regard to the harsh economic experience occasioned by the commencement of implementation of the petrol subsidy removal. President Tinubu was seen on a viral video saying: "Let the poor breathe, don't suffocate them". He made the statement on May 29, 2023, during his inauguration as the new president of Nigeria. He announced the final removal of petrol subsidy right there at the inauguration venue. His government also announced the floating of the naira – an exchange rate system that eliminates a fixed price for forex trading within the country, thereby introducing an exchange rate method where the local currency is

set by the forces of demand and supply within the forex market (Tijani, 2023). These two economic policies led to inflation and fall in standard of living, thereby giving the impression that the president was saying one thing while his government is walking a different, in fact opposite, road.

It is against this background that this study seeks to analyze audience perception of Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment which went viral on social media and how the comment influences people's perception of his economic policies. It provides an insight into how the citizens of Nigeria perceive the president's economic policies based on media exposure to his comments.

Statement of the Problem

The perception of government in power could affect public support for its policies. A negative perception could lead to lack of support or belief in the policy of a particular government in power. Comments of political leaders could influence perceptions which the public have about them. If the comment about the poor as made by Tinubu is perceived in bad light, this could affect public support for his administration's policies and lead to lack of belief in his administration. This is why it is important to find out whether Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment is perceived in bad light by Nigerians, especially as it affects his economic policies.

Okoro and Nwafor (2013) observed that there is "social media war" taking place on the various social media platforms in Nigeria, which could make most members of the public to lose confidence in the social media and to raise questions about this media's viability as an important tool for public discussion and as a means of reaching government officials in the country. Therefore, it is important to look into the effectiveness and the role of social media outlets as platforms for political dialogue among Nigerians.

The effect of the social media on political participation has been studied, but whether comments in reaction to president Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" statement influenced people's perception of his economic policies, especially as it pertains to fuel subsidy removal and floating of the naira, has not received analytical attention. To fill this gap, this study investigated the audience exposure to the viral video on president Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment and its influence on perception of his economic policies. It is possible that the viral social media video may have influenced perception of his economic policies and a negative perception of government policy could discourage public support for such policies. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no study has looked at president Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment and its influence on

perception of his economic policies. It is this gap in knowledge that this study intends to fill.

Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the frequency of exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video on social media by respondents in Awka.
- To ascertain the source of exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video by respondents in Awka.
- To find out respondents' perception of Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment.
- To ascertain respondents' perception of Tinubu's economic policies in relation to his "Let the Poor Breathe" comment.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will provide insight to political parties on the role played by social media in shaping public opinion on government policies. The use of media to create a favourable image that influences public acceptance of government policies is very essential, and political parties and politicians need to know how this strategy shapes public discourse on policy acceptance by the people.

This study is also very important to students, researchers and scholars in communication and related disciplines as the findings would contribute to literature on social media influence and the effect of public opinion on government policy acceptance. Evidence from available literature indicates a paucity of studies like this, especially how comments by political office holders disseminated through social media platforms influence public opinion on government policies among residents of Awka, Anamabra State, Nigeria. Most studies of this nature were done in the Western world and, given the obvious dissimilarities in the socio-political, environmental and cultural settings of Western societies and the Nigerian society, there is every need for literature from a local study, like this one, on assessment of exposure to social media and its influence on perception of government policy.

Theoretical Framework

Reception Theory

Reception theory presents media users as active interpreters of media contents. Also known as reception analysis, the theory was founded based

on the principles first put forward by the Birmingham School of Thought, led by Stuart Hall (Idakwo & Oloruntola, 2020). It stipulates that people interpret texts they are exposed to in different independent ways. McQuail (2010) explains that the essence of reception is the construction and negotiation of meaning between the message source and its receiver. Reception theory provides explanation on the existence of diverse groups in the society, with the dominant group mostly seeking to impose its interpretation of culture on all other groups.

Reception analysis is one standard for measuring media audiences, as this analysis attempts to offer a meaning for understanding media texts (print, electronic, internet) by first getting to understand how media text characters are read by audiences (Aminudin, 2018). People who analyze the media using the reception study pay attention to the experience of the audience members exposed to the media, including understanding how the experience shapes the meaning being created.

Morley (1992), one of the leading researchers that made use of Hall's model in an influential analysis of the television show "Nationwide" audience, summarizes the premises of Hall's encoding/decoding model thus:

- ✓ Individuals can encode the same story or event in more than one way.
- ✓ The message usually conveys more than one potential "reading". What this means is that messages propose or "prefer" a specific reading over others, but those messages can never become wholly closed around one reading: a television text remains polysemic (which means that it is capable of passing across a variety of interpretations).
- ✓ Decoding and understanding the message constitute a problematic practice, not minding how transparent and "natural" the act may look like. Messages that were encoded in a particular way can always be decoded in a different way (Morley, 1992).

Morley (1992) says that a negotiated reading refers to an audience member accepting the preferred reading but at the same time modifies it so that it will reflect his or her own interests, position, or experience. Oppositional reading is anti-hegemonic and has to do with the process whereby media users reject the existing frame of the preferred reading and provide an alternative frame of reference. Hall says that in this reading, the audience member "detotalises the message in the preferred code in order to retotalise the message within some alternative framework of reference.

This is the case of the viewer who listens to a debate on the need to limit wages, but also 'reads' every mention of 'the national interest' as 'class interest'" (Hall in McQuail, 2002, p. 308). It is important to emphasize the fact that these three readings are moments of decoding that lie in the realm of pragmatics. In other words, the media users' interpretations of the television text are above the levels of semantics and syntactics. The media users understand the literal meanings and whether what they read are dominant, negotiated, or oppositional actually depends on the connoted meaning (and pragmatic codes) of the text.

Stuart Hall argues that the media offer the guiding myths that shape interpretations which individuals hold about the world (Griffin 2012; Aminudin, 2018). Hall further dismissed the claim of only one existing interpretation for media messages and emphasized that to achieve this interpretation an individual has to interface with different groups. Griffin (2012, p. 347) cited Stuart Hall who emphasized that culture is primarily concerned with the production and exchange of meanings. This presentation makes the reception theory apt for the current study which is premised on audience members' reception, interpretation and perception of social media video on Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" as it concerns how his policies on fuel subsidy and Naira floating against the dollar affect the lives of the poor in Nigeria.

Perception Theory

In view of the fact that the subject matter of this work is basically focused on perception of President Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment and how it influences perception of his economic policies, it becomes essential to adopt the theory of perception for this study. There are two: the self-perception theory and the cognitive dissonance theory. First, the theory of self-perception, inspired by B. F. Skinner's analyses, refers to when individuals come to "know" or have better understanding of their own attitudes, emotions and other personal states largely by drawing conclusions from observing their own behavior and/or the situations in which this behavior occurs (Baran, 2002).

The process of media audience perception involves four stages of selective exposure, selective perception, selective attention and selective retention, which fall within the selective process, a postulation of Festinger Leon in 1957 while pioneering this line of thought (Festinger, 1957; Folarin, 1998; Baran, 2002). Research often emphasizes on the study of these selective process, especially in dealing with media audience perception and attitudinal change.

Selective exposure entails a process where individuals expose themselves to selected messages and, because of this, it is difficult for other messages to have effect on them. The concept of selective retention assumes that people remember best and longest those messages that are consistent with their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs. People tend to retain messages that are useful to them when they are exposed to a certain medium. Two people cannot have the same interest (Folarin, 1998; Baran, 2002; Agbanu, 2013). The concept of selective perception predicts that people will interpret messages in a manner consistent with their pre-existing attitudes and beliefs. Finally, selective attention says that because the eye processes information much faster than the brain can interpret, the human brain has to select which information to pay attention to at any given time. Perception theory is very essential to this study because it has to do with the perception of the people about Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment and how his economic policies, especially fuel subsidy and naira-dollar exchange floating, have affected standard of living of the poor in Nigeria.

The Review

Social Media and Public Opinion Formation

Opinion dynamics is the study of how people's opinions evolve (Lee, Yang & Kim, 2022). People hold their own thoughts to issues they confront, and individual opinions change over time through communication among their peers. As mobile devices become necessities in people's modern daily lives, access to media is getting easier and easier. People can easily express and post their thoughts and emotions about social issues and freely interact with others (Lee, Yang & Kim, 2022). So, lots of contents that have various points of view about social issues arise and disappear constantly in a modern society. Considering that the echo chamber filter bubble appears in many platforms which serve contents tailored to individual tastes and preferences, opinion formation is greatly influenced by the contents that the media provide. Therefore, the portion of our opinions that are shaped by what we read or watch on media cannot be ignored (Dong et al., 2018; Lee, Yang & Kim, 2022).

Social media platforms have been used as powerful tools by politicians, marketers, brands, companies, and even individuals to achieve their goals. After the technological revolution dominated the world and changed our lifestyle and way of exchanging knowledge, social media became the most significant influence on public opinion. A person's awareness, personality, and thinking pattern are shaped by what they acquire from the behaviours and information present in their surrounding environment (Lee, Yang &

Kim, 2022). That environment includes: family, friends, school, places of worship, religious practices, and any other place or means where they can interact with and learn from others. That can happen through face-to-face communication or through any cultural or artistic forms, such as books, music or movies (Dong et al., 2018; Pinto, et al., 2019).

With the advent of the internet, the social media has become a major component of the environment that constitutes and affects human awareness, inclinations, opinions, and even behaviours (Pinto et al., 2019). It has also become the easiest way to communicate with different people from all over the world, access information from various sources in the easiest and fastest way, and learn the diverse ideologies of different cultures. That is how social media influences public opinion and moves the audience towards the desired behaviour. The role of social media in public opinion has been profound and evident since it started gaining attention and attracting interest years ago. In many countries, including Egypt, especially after the 2011 revolution, the understanding of the importance of social media has been increasing each day (Dong et al., 2018). The new generation, after that revolution, recognized that social media platforms are not just made for entertainment; they also have a crucial role in helping in the uprising of social movements, leading them to achieve their goals and changing political views (Dong et al., 2018). This has forced people with authority to also believe in the power of the double-edged sword which social media is.

Social networks are tools used to reach and influence the public sphere. However, with the advent of social media, it has become an invaluable addition, if not the perfect replacement for the traditional platforms. Social movements were always an effective weapon that people used on a national and international level all around the world to restructure the past, reshape the present, and change the future of society (Pinto, et al., 2019). Through the social media, communication among the public sphere has been a lot easier. Also, considering the billions of people browsing the internet and including social media in their lifestyle, those social movements became able to reach larger audiences. This has changed the idea behind a public sphere, as it wasn't exclusive to the citizens of a specific country. Now, social movements can reach everyone through Facebook, Twitter, or any other platform, making social movements an international matter in which everyone can participate (Lee, Yang & Kim, 2022).

Social media is one of the most influential contemporary tools for the manipulation of international, regional, and local public opinion. Through it, cases are made and one side can be biased at the expense of another,

achieved through what is known as a “trend”. Social media are used politically to disseminate both true and false information to help win victory for certain political parties (Abdelmalak, 2022). The social media has been significant in the springing up of many social movements. It was used as a channel by many social groups to launch their own brand of campaigns on social issues.

This represents a general orientation towards a topic on social media sites that is crystallized within the framework of a group of publications. People adopting such trends can be personally acquainted with each other or they can be distant from each other (Abdelmalak, 2022). But the danger of this method, which affects public opinion and leads it in certain directions, is ignorance of the source of the topic raised, ignorance of the identity of the participants raising the topic, and ignorance of the topic’s objectives. Social media sites are used by many as tools for influencing public opinion to achieve different goals, including creating a collective mindset through which the public can be led to take up unified positions on social or political issues, which amounts to creating social movements (Abdelmalak, 2022).

Brief on President Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” Comment and Its Controversy

President Tinubu made the “Let the Poor Breathe” comment during his inaugural speech, after being sworn in as president, on May 29, 2023. This statement became what sounded like an impressive sound-bite which tended to give the impression that he would be a people-friendly leader. President Tinubu was seen on a viral video saying: “Let the poor breathe, don’t suffocate them” (Odeleke, 2023). He announced the final removal of petrol subsidy right there at the inauguration venue. His government also announced the floating of the naira, an exchange rate mechanism that eliminates the practice of fixing naira’s exchange rate, thereby allowing the forces of demand and supply to determine the local currency’s rate within the forex market (Tijani, 2023). These two economic policies led to inflation and fall in standard of living, thereby giving the impression that the president was saying one thing while his government was doing a different thing.

Analysts were of the opinion that Tinubu was not sincere with his comment about the poor as his policies were in no way helping the poor to breathe. Some analysts felt he did not understand who the poor in Nigeria are. According to Amadi (2023),

when we discuss about the poor in Nigeria, we are not just discussing about the more than 93million citizens who are formally

captured as living below official poverty lines. We are not talking only about the 134million citizens who do not have access to the barest basics of health, education, and recreational facilities in rural and urban Nigeria, or the additional 7.1million Nigerians that the World Bank predicts will fall into deeper poverty because of government's removal of subsidy and spikes in energy costs. When we discuss about the poor in Nigeria, it includes the millions who, though officially not poor, are continually exposed to plenty risks of such nature that if any of them crystallizes, they are flung into deep poverty. Poverty in Nigeria is not just numbers; it is pervasive vulnerabilities and incapacities.

Analysts argue that successive Nigerian governments have paid lip service to the question of acute poverty and inequality because, in the eyes of an irresponsible State, poverty is basically a personal problem for millions left behind (Odeleke, 2023). Even the poor themselves do not seem to begrudge society as is done in other societies where increasing poverty often leads to violent conflicts. It seems that the Nigerian poor are a more charitable lot. But despite the social psychology of poverty in Nigeria, it remains a real threat to national prosperity and survival. Nigeria's future is partly tied to her ability to drastically reduce poverty (Odeleke, 2023; Amadi, 2023).

For decades, the elite have held Nigeria down and sabotaged every reform effort. It is to their credit that the poor in the country are going through the worst moment of their lives (Odeleke, 2023). Among the downtrodden, things have fallen apart and it has become increasingly difficult for the poor to earn a living. Every right-thinking Nigerian, including President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, agrees that it is time the poor breathed (Odeleke, 2023).

Analysts suggest that the president should go beyond mere words to put other things in place for the poor to truly breathe as he said. For the poor to breathe, the fuel subsidy must go as the president told the nation during his inauguration. This is because fuel subsidy is the channel through which the corrupt elite enriched themselves, claiming subsidies on products they never supplied, or inflated or directed to neighbouring Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. For the poor to breathe, the education system needs surgery (Odeleke, 2023). For the poor to breathe, Nigeria's security situations have to change. Farmlands from Owo to Mubi to Eket to Okigwe have to be safe for the farmers. Kidnappings and banditry have to stop. For the poor to breathe, the nation's health system must begin to work, among other suggestions by analysts (Odeleke, 2023). It is based on the effects of the policies of Tinubu's government and the hardship that Nigerians are passing through that this study seeks to ascertain the

perception of residents of Awka on whether the president is truly keeping to his words which went viral in the social media that he wants the poor to breathe.

Brief Look at Two Economic Policies: Fuel Subsidy Removal and Floating of Naira

Floating of Naira: Nigeria floated the Naira on June 14, 2023; this weakened the currency by over 70 percent compared to the N460 per USD level it traded before the reform. The currency now trades at almost N850 per USD in the parallel (black) market though in a fluctuating manner. Floating the naira presents a complex decision for the Nigerian government though this policy can enhance export competitiveness, attract investment, and signal economic reforms but also carries risks such as increased exchange rate volatility and potential inflationary pressures.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has employed various measures to manage its currency, the naira, including pegging it at a specific exchange rate. This naturally created two exchange rates, the official and the black market (Tijani, 2023; Eromosele, 2023). The disparity between the two provided an avenue for people with access to dollars to buy at the official rate and resell at the black market. Many millionaires and a few billionaires were created through this distorted system. Floating the exchange rate is meant to solve this problem. The idea of floating the naira has, however, remained a subject of debate as it is viewed by experts to have both potential advantages and risks which can affect the standard of living (Eromosele, 2023).

Floating a country's currency, also known as a floating exchange rate, refers to a monetary system where the value of a nation's currency is determined by market forces such as supply and demand. In this system, the currency's exchange rate fluctuates freely in response to various economic factors, including inflation, interest rates, trade balances, and capital flows (Tijani, 2023). This means that the naira's value would fluctuate in response to economic factors, including inflation, interest rates, and foreign investment. While this volatility can be unsettling in the short term, it can also help promote economic adjustments and improve competitiveness in the long run. The Central Bank of Nigeria would need to implement effective monetary policies, such as interest rate adjustments and tight fiscal measures to manage inflation and maintain price stability (Eromosele, 2023).

Removal of Fuel Subsidy: On Monday 29th May, 2023, in his inaugural speech, President Bola Tinubu said that Nigeria's fuel subsidies would be

scrapped, citing budgetary concerns. The decision led to a steep rise in fuel prices and widespread panic-buying of fuel. Some bus companies have been unable to refuel their vehicles, leaving many people stranded. Barely two days after the announcement, the state oil company, NNPC Limited, reviewed the pump price of petrol from N189 per litre to between N480 and N570 per litre – more than 200 per cent increase (Yusuf, 2023). Officials of NNPC argued that the adjustment in petrol prices with market rates will promote competition and efficiency in the oil market and drop prices naturally as prices would continue to fluctuate to reflect market dynamics (Yusuf, 2023). This policy has led to price increase of various products in the country and is adversely affecting the people. Businesses were eventually affected as this policy led to rise in the prices of goods and services across the country. It has to be noted that the price of fuel is still on continuous rise even to the tune of N670.

Methodology

This study adopted the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method. The population of this study was made up of civil servants working for Anambra State. The study focused on civil servants working in Ministries at the State's secretariat. The total population is 3162 (Source: Office of the Head of Service of the State). The ministries are Information, Health, Housing and Urban Development, Judiciary, Education and Science and Technology. Since this is an exploratory study, the researcher randomly selected 72 civil servants from the six State's Ministries. The selection was based on the researcher's discretion and convenience. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the 72 civil servants who agreed to be part of the study. This figure was then used as the sample size. Six (6) FGD sessions were held altogether, one each for the six (6) ministries that were randomly selected from the State ministries. Only those who saw the "Let the Poor Breathe" videos circulated on social media which showed President Tinubu making the comment during his inauguration in Abuja were selected for the study. The FGD sessions lasted for an average of 50 minutes per session with a distribution of 12 participants in each session. The FGD sessions took place between the hours of 12noon and 4pm on week days within the period of research. The choice of timing was so designed to fit into the break periods of the workers and the time they said they could take excuse from their offices to be part of the study. An interview question guide was used for the study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What is the frequency of exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video on social media by

respondents in Awka?

During this session, all the respondents agreed that they watched the video very often on their social media platforms. They also said that they shared the video to friends on social media. According to Madam Chinwe, one of the participants from Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, “I watched the video several times because I found it very funny. Just that I started feeling that Tinubu was not sincere with the comment when he removed subsidy and things got worse.” Her position was corroborated by other participants in the various FGD sessions who said they were frequently exposed to the video on Let the Poor Breathe’ which was said by President Tinubu. Majority of the participants said they were exposed to the video frequently as several friends shared the video on social media where you could see it more than once.

Research Question Two: What is the source of exposure to Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” video by respondents in Awka?

Most of the participants, during this session, said they mostly saw Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” video on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp platforms. These were the top three platforms through which the participants saw the video. Very few mentioned TikTok as the platform they first saw the video. According to Nnamdi, one of the participants from Ministry of Information, “I saw it several times on Facebook. A lot of my friends on Facebook posted it on their walls.” Another participant, Grace from the Ministry of Education said she saw it on Twitter and a lot of her friends watched it on Twitter with her. She said, “I saw it on Twitter and my friends watched it with me on Twitter. At a point that video was trending on Twitter”. Many other participants said they saw it on WhatsApp and shared it to friends on WhatsApp. From the discussions it was clear that most participants saw the video of Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” comment on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

Research question three: What is the respondents’ perception of Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” comment?

Most of the participants saw it as a mockery of the poor in Nigeria. Though some of them said initially they thought Tinubu was being sincere with the comment, but immediately he announced the removal of subsidy and the effects started biting hard on the country they knew he was not sincere about letting the poor breathe. One participant identified as Alex, with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, said, “I had always known that he was not serious with the comment because of his antecedents as a politician who made promises in the past, especially

during his party's campaign for ex-president Buhari's election, but they never fulfilled their promises. So I knew he was joking; in fact, he was mocking the poor". Another participant from the Ministry of Education said, "How could anyone have believed what Tinubu said about the poor? Well, you can see for yourself that it was an insincere comment". Other participants corroborated this view by saying that Tinubu's comment was insincere and the usual rhetoric of politicians.

Research question four: What is the respondents' perception of Tinubu's economic policies in relation to his 'Let the Poor Breathe' comment?

During this session, participants said that they were not confident about the seriousness of President Tinubu as regards his economic policies, especially fuel subsidy removal and floating of the Naira which had led to untold hardship on Nigerians. There was a consensus among participants on a negative perception of Tinubu's economic policies, especially as it has to do with his sincerity of purpose. They said that a man who removed subsidy and floated the naira without first putting in place measures to address the hardship is not really serious about letting the poor breathe, as he said in the viral video. One of the participants from the Ministry of Justice, Emmanuel, said, "I don't believe he is serious about letting the poor breathe. His economic policies do not show that he has the poor at heart." Another participant from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Madam Ifunanya said, "His policies are against the people. It does not show he has any feeling for what the people are suffering. His policies do not show he has the interest to let the poor breathe." Other participants corroborated the view that Tinubu's economic policies are not favourable to Nigerians and that he does not have the interest of the poor at heart, although very few participants also mentioned that it might be too early to condemn the president's economic policies as it was necessary to give him time to see whether the policies would yield positive results. In summary, the participants had a negative perception of President Tinubu's economic policies, especially in relation to his "Let the Poor Breathe" comment.

Discussion of Findings

The first research objective which is to ascertain the frequency of exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video on social media by respondents in Awka. Data revealed that respondents were well exposed to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video on social media. Most of the respondents watched the video very often. From the findings, it could be seen that most of the respondents watched or heard the messages very often. This agrees with the findings of Shadrack & Apuke (2020) which states that the mass

media are the primary sources of information for voters, enabling them to monitor politicians and to use this information in their voting decisions. The study also agrees with studies that suggest that social media are one of the major sources of information on politics for users (Duru, 2019; Aslan, et al., 2021, Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2021; Obiakor, Ikegbunam & Ezeaso, 2023). After a study, Aslan, et al. (2021) observed that social networking is used for effectively and efficiently interacting with the electorate, especially during election processes, through campaign activities.

The second research objective is to ascertain the source of exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" video by respondents in Awka. The result showed that most of the participants saw the video on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. These are the three social media platforms which came tops as the platforms that the participants exposed themselves to "Let the Poor Breathe" video by Tinubu. This finding also supports the assertion by Ahad & Lim (2014) that there is anecdotal evidence of social media platforms such as WhatsApp playing a central role in civic as well as political engagement. Similarly, Shadrach (2017) says that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are gaining popularity among citizens because they pass information freely without control of government, powerful politicians and advertisers as well as free of conventional professional bottlenecks like gate-keeping. Popular platforms, according to Ahad & Lim (2014), are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp, in that order. WhatsApp users, for instance, get news outside the domain of family and friends and from a variety of topics, which enables them to meet their different information needs (Ahmadi, & Wohn, 2018). Some studies have demonstrated how the sense of collective or social identity motivate the use of WhatsApp and other instant messaging platforms for activism (Treré, 2018). Similarly, Obiakor (2022) discovered after a study that Twitter platform is more preferred and enjoyed by the users than the WhatsApp platform especially for exposure to security information; the study concluded that more people get exposed to such information basically through the new media platforms than through the traditional media.

The third research objective seeks to ascertain the respondents' perception of Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment. Result shows that many participants had a negative perception of the comment as they saw it as a mockery of the poor and an insincere comment from Tinubu who has a political background that is not credible. This is supported by studies which established that the media's coverage on politics influences people's political attitudes, and this includes university students (Hamad, Ichtat & Zulham, 2001). Similarly, Kraus & Davis (1978) had found that the media

played a significant role in shaping the political attitude of voters. McNair (1995) also shows that the media do mould the audience's political knowledge and attitudes. This also supports the perception theory which says the audiences engage in selective exposure, interpretation and retention of information they are exposed to in the media (Folarin, 1998; Baran, 2002). The participants in this study were exposed to the Tinubu's video on "Let the Poor Breathe" and interpreted it based on their experiences.

The fourth research objective sought to discover the respondents' perception of Tinubu's economic policies in relation to his "Let the Poor Breathe" comment. This result showed a negative perception of his economic policies which the participants said did not show that he was sincere about his comment that the poor should breathe. This is supported by studies which establish that the media play significant role in the public perception of government policies (Green-Pedersen 2019; Grossman, 2022). As Agbanu (2013) pointed out, the media set the public agenda and act as the gatekeeper of public issues. The findings also support the reception theory which stipulates that audiences interpret information they are exposed to in the media according to existing trends in the society (Idakwo & Oloruntola, 2020). People who analyze the media using the reception theory pay attention to the experience of the audience members exposed to the media, including understanding how the experience shapes the meaning being created (Aminudin, 2018). In relation to this study, participants interpreted the "Let the Poor Breathe" comment of Tinubu in relation to his economic policies which are causing hardship to the poor he was referring to.

Conclusion

This study investigated the exposure to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" viral video on social media and its influence on perception of his economic policies. The study focused on civil servants working for Anambra State government, especially those in the State secretariat located in Awka, the capital city. The researcher chose to focus on civil servants in Awka based on discretion and convenience. Four objectives were formulated for the study. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was adopted for the study. Data revealed that participants were exposed to Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" viral video on social media. It was also found that respondents saw the video on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp more often than on other social media platforms. The participants had negative perception of Tinubu's "Let the Poor Breathe" comment as they saw it as a mockery of the poor and an insincere comment from the president. The participants also had a negative perception of Tinubu's economic policies

in relation to his comment on “Let the Poor Breathe”. These findings were analyzed showing how they supported the Reception and Perception theories, including their relationship to other researches done in this area of study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Political office holders in Nigeria should stand true to their words and make sure their actions and policies are a reflection of the comments they make in the media as this affects public support for their policies.
2. Political office holders should utilize the social media in advocating for public support for their policies since these media play essential roles in shaping public perception of government policy acceptance by the people.
3. Government administrations at State and Federal levels should combine both mainstream and social media in projecting policies and programmes to the public with a view to gaining support for such policies. This also includes use of both private and government owned media.
4. The researcher recommends further studies in this area of study, especially in other States in the country to check the perception of the people in other states regarding Tinubu’s “Let the Poor Breathe” comment and its relationship to his economic policies.

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APA

Obiakor, C. U., & Adikuru, C. C. (2024). Exposure to Tinubu's 'Let the Poor Breathe' Viral Video on Social Media and its Influence on Audience Perception of His Economic Policies. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, 3(2), 7-31. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-01/>.

MLA

Obiakor, Casmir U. and Adikuru, Chinonso C. "Exposure to Tinubu's 'Let the Poor Breathe' Viral Video on Social Media and its Influence on Audience Perception of His Economic Policies". *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2024, pp. 7-31. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-01/>.

Messianism and Zionism in Jewish Nationalism: A Panacea for Nation-Building in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Some of the notable liberating mechanisms and advocating organs recognizable in the Jewish national history are Messianism and Zionism. While Messianism is a religious ideology, Zionism remains the political organ that expresses the messianic ideology towards the re-building and development of the Jewish nation. Previous scholars had interpreted these concepts to express different ideas ranging from the liberation of the oppressed to the advent of an eschatological utopian state, yet adequate attention has not been paid to how the messianic concept gave impetus to the Zionists to re-gather and re-build the Jewish nation. Adopting Historical-Critical and Contextual methods, this paper analyses a few selected messianic texts in the Old Testament in the context of Messianism and Zionism. These texts are selected because they were historically instrumental in sustaining the Jewish faith towards the fulfilment of their national dreams. Findings revealed that the Jews experienced exile and travails in history yet they sustained the messianic ideology through didactic devices and literature, which eventually helped the Zionists in actualising their national goal. Data were subjected to exegetical analysis of the selected biblical texts. Similarly, available Jewish documents were explored. The paper recommends that Nigerians and their leaders should learn from the Jews' dispositions towards the messianic ideology and the patriotic move of the Zionists. It concludes that the Messianic ideology and the Zionist patriotism could serve as impetus and veritable templates for re-building any given nation into an enviable status.

Keywords: Messianism, Zionism, Jewish nationalism, nation-building, Nigerian context

Introduction

In human history, the idea of deliverance and restoration of mankind has found its expressions in various contexts. A very prominent one in the Old Testament is Messianism. Messianism is a concept that is epitomised in the prophecies about the re-gathering and re-establishment of the Israelites into a nation. Previous scholarship widely expressed the phenomenon as an organ for political movements that demand a radical transformation of society¹, re-establishment of nationhood² and re-gathering of the exile into utopian state.³

Historically, the messianic concept began when the first man lost his world and Yahweh promised thereafter to raise a Messiah in the person of the זרע Zera' (Seed); to whom the *Tanakh* (Hebrew Scripture) refers as: זרעהאִישה, Zera' ha-ishah “the Seed of the woman” (Gen.3:15). But later, the concept became so prominent with technical usage; and it developed beyond its root meaning. According to Klausner, the concept developed into a singular focus, which forms according to events and circumstances; but always at the base of one great longing, which is to redeem Israel from servitude into freedom and restoration.⁴ Being a progressive concept with different interpretations in the Israelite prophetic tradition; the messianic prophecies become so prominent in the Old Testament, particularly, in the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah and Zechariah. These books typically set the hopes of re-gathering of the exiles from diaspora, re-establishing them to their homeland and re-building their public life and system. Keying into these hope and aspiration, a political organ that sued for rebuilding of the Jewish nation grasped these biblical prophecies and promises of national restoration and re-establishment. It approached and achieved her vision and mission through political means.

Thus, this paper views the historical events around the Jews' aspiration for deliverance and restoration into nationhood in the light of the Old Testament messianic prophecies. It infers that their processes of freedom from diaspora and re-establishment in their homeland were through the religious interpretation and political efforts of the Zionists. It explores how the Zionist Movement eventually ushered in a utopian state, invested in nation-building and brought about good governance in the Jewish nation. Consequently, the paper recommends that Nigerian citizens should learn from the Jews' dispositions to the messianic ideology, be patriotic like the Zionists and intensify efforts in re-building the nation if they wish to actualise the Nigeria of their dreams. It concludes that the Jewish Messianic ideology was a modality for freedom, re-gathering and re-

establishment for the Jewish people, and that though Nigeria is a multi-religious nation with cultural diversities, yet her citizens can garner modality from the messianic faith and the Zionist mission to re-build her wholeness.

Conceptual Meaning of Messianism and Zionism

Etymologically, the term “Messianism” comes from the word “Messiah”.⁵ It is derived from the Hebrew word *Mashiach* “to anoint”, or the anointment of some individuals such as priests, prophets and kings for divine assignments. It is also traditionally used in biblical history for deliverers or redeemers of God’s people, who would also establish them in His Kingdom.⁶ Zionism, on the other hand, is the socio-political group that has been canvassing and promoting the re-settlement of the Jews in their ancestral homeland, and the re-establishment of Hebrew language as a national language throughout Eastern Europe. The Movement is collectively known as **ציונות** “*lovers of Zion*”. It is derived from the noun “Zion”, that is, the historic reference to the holy city of Jerusalem.⁷ Modern Israel actualised the declaration and inauguration of the modern nationhood by the influence and pressure of Zionism. Jews in the Russian Empire established the Zionist Movement (Sect) in the late 19th century. The Movement politically canvassed for the establishment of territorial Jewish State seeing the afflictions and persecutions their people were going through. They were zealous promoters of the Jewish re-settlement⁸ who keyed into the biblical prophecies and promises of re-gathering and re-settlement of the Jewish people (Israelites) into their homeland.

The Development of Messianism in the Jewish Tradition

The works carried out by a class of scholars with a peculiar reference to the work of Blocks on Messianism in the Old Testament give a common submission that the concept is too broad and complex to be reduced to single word-study.⁹ The implication of this is that the Old Testament messianic concept cannot adequately be discussed by restricting it to its concept of anointment or the anointed with its elements of redemption and restoration.¹⁰

Historically, the messianic ideology takes a progression in the Old Testament. The concept began with the first dominion of the first man over the world of his time, who fell when the dominion was influenced by Satan. As a result, the book, Genesis, records a consolatory prophecy, holding that the dominion of sin and the evil arising from sin, shall not last forever, but rather, the **זרעה אישה**, *Zera’ ha-ishah* “the seed of the woman” shall, at some future time, overthrow their dreaded conquerors and

reinstate humanity into its permanent abode.¹¹

In the era of Abraham, the messianic concept received a fresh interpretation. According to Nadler, Abraham was saved from the midst of idolatrous people, and as well promised a great nation.¹² This promise of the great nation to Abraham and his descendants set the hope of the Jews towards the realisation of the Promised Land (nation) through a messianic figure. The first nation, however, got lost in slavery in the land of Egypt, and had messianic deliverance, in-gathering (restoration) under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. After this freedom, Israel was again deported to Assyria in 722 B.C, where she lost her national identity and religious dignity; and later the southern kingdom (Judah) was exiled to Babylon in 586 B.C where a nation of honour became a laughing stock. At this dawn of frustration, the Old Testament prophets began to give prophecies and hope of re-gathering and re-establishment. Some Israelites (Jews) took these prophecies metaphorically, but God set a messiah for them in the person of King Cyrus The Great who liberated the Jewish exiles, gave them freedom to return to their homeland, and got re-established as a nation.

However, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Romans, the Jews were scattered all over the world again and suffered in the hands of their captors. But they kept their faith alive through didactic devices and literature. They held firm to the messianic prophecies that ensured their return and re-gathering as a nation where they would live in peace, safety and in prosperity, trading with nations under a godly anointed prince (Ezekiel 34:24; 38:12). Predicating on this religious faith by the Zionists in modern Judaism, the concept receives a fresh interpretation; jettisoning the idea of the supernatural figure(s), it is interpreted as a galvanised political ideology and intellectual philosophy for the liberation of the downtrodden and the re-gathering of the dispersed people.¹³

Selected Messianic Prophecies as Bases for Zionism in the Biblical Texts

According to Bimyon, a common fact about Messianism regarding its restoration concept in the Jewish perception and writings is that most of the books of the Old Testament are virtually messianic in nature¹⁴, as they express the *Shevutekh*¹⁵ (the hope of good welfare and governance for the people of God). This faith became the major prophetic element of the prophets of Yahweh in the era, which robustly addressed the return and re-establishment of the people of God.¹⁶

In the Pentateuch, the record of the Deuteronomist gave consolation to the

house of Israel about her eschatological hopes of return, re-gathering and nationhood in the word: *Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and show you mercy. He will gather you again from all peoples, where He has scattered you. If your out-casts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you; and the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed that you may possess it, and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers* (Deut. 30:3-5 NIV). Prophet Isaiah while giving the hope of restoration to the house of Israel who were suffering slavery in Assyria under the political hegemony of Sargon II (740—698 BCE) said, *In that day, the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the Remnant which is left of his people from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamata, and from the coastal land of the sea* (Isa. 11:11, NIV). Moreover, Zephaniah (641—612 BCE), who also prophesied at the time when Israel was scattered all over the territory of the Assyrians, revealed thus: *At that time, I will re-gather you home, at the time when I gather you together, yes, I will make you renowned and among the people of the earth, when I restore your fortunes...’, says the LORD.* (Zeph.3:20 RSV).

Dramatically, God gave Ezekiel a vision of the valley full of dry bones and prophecy of restoration between 590—570 BCE. According to the record in Ezekiel 37:11, God told the prophet, *son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.* The text is crystal clear that the resurrection of the dry bones was a reference to the restoration of the house of Israel. The prophecy came in a clear term after the dramatic scene put as: *Then say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: “Surely, I will re-gather the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from everywhere and side and assemble them into their own land* (Ezekiel 37:21 NIV). Specifically, Jeremiah, the Judaeen prophet who began his prophetic ministry in 627 BCE through the final deportation of the Judahites to Babylon in 586 BCE, thereafter assured the Israelites the hopes of return and re-establishment in future. He made an expressed prophecy proclaiming: *I will re-build you again, O maiden Israel!... I will bring them in from the northern land; gather them from the surface of the earth...in a vast throng, they shall return here. I will bring them (the Jews) out of the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. And I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel. There will be a king over all of them, and they will never again be two nations or divided into two kingdoms* (Jeremiah 31:4,5; 34: 13; 37:22 NIV).

Precisely, in 587/6 BCE, the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon under the leadership of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52). It was an experience of torment and lamentation when people of honour became insignificant figures in the land of heathens.¹⁷ They were molested and ridiculed at the riverside of Babylon that the people longed for a return and restoration into their homeland. At this time (520—518 BCE), Prophet Zechariah came to the prophetic scene and proclaimed that: *I will signal for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them... Though, I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries, they will remember me, and with their children, they shall live and return. I will bring them home...and gather them.* (Zechariah10:8-10 NIV). All this were biblical literature that gave the Israelites hopes of restoration and re-establishment. Similarly, these prophetic texts were the basic points of reference which gave impetus to the Zionists in their pursuit for the Jewish nationhood.

Messianism and Zionism in the Socio-political Context

Messianism expresses its conceptual and ideological tentacles beyond its religious perspective. Today, several efforts have been put in place by some individuals and groups in order to explore its socio-political phenomenon. The activities of the social group (the Zionists) in this regard took paramount space in contemporary history. Modern Israel actualised the declaration and inauguration of the modern nationhood by the influence and pressure of Zionism. The Movement politically canvassed for the establishment of territorial Jewish State after the Jews had undergone many afflictions and persecutions without a compromise. By the end of the century, however, the Remnant Jews themselves became the strongest advocates of their “Return” to Zion, their homeland. The communal spirit of the Jews at this period sprang up when they remembered the “prophecy” of Theodor Herzl¹⁸ who, according to history, published an influential political pamphlet called “The Jewish State” in 1896.

Theodor Herzl: A Zionist and Messianic Vanguard

Herzl, being a Zionist, political activist and a passionate Jewish nationalist, envisioned a mass emigration of Jews from Diaspora, especially from Europe. He advocated therein that the establishment of a Jewish State was the only way of protecting the image of the Jews from Anti-Semitism. His vision was motivated by the messianic prophecies about the return, restoration and restructuring of the Israelites into a homeland, where they would enjoy socio-political and economic bliss (Isaiah 11:11; Zephaniah 3:20; Ezekiel 31:4,5; 34: 13; 37:22; Zech.10:8-10). He deemed it that the exodus of the Jews would be in accordance with religious incentives

(ancient prophecies of return) to return to a homeland. He advocated that the up-building itself would bring about modern scientific and technological instruments, and a model in the social lines. Below is an extract from his pamphlet:

Let the message be heard once again, the message of the ancient days (biblical prophecies): The Jews will be given a portion of land for their State. We shall definitely live as free citizens in our land and also die at our due age peacefully in our own land. The whole world will surely benefit by our liberation. And many will come to benefit mightily from that which we seek for, for our own use.¹⁹

Herzl's call was said to have been received favourably and unfavourably among his own people, to an extent that some called him the "modern Moses" or the "new Moses" whose reference had been made in the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 30:1-5). Christians as well as Jews, leaders and the masses also hailed his suggestions. Based on this influence, the ideology of Zionism, therefore, came to the limelight as to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine with secured public space. These four-point plans for re-building the Jewish nation were reached.²⁰ The plans read as follows:

1. The advancement of agriculture within the colonised land by the Jewish agricultural and industrial workers. This plan really helped the Jews to penetrate into every nook and cranny of a larger portion of land in Palestine. They seized this opportunity to procure and cultivate many pieces of land all over the Palestinian territory, and thereby dominate a larger portion of land, which opened door for them to re-settle when they were finally permitted to return to home.
2. The encouragement of a united and wholesome Jewry by means of appropriate and constituted institutions in both local and international bodies in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The encouraging and fostering of sophisticated Jewish national feelings and consciousness. (By these, there is sanctity of life, and every Jewish soul counts and matters to the Jewish nation).
4. Formal and appropriate steps must be taken towards obtaining government permission for the achievement of the aims of the Zionists, which include: freedom, peaceful relations, political stability and economic buoyancy).

The Zionists believed strongly in the homeland (nationhood) of the Israelites, particularly Jerusalem (Zion), as a special place for and in the plan of God. The presence of the Ark and the building of the Temple as

God's dwelling place in Zion (Jerusalem) invariably emphasised the plan and programme of God for them. Moreover, in Jerusalem (Zion), it is believed that Abraham passed the greatest test of faith and the right to be the father of the nation, Israel. Similarly, it is undoubted that David established his capital in Jerusalem, while Solomon built the Lord's Temple therein. Premised on these facts in the later days, the Balfour Declaration identified with these and recognised the right of the Jewish people to national home in Zion (Jerusalem) with the agendum of re-building.²¹

The Zionist Politics towards the Birth of the Jewish Nation

History has it that all over the United States and in Great Britain, there was advanced agitation to censor free entrance and open immigration for the Jews into Palestine. To their credit, in January 1944, the United States Congress gave her full support in favour of unrestricted immigration of Jews to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish State (nation) in the territory.²² In view of this, the British Labour Party was said to take a clue from the action in the United States. It thereby passed a resolution suggesting that efforts should be made to enforce the Arabs to vacate Palestine and make residential space for the Jews to occupy. This suggestion was denounced by some sectors of the Jews, who expressed their hope that Zionist aims and request could still be achieved without displacing or harming the Arab population.

Thus, the Labour Party reflected on the direction of Labour government policy after its election to power in 1944.²³ Encouraged by Labour political sentiments, the World Zionist Conference which met in London in August, 1945, approved of the Jewish request as regards the Jewish homeland, which the Jewish Agency in Palestine had presented to the British government.²⁴ According to Bein,²⁵ the petition included the following requests:

1. That a resolution to establish the Palestinian land as the State of Israel be taken without a delay.
2. That the Jewish Agency be given every necessary authority to absorb into Palestine Jews willing to settle therein, and to develop fully and speedily all the resources of the country, especially in agriculture and power resources.
3. That an international loan and other social assistance be rendered to the Jews with regard to the transfer of thousands of Jews to Palestine, and for the quick economic development of the State.

4. That reparation in kind and cash from Germany be released to the Jewish people for the re-planning of Palestine, and for the re-settlement and development of Jews from all the European countries.
5. That international facilities be made available for the exit and transit for every Jew who wished to immigrate to Palestine for settlement.

Bein added that the nations that voted in favour of the petition were more than those that voted against it.²⁶

The Birth of the Nationhood of Israel (the Jewish State)

The Israeli ‘Declaration of Independence’ *הכרזת העצמאות Hakh^eratsatHa ‘atzma’ut*, which was the formal Declaration of the State of Israel was pronounced on the 14th May, 1948 (5 Iyar 5708) by David Ben-Gurion, the Executive Head of the World Organization, and the Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.²⁷ He was born as David Grein in 1886 in Czarist Poland. But he decided to give himself a new Hebrew name. He chose Ben-Gurion, which means “son of lion.”²⁸ He was the man who anchored the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies via the re-establishment of the nation. With the declaration of the Jewish State in *Eretz-Israel* (the Land of Israel), the State of Israel came into effect on the termination of the British Mandate in Tel Aviv.²⁹

Messianism and Zionism in Relation to Nation-Building

It is obvious from the above discourse that messianism is a religious faith while Zionism is a social organ and political mechanism for the re-establishment of the Jewish nation. The various messianic organs shared utopian hopes using the prophetic framework as recorded in the texts of the Bible (Ezekiel 37:21). Politically, the Zionist Sect championed the course of messianism, translating it into political mechanism basically on biblical prophecies as impetus for the pursuance of their political ambition. Their longing was to regain the lost nationhood of Israel and re-build the land — its citizenry, political system, economic structure, social status and religious faith in order to bring about its earthly bliss for the Israelites (Jews) in their homeland. All this were echoed in the maiden address of the inauguration ceremony of the state of Israel in 1948; as they expressed the events, travails, suffering and persecution of Jews in history together with the hope for solace and comfort in conformity with the prophetic hopes by the prophets of Israel. Here is an extract from the address:³⁰

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people... Exiled from the land of Israel, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersions, never ceasing to pray and hope for the return and the restoration of their national freedom.

...In the year 1897, the first Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 and re-affirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations...It is the natural right of the Jewish people to be a nation, as all other nations, in its own Sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY, WE, the members of the National Council representing the Jewish community in Palestine, and the World Zionist Movement, are met together in solemn assembly today, the day of termination of the British Mandate for Palestine and by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Madinat Israel (The State of Israel).

WE HEREBY DECLARE that, as from the termination of the Mandate at mid-night the 14th -15th May, 1948, and pending the setting up of the duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a Constitution.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersions; ...will be based on the principles of liberty, justice and peaceful co-existence as conceived by the Prophets of Israel...

Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle of the fulfilment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.

Indeed, the re-gathering of the Israelites into nationhood brought about a lot of benefits and good governance to the Israelite nation. A few of these include: emergence of good leaders starting with David Ben-Gurion (1948-53) to Benjamin Netanyahu (third term, 2022 to date).³¹ According to Hagee, the Jewish nation has been built as

a home for some of the world's holy sites, a start-up centre for technology, a slave-free nation, an enterprising tourism centre with strong economic facilities, an internally generated revenues nation, a nation with strong security apparatuses, a nation that offers free education facilities for citizens, especially the Rabbinic family, a

nation well known for agricultural advancement and good management of natural resources, a good player of global affairs, a nation with minimal corruption tendency and a nation with Judeo-Christian practical realities; just to mention a few.³²

Messianism and Zionism as Panacea for Nation-building in the Nigerian Context

Unarguably, Nigeria is a blessed nation in terms of its geographical features and natural characteristics, but it continues to grapple with the monster of bad leadership and governance, which, according to Oni and Excellence-Oluye, have been the bane of political instability and poor state development in the country.³³ Consequently, these anomalies have led to the exodus of many technocrats and professionals from the country to search for greener pastures and better living elsewhere. Presently, the country is sadly expressing an emigration mantra called *japa*, that is, 'running away from the country to the United Kingdom in search of greener pastures'. It is obvious that the socio-political system of the nation is majorly marred by blatant mal-administration, inequality, injustice, poor distribution of available resources and poor policies that are making life difficult for the masses.

Paradoxically, Nigeria, the so-called giant of Africa, wallows in socio-economic, political and infrastructural decadence in all her services.³⁴ Moreover, as the nation is contending with factors of under-development, she is plagued by deadly insurgency, oil theft, violence, criminality, inflation and debt, inadequate power supply, problems in the communication sector, state-society gap, marginalisation, corruption, social vices, excruciating economic policies, poor human capital development, bad leadership, among other problems. This is why there is need for a new impetus which could spur the country to develop a mechanism for re-building the nation and curtailing the ills, woes and structural deformities presently afflicting the nation.

In the past, various leaders have made several efforts to restructure and re-build Nigeria. Ikenna,³⁵ in an article on the topic, highlighted some of the re-building efforts of past Nigerian leaders since independence. He made reference to Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966) who created the Mid-western region from the Western region under a central federal authority. General Aguiyi Ironsi (January 1966-June 1966) cancelled Native Authority policies and made the federal government to take over control of revenue. General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975) created 12 states to replace the 4 regions; introduced free primary education; changed currency from pound to naira; introduced NCE, NYSC; took over control of schools from

private owners; and created the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. In the short time of General Murtala Mohammed (1975-1976), he started the process of relocating federal capital from Lagos to Abuja, which was executed by General Olusegun Obasanjo in his first regime. Obasanjo in his first regime also established the mechanism that gave Nigeria a new constitution and presidential system of government; introduced free tuition in federal tertiary institutions, and established JAMB and the Nigerian Labour Congress.

President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), who became the first civilian head of state since 1966, introduced 6-3-3-4 educational system, and created the Ministry of Science and Technology. Major General Ibrahim Babagida (1985-1993) created OMPADEC (now NDDC), broke NITEL's monopoly of the communication sector and created NCC to attract private sector investment; he also decreased the years of service before qualifying for pension from 15 years to 10 years. General Sanni Abacha (1993-1998) created additional 6 states and introduced value added tax. Abdulsalam Abubakar (1998) drafted a new constitution for Nigeria by modifying the 1979 constitution, removed local government autonomy and licensed the first private university (Igbinedion University, Okada, Benin City, Nigeria). General Olusegun Obasanjo (2nd Regime) restored 13% derivation to all oil producing areas, established EFCC, and introduced 8-year tenure for civil servants (Directors and above).

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010), who became the first Nigerian head of state to take over power democratically from a civilian predecessor, granted amnesty to Niger Delta militants and rehabilitated all militants who handed in their weapons to the federal government. Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2010-2015) took a bold step in convening a National Constitution Conference and became the first leader in sub-Saharan Africa to concede to election defeat, joyfully congratulating the winner, just for the nation to be delivered, rebuilt and developed. In the tenure of General Mohammadu Buhari (2015-2023), there was a proposal for fuel subsidy removal and the proposal was implemented by the current President, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Indeed, all these vigorous efforts were targeted at restructuring and re-building the educational, political, economic, administrative, social and regional fabric of the nation. In spite of all these, the current state of the country shows that more needs to be done before Nigeria can achieve monumental transformation and development.

Nation-building, though imbued with diverse interpretations, suggests a true process of constructing or reshaping a nation's institutions, infrastructure, culture, and identity to foster unity, stability and

development within a defined geographic and political territory. It often involves establishing or strengthening governance and structures, promoting a shared national identity, enhancing social cohesion and improving the overall well-being of the population. Comparatively, Jewish messianism occasioned a re-gathering into a utopian condition. It also brought about restructuring and re-building, hence this statement in their inaugural address: *the state (nation) of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersions; ...and will be based on the principles of liberty, justice, bliss and peaceful-coexistence as conceived by the Prophets of Israel.* Today, Israel is making optimal use of her resources in generating income and dividends in the socio-economic and political sectors through tourism and other economic means.

Equally, cultivating more nation-building habits in Nigeria would not only make the nation more stable politically, but would bring more agricultural advancement, national value, sanctity of life, security of lives and properties, good roads, economic progress, and encourage hard work at the federal, regional and local levels. It would equally allow every sector in the nation to develop at its own pace. Nation-building is a paramount way to salvage Nigeria's fledging situation, provide national bliss, incapacitate corruption, celebrate harmonious living and give good leadership at every level.

Recommendations

1. For Nigeria to be built into an enviable status, there is need for her leaders from all sectors to borrow a leaf from the patriotic Zionists who believed in the ancient prophecies of their religious leaders and messages of hope, and developed a drive to accomplish their dreams through political means. No doubt, Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation; it is, therefore, an obligation on all and sundry to use their religion to re-brand and build a better, peaceful and a more habitable Nigeria.
2. Nigerians at every level should bear in mind their fatherland, aim at building it with all their resources, work harder to reconstruct and re-brand their personalities, live as citizens of integrity, constitute a habit of hard work, and exhibit diligence and discipline every where they find themselves. By so doing, the country will take a new shape and carve for itself a better international image.

Conclusion

The messianic phenomenon served as motivational faith that spurred the Jews and their political organ(s) such as Zionism into action. The Jewish

leaders expressed the messianic concept beyond its religious circle and the advent of an eschatological saviour to a radical political philosophy. The Zionist Movement and other lovers of the Jews gave the concept a political interpretation, which encapsulated in the liberation, re-gathering and re-establishment of the Jews into their homeland. Comparatively, though Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation and some significant roles have been played by past leaders as attempts to build the nation, it is advocated that more commitments can still be made in order to enthrone justice, equity, security, sanctity of life, economic buoyancy, an accountable polity, rapid educational advancement, robust public services and other social amenities that enhance the overall wellbeing of all citizens. A well-built Nigeria is a political and religiously stable Nigeria where every area, region or zone will be able to look inwards, concentrate on the natural and other assets within its area; and research, analyse, and explore its mineral and agricultural resources with a view to harnessing them for its own good and towards developing the country's socio-economic standing.

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CITING THIS ARTICLE



APA

Iruo-Oghene, A. S., & Olatoye, I. A. (2024). Messianism and Zionism in Jewish Nationalism: A Panacea for Nation-Building in Nigeria. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, 3(2), 32-50. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-02/>.

MLA

Iruo-Oghene, Akponorie Simeon and Olatoye, Iyanda Abel. "Messianism and Zionism in Jewish Nationalism: A Panacea for Nation-Building in Nigeria". *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2024, pp. 32-50. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-02/>.

Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

By

Livinus Nwaugha

Abstract

Peace and security are required for sustainable socio-economic development of any country; in some parts of Nigeria, these are disrupted by terrorist and insurgent activities, hence the Nigerian government's long-drawn deployment of its military in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. The military is saddled with the task of combating armed groups, such as the Boko Haram insurgents in the north-eastern part of the country and Niger Delta militants, among many others engaged in criminal activities that threaten the security of lives and properties and sabotage economic activities. Most of the previous studies conducted on the nature and operations of the terrorist groups and insurgencies in Nigeria have focused on their atrocities and their disruptive impact on society. This study reviews the various aspects of the crisis with a view to highlighting how the protracted counterterrorism and counterinsurgency offensives have resulted in diversion of public funds and gulped up huge resources that could have been used for the socio-economic development of the country. Based on available data, the study concludes that although fighting terrorism and insurgency is a necessary duty, the corruptive and ineffective manner in which it has been done in Nigeria has further aggravated the plight of the people and impeded socio-economic development.

Keywords: counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, Nigeria, threats, socio-economic development

Introduction

Socio-economic development and a peaceful and stable polity are prerequisites for the attainment of prosperity in any country, and these fundamental requirements are threatened in many countries by violence unleashed by terrorists and insurgents. This is why, wherever there is a prevalence of terrorism and insurgency, states have adopted several strategies to deal with the menace. As Nigeria's experience has shown, attacks by terrorist and insurgent groups are generally unconventional in nature and are highly unpredictable. Diverse approaches are required to deal with the problem, particularly where the operations of the group spill

over national borders or form alliances with international terrorist organizations. Terrorism and insurgency appear to have assumed greater global dimension since the end of the Cold War in the late 1990s (William, S. Lind et al, 2008) but it was the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack at New York's World Trade Centre that reinforced the utmost importance of counterterrorist and counterinsurgent operations (Gingell, 2021). That attack, in which 2,996 people lost their lives (Washington Post, 2013), was preceded by the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing.

In Nigeria, militant groups in the Niger Delta and the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern part of the country, among others, currently pose serious security threats. According to a 2024 figure released by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "more than 35,000 people are estimated to have been killed as a result of Boko Haram attacks between 2009 and 2020". Thousands of people have also been killed by other insurgent groups operating in the northeast, such as ISIS-WA and Ansaru. All of these, and the fact that conventional military strategies are often ineffective in dealing with terrorists, have led to the formation of counterterrorism (CT) and counterinsurgency (COIN) joint taskforces in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world.

The faceless, multi-faceted and international nature of many terrorist and insurgent operations makes inter-agency collaboration crucial and also necessitates international partnerships and cooperation. The cost implication of countering the atrocities of terrorist and insurgent groups, and of managing the human, economic and environmental emergencies caused by them is enormous, and has in no small measure affected the socio-economic development of not only the affected areas but of the country as a whole.

Objective and Methodology of the Study

Diverse studies have been conducted on the nature, operations, and negative impact of the terrorist groups and insurgencies in Nigeria. Each of these studies mostly focused on some dimension of the problems – such as disruption of communal life, violence, kidnapping, human rights violation, forced recruitment and banditry – caused by these gangs and the Nigerian military's war against them. The current study reviews the various aspects of the crisis with a view to highlighting how the protracted counterterrorism and counterinsurgency offensives against terrorist and dissident groups have gulped up huge resources that could have been used for the socio-economic development of the country and how failure by the Nigerian government to quickly and roundly win the war against terror could further stunt Nigeria's stability and economic growth.

The methodology adopted for this study was secondary source of data collection, as it provided a convenient and broad-based access to the mass of information needed for a holistic view of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria and the operations being conducted by the military to counter their massive disruption of social life and economic activities. Data-collection sources utilized in this study included news reports, books, previous research conducted on the topic, and authoritative websites that captured and recorded the activities of insurgents and terrorists in Nigeria. Data collected were subjected to qualitative analysis to arrive at the findings and conclusion of the study.

Definition of Key Terms

The key terms of this study that need to be defined in order to understand the issues discussed are terrorism, insurgency, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency. Not all terror is terrorism and not all forms of militant agitation can be termed insurgency. Terrorism and insurgency have assumed global dimensions and so a generally-acceptable definition is required to aid our understanding of the nature of each of these terms and why both forms of militant oppression should be countered and censored by every orderly and democratic society as well as by the international community. Although there are different definitions of terrorism, some of them ideologically motivated, this study's use of the term would be based on two standard definitions quoted by Gingell (2021) that defined terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets" and as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives".

While "insurgency" as a term may share all or some of these attributes, it is different from "terrorism" in the sense that it is targeted at gaining control of a territory and its resources. This is why the US Department of Homeland Security defined insurgency as a "protracted political-military struggle directed towards subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations" (Gingell, 2021). Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, therefore, are approaches and operations geared towards opposing, responding to and counteracting terrorism and insurgency. These approaches may be enemy-centric, population-centric or authoritarian-centric (Bala & Tar, 2019). Scott (2007) described counterterrorism and counterinsurgency as the totality of political, economic, social and security measures put in place to end armed

violence while promoting political stability. Scott, however, like most commentators, offered no suggestion on how to end violent agitation where injustice, mounting unemployment and marginalization are the order of the day in a country so blessed in natural and human resources, such as Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted by this study to explore the issue of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency and their impact on socio-economic development in Nigeria consists of Maslow's needs theory, and related peace-enhancing viewpoints, and Todaro's development theory.

Maslow's Needs Theory and Related Concepts

Maslow's needs theory and similar viewpoints generally affirm that humans have certain needs and that when these needs are not met, they would create feelings of frustration and anger. However, as diverse as human needs are, there is no time they would all be met, as they are ever evolving. The endless nature of human needs makes it difficult to reach a point where human beings would cease to have needs. The insatiability of human needs make conflict inevitable. This is because human needs vary from basic or essential needs to complex personal or group desires that change as human beings and societies develop or evolve. Though human needs are not static but dynamic, there are certain basic things universally needed by all human beings for their survival and wellbeing. They are food, water, clothing, shelter, security and justice; when these are absent, they may trigger terrorist or insurgent activities. There are different needs theories but, generally, they make the following assumptions:

- (i) that because human needs are insatiable, competition is inevitable;
- (ii) that because there is competition, conflict will always arise.

As Maslow's hierarchy of needs extrapolates, human needs are highly insatiable: as soon as one need is met, another need arises. Maslow's pyramid of needs categorises needs in terms of their order of importance, beginning with basic needs, such as food, shelter and clothing, to essential needs, such as the need for self-actualization and self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1973). Danesh (2006) sees the issue of justice as a fundamental human need. For him, the matter of distributive justice is a primary human need for lack of it usually leads to series of agitations and conflicts, especially in countries and communities where social exclusion is the rule rather than the exception. Some people believe that unrealised justice and inclusion needs are the root causes of terrorism and insurgency, as inability to meet these needs lead to frustration and anger. Hertnon (2005), in his

categorization of needs, places survival and betterment needs as the most basic universal needs individuals and groups do not play with, as any action or inaction which tends to undermine these basic needs may lead to violence.

Critics of these needs theories opine that since human needs change over time, it is difficult to ascertain which needs are so important that failure to meet them would lead to violent conflicts. They argue that it is only when needs are static that their evaluation and analysis can be carried out in relation to prevailing circumstances. These criticisms notwithstanding, the needs theories offer valuable insight into wide scale occurrence of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria and, probably, elsewhere in the world.

Todaro's Development Theory

Todaro's development theory and similar theories are relevant frameworks in this study because some people are of the view that the root cause of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria is lack of socio-economic development. Although the concept of development has evolved over time, it still constitutes a significant benchmark by which the progress of any country is measured. Due to its fluid nature and various usages over time, it is now rather difficult to come up with a concise meaning of development, more so because the concept appears virtually in all disciplines with different meanings. However, development on a general note connotes an elevation of people's life towards a better condition (Egonmwan & Ibodje, 2001). The fact that the things that constitute better life vary in accordance with people's needs and expectations means that there is no one-size-fits-all definition of development, as it is an on-going phenomenon (Adetula, 2013:308). However, according to Todaro (1981):

Development must represent the entire gamut or change by which an entire social system tuned to the diverse needs and desire of individuals and social group within that system move away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better (Todaro, 1981:70).

Development, pertaining to self-esteem, refers to an individual's degree of self-respect, accommodation and tolerance (Todaro, 1981:71).

In the view of Goulet (1992), development is a multidimensional concept which can be seen in three areas. They are life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. At these three levels what constitute development varies from food, shelter to protection. The extent to which these attributes are available in a society determines its level of development. Basically, what

causes some level of dissatisfaction is when people are uncertain about when the next meal would be available, and when their protection is uncertain or in abeyance.

These values mark how advanced people are. Where there is incessant altercation and infighting development would be elusive, but at times these altercations drive development; this is why Goulet (1992) generalizes that development is a two-edged sword which can be used to build or to destroy.

According to Egonmwan & Ibodje (2001), the whole essence of development is to eradicate poverty through the enhancement of the living condition of the people. At various times, since Nigeria's independence in 1960, several conscious steps have been taken to chart the nation's development. Immediately after independence, a five-year development plan (1960-65) was drawn to drive the country's development. From 1970 to the 1980s, several developmental steps were taken; but towards the mid 1980s onwards, due to maladministration and corruption, the nation was plunged into economic mess which culminated in its adoption of structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986. The period of the 1970s registered appreciable development indicators both in savings and purchasing power with the naira being stronger than the US dollar, but beyond this period a general distortion characterized the entire system.

As Ayorinde and Uga (1999) captured succinctly, "the tapping of the country's endowment of various resources has not culminated in improved living condition for the majority of the people". By 2001, during the presentation of the appropriation bill to the National Assembly, President Olusegun Obasanjo was emphatic when he said publicly that Nigerians have not sufficiently improved since its hard-won democracy (Taiwo, 2001). Improvement must be judged by the welfare of the people, not by mere statistics; the questions to be asked, according to Seer (1969), are:

What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been going worse, especially if all three exists, it would be strange to call the result development even if per-capita income doubled (Seer.1969:3).

Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency: the Nigerian Experience

Since the return of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, and its accompanying cry of marginalization, sectional politics, mounting

unemployment and increasing poverty in the midst of plenty, terrorism and insurgency and related activities have continued to hinder the provision of social goods to the citizenry. This necessitated the formation of civilian and military joint task forces (Hamza & Sawab, 2013; Bala & Tar, 2019) to deal with the problem. In Nigeria, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency has borne different names – from Operation Restore Order (ORO) 1, 2, and 3, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Python Dance, Operation Lafiya Dole, to Operation Thunder Strike, to mention but a few.

The combative nature of most of these names reflects the operatives' awareness of the heavy arms and ammunitions at the disposal of the terrorists and insurgents and the danger they pose to the socio-economic development of the Nigerian state. In an atmosphere where life has become “short and brutish”, no visible and calculated development can thrive. Since it is their constitutional mandate to quell insurrection of any kind and restore socio-economic activity, the military swung into action to counter the terrorists and insurgents in collaboration with civilians in the affected communities. The local communities, using an assortment of local weapons such as knives, swords, dane-guns, bows and arrows (Olugbode, 2013; Bala & Tar, 2019), formed vigilante groups to enhance their fight against violent-non-state actors (VNSAs).

The use of vigilante groups is very old and predates Nigeria's independence in 1960 (ICG, 2022:6). Before independence, vigilante groups constituted the vanguard of the communities that protected and secured lives and properties. Mainly able-bodied men, grouped according to the age, constituted these groups. Most essentially, vigilante groups provided security for the local communities; in some cases, where there were conflicts amongst communities, the vigilante group mediated to enthrone peace. When there are conflicts of roles and functions amongst the vigilante groups, it is settled by the traditional authority of their community (Ogbezor, 2016:1). Arguably, the vigilante groups also played important roles in the provision of socio-economic goods, especially as they constituted the work groups that cleared, planted and harvested crops. Moreover, they ensued that justice was maintained in their communities.

In recent times, especially since 2000, vigilante groups have been integrated into the mainstream of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria, largely due to the overwhelming of the mainstream security architecture by the terrorists and insurgents who use their better understanding of their local terrain to inflict incalculable damage on the military operatives. By 2000, the number of vigilante groups in Nigeria has greatly increased; they bear different code names, such as Niger State

People Congress (NSPC) in Niger State, Neighborhood Security Committee (NSC) in Akwa Ibom State, Edo Vigilante Service (EVS) in Edo State, Hasbah Corps in Kano State, Yan-Sakai in Katsina State, Yan Komiti in Bauchi State, Amotikun in the southwestern zone, and Ebubeagu, which was formed by the State Governors of the southeastern zone of Nigeria.

The synergy between the civilian taskforce and military force became necessary owing to the fact that members of vigilante groups are versed in the knowledge of their rural areas where the insurgents and terrorists operate. It is necessary to make this explanation or clarification here. Terrorism and insurgency are not limited to local or rural areas as their activities have equally been registered in major cities and towns in Nigeria, including Abuja, Nigeria's capital, Owerri, the capital of Imo state, Makurdi in Benue state, Jos in Plateau state, Katsina in Katsina state, Maiduguri in Borno State, Minna and Suleja in Niger state, and Damaturu in Yobe State.

There are misgivings in some quarters that the synergy between the civilian and military operatives is a mere marriage of convenience, and that the military has always treated the civilian populace with disdain whenever it suits them. Bala and Tar (2019) assert that for counterinsurgency operation to be effective and possible the local populace should be separated from the insurgents and terrorists. There are records of incidents where the military joint taskforce left the insurgents to attack the local communities, accusing them of shielding the insurgents and the terrorists. The military joint taskforce has also been accused of unlawful arrests, extra-judicial killings, rape, looting and destruction of properties belonging to some communities. This is why some scholars assert that counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria are politically motivated and aimed at disintegrating the already disenchanted local communities. Amnesty International, in a report cited in Omilusi (2016), said the military were better trained and equipped to enforce counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, and need not integrate the civilian populace so as to reduce the number of casualties. Transparency International has described Nigerian counterterrorism and counterinsurgency military operatives as barbaric, especially after their 6th of January, 2019 activities at the offices of the Daily Trust Newspaper in Maiduguri and Abuja.

Some people are of the opinion that terrorists and insurgents have infiltrated into the corridors of power, and some terrorists and insurgents have even openly named the Nigerian government as their major sponsors. In this regard, the late General Sani Abacha is reported to have said that terrorism and insurgency cannot last 24 hours if the hands of government

are not in it. The case of Boko Haram appears to support this claim. According to Shehu (2024), Boko Haram was formed in 2002 and assumed a terrorist dimension in 2009; but it took nearly five years (2014) for the government to proscribe it and to declare it a terrorist organization. All these agitate the minds of Nigerians who find it difficult to understand why the war against terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria, after so many years, is yet to be won.

How Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Undermine Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

Bala and Tar (2019) see counterterrorism and counterinsurgency as veritable moves needed for the restoration of normalcy so that socio-economic development can thrive. This study, however, considers many aspects of Nigeria's counterterrorism and counterinsurgency initiative as a drain on the country's resources, especially given the fact that the nation has not seen the end of terrorism and insurgency after so much has been spent on countering them. Apparently, a lot of the money has been diverted. For instance, former National Security Adviser (NSO) to President Goodluck Jonathan, Col. Sambo Dasuki, was alleged to have embezzled 2 billion US dollars, money that would have been used to fight terrorism and insurgency. Till date, nothing more is heard about that case. According to Usman (2024), "The military is deployed virtually to every part of the country in order to bring respite at great cost to the country, including misappropriation of colossal amounts of funds voted for logistics and personnel welfare". A table of Nigeria's security budgetary allocation (2009 to 2019) is presented below, as it would help us to understand the "colossal" nature of spending on security in the country.

Security Budgetary Allocation in Nigeria (2009-2019)

YEAR	BUDGETARY ALLOCATION
2009	261 Billion Naira
2010	264 Billion Naira
2011	348 Billion Naira
2012	921.91 Billion Naira
2013	923 Billion Naira
2014	937.8 Billion Naira
2015	964.7 Billion Naira
2016	1,005 Trillion Naira
2017	1,117 Trillion Naira
2018-2019	1,176 Trillion Naira

Source: Dan-Azumi (2018) as modified by the author

The statistics above buttress our argument that counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in the country have depleted the nation's resources, without overwhelming the militants and creating an atmosphere conducive for the socio-economic development of Nigeria. As at 2012 when the security budgetary allocation was 921.91 billion naira, unemployment rate was 30.30% and in 2015, when the security budgetary allocation rose to 964.7 billion naira, the unemployment rate was 38.38% while the poverty rate was 76.3%. In 2017, when the security budgetary allocation was 1117 trillion naira, the rate of unemployment was 43.34% while poverty rate was 74.70% (Dan-Azumi, 2018). Life expectancy in Nigeria was 52.40 in 2014, 52.84 in 2015, 53.29 in 2016, 53.73 in 2017, 54.18 in 2018, and 54.49 in 2019. As noted by UNICEF (2018), in 2015 37% of Nigeria's health facilities were closed down while 40% and 44% were closed down in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

Conclusion

Having examined counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in the context of ending terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria to facilitate socio-economic development, the findings of this study indicate that both operations have, instead, hindered socio-economic development. While acknowledging the necessity of countering terrorism and insurgency, this paper notes that the corruptive and ineffective manner in which this has been done in Nigeria has further aggravated the plight of the people, as resources which could have been used to alleviate the sufferings of the masses were unaccountably poured into the operations while other critical areas of social and economic concern were starved of funds.

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Nwaugha, L.. (2024). Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, 3(2), 51-62. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-03/>.

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Nwaugha, Livinus. "Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria". *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2024, pp. 51-62. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-03/>.

Religion and Political Culture in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The political environment of Nigeria, including the manner of government, the creation of public policies, and the electoral process, have all been significantly influenced by religion. It cannot be overstated that religion has always played a significant role in Nigerian politics, particularly since the country won its independence. No matter how one feels about religion, it is a well-known fact that in Nigeria, politics and religion are closely related, despite the circularity of the Nigerian state in line with the constitution. This paper, therefore, examines the impact of religion on Nigerian politics, focusing on how it has influenced the political culture of the people positively and negatively since the advent of the fourth republic in 1999. This study suggests that people of all religions should get involved in politics, starting with local elections in our small towns and moving on to presidential campaigns and elections. To achieve national cohesion and development, politics in Nigeria needs to be practised, religious morals followed, and freedom of religion protected by the Nigerian constitution. The paper concludes that religion should shape our personality to reflect the characteristics of whoever our creator is and use those characteristics to improve our society's political space. Each of us should strive to become a member of the Nigerian dream team that will advance the nation and rethink the concept of modern governance to better serve the needs of as many people as possible.

Keywords: culture, governmental policy, religion, political culture, politics, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is one of the world's most religiously and ethnically divided countries, with extensive socioeconomic cleavages. These have grown increasingly significant because of the following: The three major ethnic groups have nothing in common politically, socially, or historically. Most Nigerians speak a "home language" and learn English, but not the other main local languages. Religion is not as significant in the South. Muslims in Yoruba, for example, behave politically as Yorubas rather than

Muslims. In contrast, in the north, it is difficult to separate religion from ethnicity. Religion has been in existence since the creation story, from the biblical perspective; it has no generally accepted definition, but salient points from available definitions expressly emphasize religion as a channel or means through which mankind reaches or interacts with whoever he/she believes or accepts as his/her creator. So whichever religion one finds himself or herself in, there is the realization and consciousness of salvation, which makes the adherent to desire to do always what is acceptable to one's creator in order not to be sanctioned. According to Durkheim (1912), cited in Taves (2009), "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."

Max Lynn Stackhouse, according to Nelson (2010), said religion is "A comprehensive worldview or 'metaphysical moral vision' that is accepted as binding because it is held to be in itself true and just even if all dimensions of it cannot be either fully confirmed or refuted." In 1871, Edward Burnett Taylor coined the term "religion" to describe "the belief in spiritual beings." He argued that limiting the definition to include "belief in a supreme deity," "judgment after death," "idolatry," and other similar concepts would exclude a large number of individuals from the category of religious people and "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them. "Additionally, he argued that all known societies hold spiritual beliefs. The truth about religion is that certainly religion is a beaming light and an unassailable tower for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God encourages those who truly believe in Him to hold fast to that which is good and turn away from all evil acts. Once the lamp of religion is hidden, confusion and misunderstanding will follow, and the lights of fairness and justice, tranquillity and peace will cease to shine. Unto this every one of true understanding will bear witness (Baha'u'llah, 2018).

"Political" is referring to politics, which is an act or process of governance or, put differently, a settled pattern of administration. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines political as "referring or relating to government, a government, or the conduct of government, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of governmental policy and relating to, involving, or involved in politics and especially party politics." In his book, *The Sociology of Religion*, Thomas F. O'Dea (1970) said, "Religion, like culture, is a symbolic transformation of experience."

Culture rules virtually every aspect of an individual's life, which is why it is commonly referred to as a way of life of the people. Culture is dynamic because it allows its members to function through relating with each other without the need to discuss the implications of being together at every moment. Culture is learned and unwittingly expressed, so regardless of its importance we are generally unconscious of its effect on how we perceive the world and interact within it (Global Affairs Canada, 2014). Anthropologist E.B. Taylor referred to culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society," a definition which Griswold notes is the "anthropological definition of culture" (Griswold, 2012).

A diagnosis of these three concepts, namely, religion, politics and culture, reveals that, in the context of this study's topic, they are bound in a strong, interwoven relationship in the sense that religion can bond and inspire individuals in the direction of a mutual goal or common belief system; this set of common beliefs can influence their worldview, attitudes and social behavior (culture), which in turn, might become a prism through which they assess social options and make leadership decisions as to how their society is governed (politics). In generating this string of relationships, religion appears to exert a force greater than what no political factor could generally accomplish. Culture, as a concept, is all-embracing, in the sense that it is a way of life of a people in terms of their collectivist orientation that manifests in their individual or group social expressions. When we talk of religion and political culture in Nigeria, therefore, we are referring to the manner in which religion influences the political viewpoints, attitudes and choices of Nigerians as seen in their involvement in politics, especially party politics, and in their political affiliations and choices. This is a very broad issue we cannot exhaustively discuss within the scope of this paper, and so we will narrow our attention, in this study, to the question, "In what ways does religion affect political culture in Nigeria?"

Theoretical Framework

The three concepts, religion, politics and culture, are discussed in this paper under the conceptual framework of structural functionalism theory. Structural functionalism sees society as an interrelated part. The functionalist's approach was first obvious in the thought of August Comte who stressed the need for cohesion after the social malaise of the French Revolution. It was later presented in the work of Emile Durkheim, in his study of how societies can maintain social unity. In 1963, in their book titled, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in Five Nations* (Almond & Verba, 1963), two political scientists, Gabriel Almond

and Sydney Verba, who were strongly influenced by sociological structural functionalism, published a study of the political cultures associated with five democratic countries – Germany, Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

According to Almond and Verba, there are three basic types of political culture which can be used to explain why people do or do not participate in political processes; they are: Parochial political culture, Subject political culture, and Participant political culture. Parochial political culture exists where citizens are mostly uninformed and unaware of their government and take little interest in the political process. Subject political culture refers to where citizens are somewhat informed and aware of their government and occasionally participate in the political process, while Participant political culture is what we see in a polity where citizens are informed and actively participate in the political process. It is based on these three types of political culture identified by Almond and Verba that the direction of the political culture that religion has helped to shape is determined. Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), who was heavily influenced by Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, and who developed the idea of roles into collective roles (Parsons, 1966), says that for society to enjoy some acceptable level of solidarity and stability, institutions saddled with the responsibility of social functioning in the society (economics, education, legal and even gender-based) should complement each other in fulfilling societal functional needs for it to run smoothly. He believes that once this is allowed in every society the social contract between the ruler and the ruled will be beneficial to the ruled; this can encourage those persons on parochial and subjective side to navigate toward the direction of participant political culture. Although numerous critics have pointed out Parsons' emphasis on political and monetary struggle, his position has continued to gain popularity as it concerns stability and order in society.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected from secondary sources like books, articles, newspapers, libraries, resource centres and online sources. All of them helped in the explanation of the concepts and in understanding how religion affects political culture. Collected data were analyzed using monolog descriptive mechanism to extract points made by different authors that argue for or against the ways religion affects political culture.

What is Political Culture?

Having discussed above the word “political” (as used in this study’s title), we need to also explain the term “political culture.” According to the

International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, political culture is the combination of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which make available the fundamental expectations and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. The aforementioned encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity. People behave in ways that are consistent with their fundamental views in terms of politics, the economy, and society, according to Robert Swierenga, cited in Wald & Calhoun-Brown (2018). The god or gods they place at the centre of their being determine their values, morals, and behaviours in the workplace, at home, and in the voting booth (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018).

Political culture is a concept used in political science to describe a population's shared opinions and normative judgments about its political system. This concept does not refer to attitudes toward particular political figures, such as presidents or prime ministers, but rather to how people perceive the political system as a whole and their confidence in its legitimacy. Political culture was defined by American political scientist Lucian Pye as the collection of fundamental beliefs, sentiments, and knowledge that form the basis of the political system. Therefore, the attitudes that people have toward their system of governance serve as the foundation of political culture (Morlino, 2017; Winkler, 2022). Gabriel Almond defines it as "the particular pattern of orientations toward political actions in which every political system is embedded". According to López González (2017), María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni defines political culture as "the set of discourses and symbolic practices through which both individuals and groups articulate their power relationship, elaborate their political demands and put them at stake."

Political culture, simply put, talks about what people believe and feel about government, and how they think people should act in the direction of government. Comprehending the relationship of a government to its people, and how those people are going to act towards that government and others, is at the core of political culture which, according to Swedlow (2013), is the shared values and beliefs of a group or society regarding political relationships and public policy and in answering the question of how human beings are going to live together. That is, political culture answers the question of who gets to do what, with whom and under what conditions. Political culture also answers the question of who decides, who has authority, and who has power in a group, organization, institution, or other social unit in society.

How Religion Affects Political Culture

Religion is a collection of ideas, practices, values, and stories that are all entrenched in culture. Just as religion cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural and political contexts, it is practically impossible to understand a culture without considering its religious dimensions. Just as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic class are always factors in cultural interpretation and understanding, so too is religion (Harvard Divinity School, 2018).

According to Cuba (2015), religion, like other closely-held opinions/beliefs/thoughts, affects political culture in the following ways; Firstly it creates voting blocks, it does not however guarantee that everyone who identifies with religion X or denomination Y or group Z will vote the same way but in practice we see this happening. Secondly, political cultures have an emotional impact on how laws/executive orders are made, by having individuals in positions of power and by having legislators who have no direct affiliation with a religious group and who can, at least, stop and consider their response to any specific legislation or position. And thirdly, political culture causes issues to be discussed. There might not always be agreement on those issues but at least they are discussed. Didonato (2018) maintains that as much as secular governments strive for a clean break between religion and politics, the two do in actuality mix in multifaceted ways. On the political end, religion can powerfully influence which party a person votes for, and even campaigns for, and on the religious end, political views can play a major role in religious conversion – in other words, people do not commonly change religions or denominations to find a fit for their political beliefs.

The Nature of Religious States

Religion is more than just a way of life in some countries; it is the basic constitutional law of some countries. States like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Vatican are religious, not secular, states. Religious concepts and codes dictate the affairs of such countries. Theocracy, not full-scale democracy, is practised in such countries where the supreme leaders are invariable religious leaders. According to Boyer (2017), ‘If religion is the opiate of the masses, these countries know how to get high.’ Emphasizing further, she said; According to data from the 2017 Best Countries rankings, a representation of 80 countries centered on a survey of more than 21,000 global citizens, Saudi Arabia is observed to be the most religious country in the world. With theocratic monarchy and a legal system based on Islamic Sharia law, her citizens can receive harsh punishments, including death, for apostasy and blasphemy.

The Vatican City, also called the Holy See, is the only place in the world where we have a full theocratic monarchy based on Christian religion. Although within a geographic state (Italy), the Vatican functions as an independent State, with the Pope functioning as its King and head of government. Under international law, the Holy See is allowed to enter into certain international agreements; however, it does not operate under civil laws since it is not a civil state but an absolute monarchy in control of the Roman Catholic Church, ruling according to the Apostolic Constitution of 1967 (Encyclopedia of Nations, 2018).

Relationship between Religion and Politics

Religion is one of the most overlooked topics in the study of world politics. This is because of a long-standing bias against the study of religion, the impact of classical liberal principles that emphasize the separation of church and state on social scientists, and the difficulty of quantifying religion, among other reasons. The Westphalia Treaty, which was signed in 1648, established political and religious separation. However, religion has always had an impact on how government decisions are made and how policies are developed. According to Fox (2001), religion has three impacts on global politics: (1) it affects the context in which decision-makers act as well as the worldviews of many of them and the people who elect them. (2) Religious beliefs and practices serve as justification for political decisions and actions. (3) Religious conflicts frequently span national boundaries and have global implications. Equally important are international religious movements like political Islam and fundamentalist groups, as well as the foreign policy of theocratic nations and other governments that are affected by religion. The global campaign to protect religious freedom is the centre of attention in the light of the world's growing interdependence. This illustrates how important religion is to comprehending world politics. The interaction between religion and politics today is complex and constantly shifting. The religious beliefs of a population have an impact on the leaders and lawmakers of a nation, and this influence cannot be isolated from the governance of a state (Fox, 2001; Mandaville, & Hamid, 2018).

The relationship between religion and politics continues in the direction of being an important theme in political philosophy, despite the developing consensus among political theorists and the cordial management of both in practical political contexts, such as the United Nations. There is a need for some kind of separation between church and state and also the right to freedom of conscience. A unique reason for the importance of this topic is that religion over and over again makes strong claims on people's allegiance, and universal religion makes these claims on all people, rather

than just a particular community. For instance, Islam has traditionally held that all people owe obedience to Allah's will. Consequently, it is probably inevitable that religious commitments will sometimes come into conflict with the demands of politics. Nonetheless, religious beliefs and practices also hypothetically support politics in many ways (IEP, 2018; Lane, 1992).

The influence of religion on world politics is complex. It is abundantly obvious that the leaders and foreign policies of theocratic countries like Iran and Afghanistan are influenced by their religious doctrines. They routinely spring up international challenges and conditions that cannot be detached from their domestic and foreign policies. The role of religion as a source of public legitimacy is highlighted by the importance of moral pleas made by religious figures like the Dalai Lama and the Pope (Fox, 2001; Golan, & Martini, 2020). Politics and religion both function as "living" systems, which means they may evolve and adapt to their surroundings just like people do. When combined, the two have a profound impact on people, neighbourhoods, nations, and even the entire world. Politics and religion coexist in a symbiotic connection with the capacity to both help and hurt the other. Every group in human society has a set of beliefs that it has developed with the aid of religious principles (Ivy Panda, 2022). These beliefs frequently influence how people behave politically within a given political system. The media will always assess a politician's life in light of specific religious ideas. These values are based on religious morality and convictions. Here in Nigeria, a candidate for office is classified as either a Christian or a Muslim. The number of votes a political figure might garner in an election depends on their religion. Politicians in the United States identify with Christianity since the majority of voters are Christians. A political figure in the Arab world must identify with Islam because it is the predominant religion in the area. Before a political leader is chosen, the religious factions must also be made apparent. In some nations, religion plays a significant role in every election year. Certain religious affiliations are seen to be connected to cultural values that influence how well leaders operate in any political system. When it was reported that Obama was a Muslim, the question of religion became more prominent in the United States. Obama almost lost the election due to concerns that he might promote Muslim interests, if elected. The president allayed concerns, though, by affirming that he was a Christian (Fox, 2001; Golan & Martini, 2020; Ivy Panda, 2022).

Religious Politics in Nigeria

In Nigeria, religious politics is a well-known phenomenon. Religion has been a significant factor in political expression in Nigeria; it influences the style of governance, policy formulation, and the electoral process.

Religion's influence on politics in Nigeria may be both beneficial and detrimental. According to Umeanolue (2019), just as religion boosts national development, it also has the potential to hinder it. In the Nigerian society, there is a clear connection between politics and religion. The connection between religion and politics has been established for a long time, even though the actual role religion plays in politics is still up for debate. In Nigeria, people are not seen as being good or bad because of their religion; rather, religion is exploited by politicians to deceive, divide, and oppress the people. The majority of Nigerians are aware of this oppression but appear to have accepted it as their fate, an attitude exacerbated by poverty, illiteracy, and lack of political education (Falana, 2010).

Religion has always played a big role in politics in Nigeria, especially since the country gained independence. No matter how religion is viewed, its connection to politics in Nigeria cannot be denied. There are numerous competing religions for relevance and recognition in addition to the three major religions—Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion. Despite this fact, Nigeria remains, theoretically, a secular state. Since independence, this has been stated in the constitution. The Latin word "Secularism," which means temporal, is the root of the word "secular". It is understood to refer to "worldly, as opposed to sacred things or having no particular religious affinities". As a philosophy, secularism rejects religion. It asserts that civil rules should not be influenced by religion and that religion should not have any place in civil affairs. In this manner, a common state is a state where strict religious networks play no perceived part in legislative issues and no conventional connection to the state. This is not the case in a religious or theocratic state, where religion dictates policy. "The government of the federation shall not adopt any religion as State Religion," reads section 10 of the 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution (Bibinu, et al., 2020; Golan & Martini, 2020). The section further states that: Any religion cannot be officially adopted as the state or the Federation's religion. Alternatively, Section 38(1) states that: Every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to change his (sic) religion or belief, and (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his (sic) religion or belief through worship, teaching, practice, and observance. Additionally, Section 275(1) of the Nigerian Constitution recognized Nigerians' right to Shari'a law, stating: "There must be for any state that requires it a Shari'a Court of Appeal for that state." Additionally, Section 260(1) states that Abuja would house the Federal Capital Territory's Shari'a Court of Appeal.

The Nigerian constitution has always been influenced by religion directly or indirectly. Political parties since 1999, at the advent of the fourth republic, has tried to play the religious game in politics by projecting candidates who represent the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, for election at the national and, in most cases, sub-national levels. Regarding presidential elections, in 1999 all the presidential candidates of the political parties either has a Christian presidential candidate and a Muslim vice presidential candidate or vice versa. This trend has been consistent, as witnessed in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 presidential elections in Nigeria. However, that of 2023 was different as a political party, the All Progressive Party (APC), projected a Muslim-Muslim joint presidential ticket. That action generated a series of reactions; some saw it as a threat to the peaceful coexistence of both religions while others saw it as a way of discouraging Nigerians from judging candidates by their religious orientations. These reactions and counter-reactions are similar to those of 1993 in the aborted third republic, where the then Social Democratic Party (SDP) also had a Muslim-Muslim ticket; the controversy ended with the annulment of that election. According to Akinwunmi (2022), Bola Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, who were the APC presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2023 election, have consistently defended themselves thus:

We are not coming into government to represent the Muslim or Christian faith. The Sultan of Sokoto and the CAN President are competent to represent their faiths. We are the Nigerian dream team that will catapult the country to a higher pedestal and we will redefine the concept of modern governance. The Christians have nothing to fear and there is no cause for alarm because we are one people with a common destiny.

Since political culture is expressed in how the electorates perceive the political parties and their candidates, the outcome of the 2023 presidential election and the performance of the Tinubu-Shettima administration would, in a significant way, affect the way Nigerians view the religious coloration of joint presidential candidates in the future, thus opening a new vista of the interwoven relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria.

Discussion

Political socialisation is value-laden in the quest for an equal society. Nigerians form political opinions and attitudes through socialisation agents such as the family, schools, interest organisations, the media, and government-sponsored events. Political socialisation in affluent nations takes place through relatively stable institutions. Nigerians, on the other

hand, grow up in a political environment that is continuously changing.

The upheaval of urbanisation, along with the impact of recurring economic downturns, complicates political socialisation even more. Nigeria's political and economic leaders constitute a bourgeois class whose income is directly or indirectly derived from the state. The elites frequently utilise their positions for personal benefit, preserving their fortune during both civilian and military rules. Because of its bigger population and leadership positions within the armed forces, the north produced the bulk of Nigeria's chief executives, both civilian and military. Goodluck Jonathan was an exception, serving as the first president from a minority ethnic group, the Ijaw. Whether obvious or implied, religion or religious influence on political culture can be discerned from most social or historical experiences. That was why Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) argued that religion was vital for politics as “religion drives people to obedience, makes them familiar with laws and how to live in a peaceful society. Alluding to Hobbes position, Montesquieu (1689-1755) also had a firm belief that religion should be part of politics as “religion provides unity, harmony and social stability for society”. Therefore, it can be categorically said that religion affects political culture. This view is supported by available literature that indicates that over many centuries religion has proved to be a very powerful concept that commands total devotion and partly or totally influences the political choices of its adherents. Religion fills such an important vacuum in the life of an individual that, sometimes, someone who had stopped believing in one particular religion may be pulled, like the people of Athens that Apostle Paul referred to who were “worshipping the unknown god” (Acts 17:23), towards relying on another form of faith. This could be why Machiavelli believed that “religion was the foundation of state and society”. This may also, remotely, explain why, in Nigeria, religion and political culture appear inseparable.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that in spite of efforts to separate religion from politics, both spheres of activities usually meet, formally or informally. As to whether religion or religious influence on political culture is positive or negative, available information indicates that it could be either or both, depending on how a given society manages the relationship. Many so-called secular ideas have roots in religious beliefs. For example, political theorists have recently emphasized the ways that different explanations of secularism have been overwhelmingly formed by diverse normative assumptions about Christianity. This single illustration of a fundamental shift in political theory is challenging the legitimacy of the long-lasting contention that religion can be and should be restricted to

a private sphere and separated from political influence. Those who insist that religion, Christianity or Islam, should be completely separated from political culture were advised by John Gladwin in his book, *God's People in God's World*, that they should have a rethink because from creation the plan of God for mankind is to be in the world and become the light and salt of their various societies so that social phenomena, such as politics and governance, will be in perfect order.

According to Harvard School of Divinity, the ongoing global influences of religions in the political life of a people during the course of time and period became pronounced in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the 9/11 attack of September 11, 2001; since these events, political theorists in the West began to recognize the highly challenging ways that religions and religious influences have been disregarded.

This study concludes by providing an illustrative response to the question posed in the introductory section, namely, "In what ways does religion affect political culture in Nigeria?" In Nigeria, the southern part dominated by Christians appears to see politics as a dirty game that good Christians should not be part of, a view which engenders political apathy, while the Northern part dominated by Muslims sees politics as a normal game – in fact, to them, Islam encourages it; and so enthusiasm about politics and political calculations is higher in that part of the country. The type of political leadership this kind of system throws up is difficult to separate from religious influence.

Recommendation

This study recommends that since religion cannot be totally separated from politics and one's religious beliefs cannot immunize them from the adverse effects of negative political choices and decisions, everyone, irrespective of their religion, should play active part in politics. They should deploy the virtues taught in their religious doctrines to play ethical politics and help in sanitizing Nigerian politics and stabilizing the polity. Irrespective of any one's religion, age or sex, they should be involved in politics, even if their involvement only goes as far as simply educating themselves on who is who or why this person, and not that person, should be elected.

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Oseghale, C. O. (2024). Religion and Political Culture in Nigeria. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research (GOJAR)*, 3(2), 63-77. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-04/>.

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**A STUDY ON THE CADAVERIC ANATOMICAL
DIMENSIONS OF THE PTERION IN A NIGERIAN
POPULATION:
An Important Landmark Guide in Lateral Approach Surgeries***

By

**Ozor I.I, Nkwerem S.P.U, Iroegbu-Emeruem L, Nnachi S.I, Asimadu
I.N, Aroh V.E & Elisa F.I.**

Abstract

Background: The pterion is a craniometric point near the sphenoid fontanelle of the skull. In neurosurgery, pterional approach is one of the most widely used operative interventions and treatments. The aim of this study is to determine the cadaveric anatomical features of the pterion in a Nigerian population and compare with those of different populations.

Materials and method: This is an observational study carried out in the Human Anatomy Departments of Enugu State University College of Medicine, University of Nigeria College of Medicine, Nnamdi Azikiwe University College of Health Sciences, Ebonyi State University College of Medicine and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University College of Medicine, Nigeria, using fifty cadaveric skulls of both sexes. Oral approval was gotten from the various departments on presentation of letter of introduction from the Department of Anatomy, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

Results: The sphenoparietal type of pterion was found to be the most common type (78%) on the right and (74%) on the left, followed by frontotemporal which is (14%) on the right and (18%) on the left; the least common types of pterion is stellate and epipteric with (4%) on the right and the left.

Conclusion: Despite the significant variation between the left and right sides of the pterion, the pterions found in cadaveric skulls of Nigerian origin are similar to those of other population.

Introduction

The pterion, which is an important landmark in human craniometry, is a point of convergence of the frontal, sphenoid, parietal, and squamous temporal bones of the calvarium (Vigo et al 2020). It is a very useful landmark in surgical planning and orientation intraoperatively. Murphy described four types of pterions namely sphenoparietal, frontotemporal, stellate, and epipteric (Murphy, 1956). See figure 1. Occasionally, a small

eipteric bone may be present.

The pterion is a reference area in locating the Broca's motor speech area, anterior pole of the insula, and middle cerebral artery (Sindel et al, 2016). It is also very useful in neurosurgical approaches, especially for anterior circulation aneurysm (Bhargavi, C., Saralaya, V., & Kishan, K., 2011).

Furthermore, the pterion which is the weakest area of the skull, overlies the middle meningeal vessels (Ilknur, Mustafa, & Sinan, 2009), which are the major cause of extradural hematoma in head injuries. (Lama, Mottolese, et al, 2000). Previous cadaveric study around the pterion in SouthEast Nigeria was a single centre study (Ukoha et al, 2013). Besides, the relationship of pterion with the mastoid process, another important neurosurgical landmark, was not explored in the study. This multicenter study is an attempt to determine the cadaveric anatomical features of the pterion in a Nigerian population, compare previous studies in Nigeria and with those of different populations.

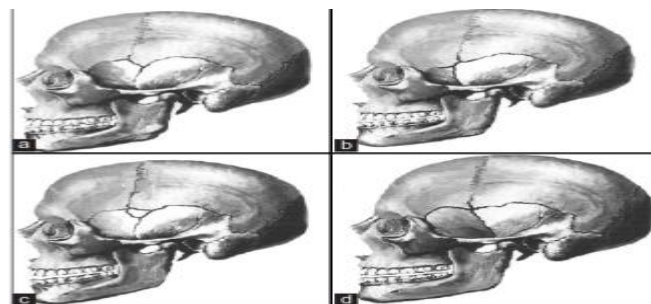


Figure 1: Skeletal picture of the types of pterions. (Murphy, 1956 & Oguz et al., 2004).

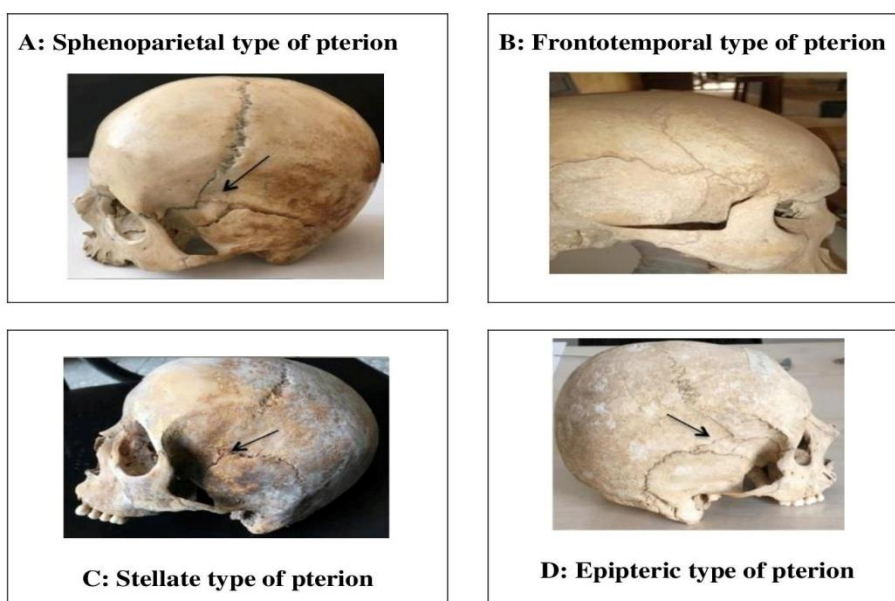


Figure 2: Types of pterions. (Çimen et al, 2019)

Materials and Methods

This is an observational study carried out in the human Anatomy Departments of Enugu State University College of Medicine, University of Nigeria College of Medicine, Nnamdi Azikiwe University College of Health Sciences, Ebonyi State University College of Medicine and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University College of Medicine. Oral approval was gotten from the various departments on presentation of letter of introduction from the Department of Anatomy, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Cadaveric skulls irrespective of males and females with intact calvaria and well-defined sutures were included in the study, while damaged skulls and very old skulls with obliterated sutures were excluded.

Study was conducted on fifty human unsexed adult skulls. Dry skulls are taken up for the study as there is paucity of cadavers. Pterion was classified based on Murphy's classification. Measurements were taken on both sides of the skull from the center of the pterion to the midpoint of zygoma, tip of the mastoid process, Bregma and to the fronto-zygomatic suture using Vernier calipers. Each of the measurements were taken twice then averaged so as to minimize bias errors. Relevant findings regarding various types of pterions and position of pterion were noted. Values were recorded separately on right and left sides and compared. Values were also compared with previous studies for their statistical significance.

The Measurement of Pterion

This was done in the laboratory, the data collected in this study were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics like the percentages, mean and standard deviation. To compare between right and left sides, One-Way ANOVA (Analysis of variance) was used.

Results

In the present study, we found sphenoparietal type of pterion to be the most common type (78%) on the right and (74%) on the left, followed by frontotemporal which is (14%) on the right and (18%) on the left, the least common types of pterion are stellate and epipterion with (4%) on the right and the left.

Table 1: The percentage distribution of various types of pterions is shown in the table below.

Types of Pterions	Right	Percentage (%)	Left	Percentage (%)
SPHENOPARIETAL	39	78	37	74
FRONTOTEMPORAL	7	14	9	18
STELLATE	2	4	2	4
EPIPTERIC	2	4	2	4
TOTAL	50	100	50	100

The table below is a comparison of left and right sides using standard deviation

Table 2a (right side)

TYPE	RIGHT X	X-X	(X-X) ²
SPHENOPARIETAL	39	26.5	702.25
FRONTOTEMPORAL	7	-5.5	30.25
EPIPTERIC	2	-10.5	110.25
STELLATE	2	-10.5	110.25
TOTAL	50		953

Standard deviation S for the right =17.8

Table 2b (left side)

TYPE	LEFT X	X-X	(X-X) ²
SPHENOPARIETAL	37	24.5	600.25
FRONTOTEMPORAL	9	-3.5	12.5
EPIPTERIC	2	-10.5	110.25
STELLATE	2	-10.5	110.25
TOTAL	50		833

Standard deviation S for the left= 16.

Table 3: ANOVA TABLE

Sources of variation	Sum of square	Degree of freedom	Mean square	Fraction
Treatment(α)	1782	(p-1)	594	594
Error(E)	4	(P-1)4	1	-
TOTAL	1786	7	-	-

The critical region is $F > F(0.5)(3, 4) = F > 6.59$

Since the calculated f_{\sim} ratio (594) is greater than the critical value (6.59) we reject the H_0 at $\alpha = 0.05$ and concluded that the varietal difference is significant. (Note this result is also significant at $\alpha = 0.01$).

Table 4: Comparing the distance from the pterion to mid-point of zygomatic arch(P-ZA), frontozygomatic(P-FZS), mastoid process (P-MP) with that of other populations.

AUTHORS	YEAR	POPULATION	DISTANCE(CM)					
			P-FZ		P-ZA		P-MP	
			Right	Left	Right	Left	Right	Left
Pretty Rathnakar et al	2019	India	4.0	4.0	3.2	3.2	8.3	8.3
Sowya S et al	2017	India	3.42	3.33	4.0	3.99		
Ma et al	2012	Australia	2.6	2.5	3.4	3.4		
Iiknur et al	2009	Anatolian	3.3	3.44	4.05	3.85		
K.Natsis et al	2019	Greek	3.47	3.52	4.13	4.09		
Bhargavi et al	2011	India	3.93	3.8	4.42	4.45		
Adejuwon et al	2013	Nigeria	3.1	3.083	3.91	3.87		
Ukoha et al	2013	Nigeria	2.74+/- .07	2.74+/- 0.06	4.02+/- 0.05	4.01+/- 0.03		
Present study	2021	Nigeria	3.32	3.40	4.53	4.39	8.92	8.78

Discussion

The predominant pterion found in the present study is the Sphenoparietal type (78%) on the right and (74%) on the left, and this is similar to all other studies summarized in Table 4. In the Asians, the Sphenoparietal pterion frequency ranged between 72% and 93.55%. The Japanese has the highest frequency with (93.5%) followed by the Indians with (72-77%). The Greeks has the lowest frequency (58.4%) followed by the Kenyans (66%). The high frequency of Sphenoparietal pterion could be as a result of evolution (Lui YH, et al 1999), given that it is the commonest type in primates (Ashley- Montagu M. 1933).

In the present study, the vertical distance from pterion to zygomatic arch is found to be slightly more on the right side compared to the left side, while the pterion to Frontozygomatic suture was slightly more on the left compared to the right. According to measurement pterion was lying approximately 4.53cm above the arcus zygomaticus on the right side, 4.39cm on the left side and 3.32cm behind the frontozygomatic suture on the right and 3.40cm on the left. A study done in Greek by K.Natsis et al (2019) shows the distance from the pterion to the zygomatic arch to be 4.13cm on the right and 4.09cm on the left, while the distance from the pterion to the frontozygomatic is 3.47cm on the right and 3.52cm on the left. In another study done in India by Bhargavi et al (2011) recorded the distance from the pterion to the zygomatic arch to 4.52cm on the right and 4.45cm on the left, while the distance from the pterion frontozygomatic suture is 3.93cm on the right and 3.8cm on the left. Another study done in Anatolia by Iiknur et al (2009) shows the distance from the pterion to the zygomatic arch to be 4.05cm on the right and 3.85cm on the left, while the distance from the pterion to the frontozygomatic suture is 3.3cm on the right and 3.44cm on the left.

Comparing the result from the present study to that of the result gotten

from other studies done in different populations it shows that the distance from the pterion to zygomatic arch is found to be slightly more on the right side compared to the left side, while the pterion to frontozygomatic suture is slightly more on the left compared to the right.

Conclusion

The pterions found in cadaveric skulls of Nigerian origin have the following features when compared to those of other population; Distance from the center of the pterion to mid zygomatic arch and mastoid process was found to be more on the right than the left, from the pterion to the frontozygomatic arch was found to be more on the left than the right and Bregma is equal on both sides.

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** This is a revised version of an article of the same title published by the authors in 2023.*



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CITING THIS ARTICLE



AMA

Ozor II, Nkwerem SPU, Iroegbu-Emeruem L, Nnachi SI, Asimadu IN, Aroh VE, Elisa FI. A Study on the Cadaveric Anatomical Dimensions of the Pterion in a Nigerian Population: An Important Landmark Guide in Lateral Approach Surgeries. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research*, 2024;3(2):78-86. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-05/>.

APA

Ozor I.I, Nkwerem S.P.U, Iroegbu-Emeruem L., Nnachi S.I, Asimadu I.N, Aroh V.E, Elisa F.I. (April 2024). A Study on the Cadaveric Anatomical Dimensions of the Pterion in a Nigerian Population: An Important Landmark Guide in Lateral Approach Surgeries. *Global Online Journal of Academic Research*, 3(2), 78-86. <https://klamidas.com/gojar-v3n2-2024-05/>.