



## Faith Leaders & the Outcome of the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study examines how the role of religion in a democratic environment is related to the history of democracy itself, especially in the country of Nigeria in 2023. Religious leaders often mobilize their congregations or allow politicians to use their podiums to mobilize support during elections. The findings of this study imply that religious leaders have now become active political actors in Nigeria, a country divided along ethnic and religious lines. The mobilization of voters based on ethnic and religious sentiments will have a negative impact on the development of democracy in the country, in the sense that leaders are chosen not based on the leadership qualities they possess or based on their competence, but rather based on primordial sentiments. This research uses explanatory research to explain and examine how religious leaders influence the results of several elections in Nigeria, especially the 2023 elections. This research uses secondary data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), an election management body in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** election, religion in a democracy, leader

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The role of religion in a democratic setting is linked with the history of democracy itself. Religious leaders often mobilize their congregations or allow politicians to use their podiums to mobilize support during elections. Nigeria is not an exception; since the First Republic elections, which were held in 1958, religion, alongside ethnicity and region, has been playing a vital role in influencing the choice of candidates at all tiers of Government and also largely determines the outcome of the elections. However, the level of involvement of faith leaders in elections conducted in 1958, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 differs. The 2015, 2019, and 2023 witnessed the active involvement of faith leaders of both Muslims and Christians in mobilizing their members to support or vote for some candidate. In the United States of America, leaders and members of Evangelical Churches were more active in political mobilization than their Protestant counterparts. Additionally, Catholics participate in civic duties than other sects among Christians in the United States of America (Campbell, 2004).

In a democratic setting, people who attained voting age declare their support for a political candidate or candidates based on different reasons. Some people in Nigeria declare support for political candidates because of the following reasons: (1) to express their political orientation, (2) to learn about politics, through campaign and voting, they can actively involve or participate in the political affairs of their community/nation. For these reasons they are stated, this article intends to explain the involvement of faith-based leaders in the mobilization of supporters for candidates contesting for political offices and how their declaration of support influenced the outcome of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. In this study, faith leaders refer to the leaders of major religious organizations in Nigeria, including Muslims and Christian leaders, regardless of their sects or denominations. Therefore, the objectives of the study are to explain what leads to the involvement of faith-based leaders in endorsing political contestants on behalf of their members and to examine the impact of the support on the outcomes of the elections.

Sketch of literature review. Umeanolue (2020) has examined how religious belief played a significant role in the previous elections in Nigeria. The

work focused on the elections that were conducted in the post-independence era in Nigeria, that is, from 1960 to 2019. The findings showed that the religious identity of the candidate largely attracted support from States with a substantial population of people who share the same faith in 2019. However, the result revealed that in the elections that were conducted in 1979 and 1983, religious affiliation of the Presidential candidate and other elective offices was not a major determinant that led to the victory for the candidates who emerged victorious.

National and local religious leaders are influential in affecting the political attitudes, opinions, and behavior of members of their organizations. Religious leaders are influential not only because they are day-to-day administrators of their congregations but also because they are looked upon to guide on doctrinal matters. However, it is important to be clear the efforts of the Christian Right are different than outright politicking from the pulpit. Because of the influence of the Christian Right in developing strategies to get members of various Christian religious organizations to support various conservative politicians and policies, there is an assumption those efforts mean religious organizations and their leaders deliver explicit political instruction to their members. That link is understandable, as studies have indicated those who attend church more frequently are more likely to vote for Republican presidential candidates.

Religious organizations have been involved at different levels of democratic processes in Africa. For example, Tofa (2012) provided a historical account of the Church in Zimbabwe, which had been deeply immersed in party politics for centuries, immediately after the country's independence in 1980. The Church supported some candidates of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU), United African (National Congress UANC), and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU NDONGA) at the 1980 General Elections. With the support of the Church, the ZANU Party won the election, and Robert Mugabe became the President.

Gathaka (2012) assessed how the Bible was used as a tool for mobilizing support for political candidates in Kenya. Being a country with about 80 percent of the Christian population, politicians deployed the Bible with the assistance of clergymen to campaign for Church's preferred candidates. Gathaka (2012, p.159) succinctly summarized the roles of the Church in the political struggles and influencing the political choice of its members.

The e church, therefore, being the custodian of God's word, must be able to transmit the right knowledge that will liberate people and promote the common good of all so that God's love, justice, and righteousness can reign over the whole creation in the present world. The church's reading of the scriptures motivated and shaped their engagement with the state. The church leaders believe themselves obliged to measure any state's action by the standards of the scriptures and to compel the state to attend to the scriptures by lively preaching.

Chamburuka (2012) has critically analyzed how the Christian religious leaders in Zimbabwe used a particular segment of the Bible to influence the perception of their members. The government of Robert Mugabe used the Church to get legitimacy from the public, which was a country dominated by Christians. Chamburuka (2012) found that Roma 13:1-7 has been interpreted by the clergymen who have supported the Zimbabwean government. The religious leaders blindly supported the regime because they benefited from it. The Government and the Church leaders used the Biblical verses to rubber-stamp political mishaps, mischief, exploitation of the public (poor), plunder of national resources, dictatorship, tyranny, racism, alleged vote buying and vote rigging, rape, torture, repressive laws, corruption, intimidation, murder, abductions, militarization of state institutions, bizarre taxation.

Chatterjee (2008) in his study of *The Gordian Knot of Religion in Politics in India*, explained how religious leaders in the country used the pulpit and mobilized support for candidates during the electioneering campaigns. The findings showed that the majority of those who won the election won with the support of the religious leaders who instructed their followers to vote for the candidate of their choice. Since 1940, religious leaders in India have been playing significant roles in shaping the political behavior of their members, influencing the political choice of their followers, and, at the same time, influencing the outcome of a political contest or government policies.

Adkins (2018) has identified some Christian religious organizations in the United States of America that express in public their support for political parties or individual candidates. The Southern Baptist Convention and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were among the two religious organizations in

the US that preached to their congregations during sermons to vote for a political candidate during elections. Religious service has been an avenue for spreading political messages to the congregation. Political candidates used to take advantage of the availability of Church members at the service to spread their manifestos. The result showed that the majority of the candidates supported by the Church emerged victorious at the polls.

McCauley and Gyimah-Boadi (2009) reported the findings of the Afrobarometer surveys on the religious faith and democracy in Africa. The findings of the survey revealed that religion occupies a central place in the minds and daily lives of many Africans. Both Christians and Muslims tend to respect the leaders of their faith. In turn, the leaders of faith-based organizations, sects, and denominations tend to use their pulpits to mobilize support for the government and political parties during elections. Politics in Africa is a mixture of religion, ethnicity, and geopolitical sentiments, and these factors and others influence the religious to either covertly or overtly influence the voting behavior of their members to vote for the candidates that their faith leaders support.

Siahaa, Samosir, and Ali (2020) conducted a study in a Muslim-predominant area of Indonesia, particularly West Java. The study found that Christians used to win legislative elections because the Muslim leaders used to support them. The Christian candidates used to carry out development projects and used local languages during the campaign, which the villagers cherish.

Eneflo (2019) conducted a study on the role of religion in the democratization process in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The researcher focused on the Catholic Church in the political processes of the country. The Church has supported different political parties and candidates for the stability of the country. The Church organized different orientation programs for their members on how to vote for good candidates who will transform the country. Candidates that the Catholic Church supported during elections won the elections because the majority of the Congolese are Christians who belong to the Catholic. Therefore, this work shows that the religious denominations of the candidates have become the major determinants of electoral victory in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Lichty (2016) found that since the independence of Kenya from Great Britain in 1963, Christian religious leaders have been using Churches and pulpits

as agents of political socialization and education. From the time of Jomo Kenyatta, the pulpit has served as an avenue for reaching the electorates who are predominantly Christians. During electioneering campaigns, candidates seeking elective offices are using the leaders of the Christian religion to canvass for votes from the Church members. The study explored the role of Pulpit in the democratic process in Kenya because of the importance of religion in Kenyan political life, which influences the political decisions or choices of the electorates. The study found that Pastors have played a significant role in the democratic processes of the country.

Theoretical framework. This paper has adopted a theoretical explanation developed by Paul A. Djupe (2022), the Religious Communication Approach. It is considered an approach because it explains how religious use their pulpit to persuade and influence the political behavior of their members. The Approach explains that politics is an affair of the Church, and the clergy are deeply interested in the political choices of their members because it has an impact on the lives of the citizens. The approach believes that the message that people get from the clergy during service does shape their political choice or behavior during the election. This explains why political elites require the support of the clergies to send their messages and campaign promises to the public or targeted voters (Djupe, 2022).

## **METHODS**

This research has adopted an explanatory type of research to explain and examine how faith leaders influenced the outcome of some elections in Nigeria, particularly the 2023 General Elections. The study utilized secondary data from the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), an election management body in Nigeria. Also, video and audio clips of some sampled religious leaders, both Christian and Muslim, were collected and analyzed. The data from the secondary sources were analyzed using comparative analysis. The results of the 2023 Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections in some States are presented alongside the public declaration of popular religious preachers in the State. The rationale behind this method is to examine how religious leaders shape or

influence the political decisions and choices of the members of their congregation or followers.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Prophet Jeremiah Omoto Fufeyin**

Prophet Jeremiah Omoto Fufeyin in Warri, Delta State, on the 31st December 2022 prophesized that the Presidential candidate of the All-Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, will win the 2023 General Election and enjoined his Church members to vote for the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party Peter Obi. Expectedly, the candidate of the Labour Party won the Presidential election in Delta State. As one of the prominent Christian leaders in the State, his public declaration in support of the LP Presidential candidate positively influenced the voting preference of the residents of Delta State, particularly during the Presidential election. The LP candidate, Peter Obi, scored 341,866, PDP 161,600, and APC 90,183. Both the Presidential candidates of PDP and APC were Muslims, Atiku Abubakar, and Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Delta is a State that is predominantly dominated by Christians. The Vice-Presidential candidate of the PDP was the incumbent Governor of Delta at the time when the election was conducted in February, but that did not influence the voters to cast a ballot for the PDP's presidential candidate.

After the Presidential and the election management body in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Bola Ahmed Tinubu of APC as the winner of the contest, Prophet Jeremiah Omoto Fufeyin prophesized that the losers would go to the Election Petition Tribunal, and the predicted that winner would not last more than six months. He further prophesized that the new president, who will emerge after six months, would make life better for the Nigerians.

### **Prophet Amos**

Prophet Amos of Jesus Christ Temple Ministry Warri, Delta State examined that virtually all the prophecies about the 2023 General Elections by Pastors failed. He queried how Churches were turned into places for making prophecies about elections and other political affairs.

DELTA STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	90,183	341,866	161,600	3,122
	WINNER			

### Pastor David Ibiyeomie

Pastor David Ibiyeomie is a founder of Salvation Ministries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. In January 2023, they encouraged the members of his Church for the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Mr Peter Obi. He analyzed that the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari has sidelined the Christians in Nigeria and were relegated to the status of second-class citizens. The opinion and support of some Christian leaders in Rivers State to support the candidature of Peter Obi in the Presidential election has yielded positive results. Peter Obi came second after the APC candidate, who had 231,593 votes, while Obi got 175,071 votes.

RIVERS STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	231,591	175,071	88,468	1,322
	WINNER			

### Bishop Feyi Daniels

Bishop Feyi Daniels is a Pastor of the iReign Christian Family in Lagos. He declared his support for the Christian Presidential Candidate, Mr. Peter Obi, in January 2023. He prophesized that the candidate of the APC, Bola Tinubu will rig the election of the election and become the President. He told his Church members that the winner of the Presidential election would not be sworn in, and he would be arrested on the day of the inauguration of the new President on May 29, 2023. 4



LAGOS STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	572,606	582,454	75,750	8442
WINNER				

### Prophet Ritabbi

Prophet Ezenwa Ritabbi George of God of Nownow is based in Jos Plateau State. He is a founder of Founder of Christ As of Old Ministry. He encouraged his followers to vote for the Presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Mr Peter Obi. During the crossover prayer on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, he charged the youths not to vote for leaders without a vision for their countries.

PLATEAU STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	307,195	466,272	243,808	8,869
WINNER				

### Pastor Sarah Omakwu

Pastor Sarah Omakwu is an Abuja-based Senior Pastor of Family Worship Centre Abuja. In June 2022, during a mass addressing the congregation, Pastor Sarah instructed the members of the congregation to cast their votes at the 2023 General Elections in one place. “My prayer is that God will raise a voice for us like there was Rev. Benson Idahosa. One of these fathers will speak for this 2023 election and direct the Church to cast votes in one direction and one place. We should not be afraid to vote for one person. If we are not afraid to say APC Muslim or PDP Muslim, we should be afraid to vote for Christians. It is a total disregard to us Christians, and therefore, we are going to get out PVC (Permanent Voter’s Card), and we are going to waste our votes. That candidate, they said, has no structure; we are going to be structureless; structure has not helped us. The structure has taken power from us, the structure has not given us electricity, the structure has been killing us, the structure has left us jobless, it has killed us, and we are going to be structureless this time. The body of Christ, anybody who is Christian, Catholic, Seraphin, Pentecostal, Baptist, etc., we are going to waste our

votes. Tell your neighbor that we're going to be vote wasters come 2023. For the first time, a Church will vote one vote.

FCT ABUJA	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	90,902	281,717	74,194	4,517
	WINNER			

### Muslim Leaders In Northern Nigeria

In Northern Nigeria, particularly North-West, the population is predominantly Muslim; the faith leaders were divided between the Presidential candidates of PDP and APC, who are both Muslims. The faith leaders influenced their followers to vote in support of Atiku Abubakar of PDP because he is a Muslim from Northern Nigeria. Others mobilized their followers to vote for Bola Ahmed Tinubu of APC because he and his running mate are both Muslim, which is referred to as a Muslim-Muslim ticket. Therefore, the votes of most States with a high population of Muslims in the North were divided between PDP and APC. They are:

KANO STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	517,341	28,513	131,716	997,279
	WINNER			

  

ZAMFARA STATE	APC	LP	PDP	NNPP
	298,396	1,660	193,978	4044
	WINNER			

<b>JIGAWA STATE</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>LP</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>NNPP</b>
	421,390	1,889	386,587	98,234
	WINNER			
<b>KADUNA STATE</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>LP</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>NNPP</b>
	399,293	294,494	554,360	92,969
	WINNER			
<b>KEBBI STATE</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>LP</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>NNPP</b>
	248,088	10,682	285,175	5,038
	WINNER			
<b>KATSINA STATE</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>LP</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>NNPP</b>
	482,283	6,376	489,045	69,386
	WINNER			
<b>SOKOTO STATE</b>	<b>APC</b>	<b>LP</b>	<b>PDP</b>	<b>NNPP</b>
	285,444	6,568	288,679	1,300
	WINNER			

Prominent Islamic scholars in the North had publicly declared their support for either Atiku Abubakar or PDP. He is a Northerner from Adamawa State or Bola Ahmed Tinubu, because he and his Vice-Presidential candidate are Muslims. Sheikh Muhammad Sambo Rigachukum, Sheikh Musa Yusuf Assadus Sunnah from Kaduna State, Sheikh Abdulrahman Azzamfari from Zamfara, and a host of others openly campaigned for Atiku Abubakar in different gatherings.

Sheikh Muhammad Sani Yahaya Jingre, based in Jos Plateau State, leader of one of the factions of Izalah, a religious organization in Nigeria, openly declared Bola Ahmed Tinubu his candidate simply because his running-mate is a Muslim. Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Uthman in Kano, Sheikh Habibu Yahay Kaura in Katsina, and Sheikh Saidu Maikwano from Gusau, Zamfara State, all enjoined their followers to vote for the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the APC.

It could be deduced from the results presented from the States sampled revealed how some faith leaders actively engage their followers in political discourse and mobilize them to cast their ballot for a candidate who will defend their faith.

Southeast geopolitical zone. This geopolitical zone comprises five States: Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo. States are inhabited by Igbo people whose populations are overwhelmingly Christian. Also, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, is from Anambra State; therefore, the faith leaders in the geopolitical do not need to mobilize their followers to vote for Peter Obi for ethnic or religious reasons. Expectedly, Peter Obi swept the entire five States of the Southeast geopolitical zone while the candidates of APC and PDP performed poorly in the States. This indicated the voting pattern or voting behavior of the areas was influenced or shaped by ethnic, religious, and geopolitical factors. The outcome of the 2023 Presidential election in the Southeast is agreed with the submission of Salahu (2023) who analyzed the outcome of the 2023 Presidential election in which religion played a major role in determining the outcome. Paraphrasing Salahu's (2023) findings in this study, Salahu found that despite attempts and promises by most states in Nigeria to run secular governments, religion has always been a major driver of the electoral behavior of the citizens. In the 2023 Presidential election, two main religions played significant roles in determining voting outcomes. The results of the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria from the sampled States have substantiated how influential some faith leaders are now in Nigeria's political landscape.

Northwest geopolitical zone. Islamic religious leaders in this geopolitical zone were divided between those who endorsed the candidature of Bola Ahmed Tinubu of APC and Atiku Abubakar of PDP. This geopolitical factor has been a major determinant of the presidential election in Nigeria due to its numerical

strength. Unlike other geopolitical zones in Nigeria, which have five and six States, the Northwest has seven States: Jigawa, Kano, and Kaduna. Kebbi, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara. Of these States, except for Kaduna, which has a sizeable population of Christians and ethnic groups that are not Hausa in its Southern part, the remaining six States are dominated by ethnic Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups who are mostly Muslims (except Kebbi State, with a handful of population of some ethnic groups that does not belong to Hausa ethnic group and are Christians). It could be deduced from the result of the election that Bola Ahmed Tinubu won in two out of the seven States in this geopolitical zone, Jigawa and Zamfara States, while Atiku Abubakar won four States (Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi) while Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of New Nigeria Peoples' Party (NNPP) won his home State of Kano. In all the five States that the APC Presidential lost in the Northwest, he was in the second position. This was a calculated or planned strategy for winning an election by all leading political parties to get votes from States with a high population of voters.

The APC picked a Northern Muslim as the running-mate of Bola Tinubu to get support from Northern Muslims since the presidential candidate is from the Southwest geopolitical zone. Atiku Abubakar and Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso are Hausa and Fulani from the Northeast and Northwest. This is in line with the analysis of the Presidential candidates of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria by Siegle and Cook (2023) of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, stated that in recognition of the country's fragile and evenly balanced Muslim-Christian composition and ethnic variety, Nigerian parties have historically alternated putting forward candidates from the north and south of the country. Also, Agbor (2019) found that voters voted along religious lines in the general elections of 2011, 2015, and 2019. Adherence to religious beliefs, pressure from religious authorities, and denominational considerations all exacerbated this sort of conduct.

### **Implication of the Findings**

The findings of this study imply that faith leaders have now become active political actors in Nigeria, a country that is sharply divided along ethnic and religious lines. The active involvement in the mobilization of voters, along with religious affiliation, will further exacerbate the existing mutual disbelief between Muslims and Christians in the country. This will harm the corporate existence of

Nigeria as a unified and peaceful country through constant ethnic and religious unrest arising from agitation for power and resource control. This correlates with one of the findings of the Centre for Democracy and Development on the outcome of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. CDD (2023) concluded that Nigeria's identity conflicts have been more prominent throughout recent elections, with narratives magnified by online debate exacerbating this. Whether to promote traditional zone patterns or to incite racial fears to strengthen voter bases, this has contributed to a sensitive political climate and a contentious voting process. Instances of systematic disenfranchisement based on ethnicity and the assumption that this will result in votes for a different party may also contribute to increased partisanship and division in incoming administrations.

The mobilization of voters based on ethnic and religious sentiments will have negative effects on the development of democracy in the country, in the sense that leaders will be elected not based on the qualities of leadership they possess or based on competency but on primordial sentiments. The allegiance of elected political officeholders will be to the leaders of their ethnic or religious groups who mobilized their followers to vote for them. This will hamper the deepening of democracy in Nigeria, with more than two hundred ethnic groups and different religious groups, sects, and denominations. This agrees with the position of Osita (2011) on the democratization process in Africa. He stated that a comprehensive examination of the democratization processes revealed that conflict was produced not by the plurality of peoples but by how these diversities were constructed and handled and how they connected to a specific power structure. In cases where managing diversity appeared to deepen existing cleavages or reproduce relations of domination by one group over another, there was always the risk that a democratic opening would raise expectations of change and result in ethnic tensions when such expectations were not met. Many African countries have experienced post-election conflicts, most recently Kenya, Guinea, and Nigeria.

Also, another implication of the findings is that minority religious or ethnic groups may not have a chance to govern Nigeria. This is because Nigeria is practicing a winner-takes-all democracy; the leadership of the country will be an exclusive affair of the ethnic and religious groups with the numerical strength of

the electorate or registered voters. This will create an atmosphere of intense competition for power among ethnic and religious groups in the country, and it will not lead to a healthy democracy. This is supported by Taylor's (2018) conclusion on democracy in Africa. He concluded that, however, the quality of Africa's democracies varies; despite political improvements, democratic values remain weak and vulnerable.

## CONCLUSION

Citizens' participation in democratic processes is part of their fundamental human rights. Faith leaders, like other citizens, have a constitutional right to actively participate in democratic processes such as contesting for elective offices, campaigning for their political party or candidate, or raising funds for their candidate. However, faith leaders in Nigeria are expected not to actively mobilize the electorate to vote for political candidates based on their faith because that erodes democracy and good governance. The outcome of the 2023 Presidential Election will change the political arrangement for a long period to come. This is because the APC presidential candidate won the election despite a call by prominent Christian leaders that their members should not vote for the APC presidential candidate. The party has not respected the unwritten political arrangement in Nigeria of picking a running-mate Christian if the Presidential candidate is a Muslim and vice versa. It showed the voting strength of Christians and Muslims in the country despite the APC candidate winning in some Christian-dominated States like Benue, Rivers, and Ekiti State. The implication is that in future elections, a Muslim Presidential may not consider the religious division of the country in the choice of the running mate, which will have adverse effects on social interaction and cohesion of the country. For the Muslim faith leaders in the North, the victory of the APC at the polls and his defeat in most of the Muslim-dominated States revealed that the voting behavior of some Northern Muslims was influenced greatly by ethnic affiliation rather than religion. Additionally, there will be political mistrust between the Muslims in the Southwest and the North since a Southwest Muslim was rejected in the North on the grounds of his ethnic affiliation in favor of a Northerner. The victory of Atiku Abubakar in most of the States in the Northwest and Northeast revealed that the Northerners were greedy for power; they wanted to retain power after a Northerner had spent eight

years in power (Muhammadu Buhari). Henceforth, a political alliance between the North and Southwest or Southeast will be made with extreme caution as a result of what happened in the 2023 General Election. Similarly, the outcome of the Presidential election will affect the development of democracy because politicians who are not competent or possess the requisite qualities of leadership will use religious leaders as a scaffold to ascend to political offices. This will not only strangle good governance but also murder democracy. It will pave the way for primordial sentiments such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, and geopolitical location of the candidate to be the major determinants of electoral victory in Nigeria. Meritocracy and competency to deliver good governance will be suspended or put aside when faith leaders dictate for their followers to cast their ballot simply because they share the same faith. Experience from some countries in Eastern Europe, like Bosnia, Kosovo, Czech Republic, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, etc., erupted into political turmoil and even genocide in Bosnia as a result of voting leaders based on ethnic and religious memberships. In the religious arena, the majority of the religious or faith leaders will not lose their relevance before their followers and politicians whom they mobilized their supporters against but, at the end of the contest, won the election. It may lead to the victimization of the followers of the leaders who openly opposed some candidates because of their ethnic and religious affiliations. This may compel the political holders to give preference to those who supported them and mobilized voters for their victory.

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