

IMPLICATIONS OF GAME THEORY ON POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA, 1999 - 2012

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Abstract

Game theory is the formal study of the rational and consistent expectation that participants can have about each other's choices, especially when the actions of several agents are interdependent. In Nigeria, there is the application of game theory in several activities which had negated the principles of unity, faith, brotherhood, rules, law, order and development. There are implicit and explicit implications of these on religious and political activities in a nation with diverse language, culture, ethnic politics and religion. The study was limited to zero-sum game with the aim of examining the religious and political implications of the zero-sum game in Nigeria. The data was gathered through secondary sources which includes but not limited to books, journals, newspapers and network news sources. It was analysed using content analysis. The study found that religion has a strong history of influence over political activities in Nigeria; Christians, Muslims, politicians and bureaucrats are actively involved in game theory practice against each other manifesting in various forms, including: incitement, distortion of fact about the other, blocking each other's chances, hatred and blackmailing as well as destruction of lives and property. The practice has not only reduced the level of development but has also made the truth of our heroes-past to be in vain, with poor judicial proceedings, lack of one nation, brotherhood and peace. The Nigerian leaders and stakeholders in religion and politics should engage in zero-sum game and non zero-sum game in order to produce results that would radiate peace, tranquility and development.

Introduction

Game theory has become one of the most powerful analytical tools in the study of politics and religion in this contemporary world, particularly, in the emerging economies. From its earliest applications in electoral and legislative behaviour, game theoretic models have proliferated in such diverse areas as international security, ethnic cooperation and democratization. Indeed all the major fields in political science and religion have been the recipients of important contributions from political and religious game theoretic models, (Cameron, 2000:87).

Rasmusen, (2001:5), assert that, Game theory is the formal study of conflict and cooperation. Game theoretic concepts apply whenever the actions of several agents are interdependent. These agents may be individuals, groups, firms, or any combination of these. The concepts of game theory provide a language to formulate structure, analysis, and understand strategic scenarios. According to Gibbons and Robert (2003:19), the object of study in game theory is the game, which is a formal model of an interactive situation. It typically involves several players; a game with only one player is usually called a decision problem. The formal definition lays out the players, their preferences, their information, and the strategic actions available to them, and how these influence the outcome. Also, Obasi (2007:169) described it as a branch of decision theory concerned with interdependent decisions.

Kenny, (2001:43) opined that the problems of interest involve multiple participants, each of whom has individual objective related to a common system or shared resources. Because game theory arose from the analysis of competitive scenarios, the problems are called games and the participants are called players. But these techniques apply to more than just sport, and are not even limited to competitive situations. In short, game theory deals with any problem in which each player's strategy depends on what the other players do. Situations involving interdependent decisions arise frequently in all walks of life. A few examples in which game theory could come in handy include but not limited to:

- Friends choosing where to go and have dinner
- Financial managers setting priority
- Parents trying to get children to behave
- Commuters deciding how to go to work
- Businesses competing in a market
- Diplomats negotiating a treaty

- Gamblers betting in a card game

All of these situations call for strategic thinking in making use of available information to devise the best plan to achieve one's objective. Perhaps, one may be familiar with assessing costs and benefits in order to make informed decisions between several options. Game theory simply extends this concept to interdependent decisions, in which the options being evaluated are functions of the player's choices.

Ezeani (2010:99), define game theory as a body of thought dealing with rational decision in situation of conflict and composition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimize losses". An application of mathematical models to political studies, the game theory deals with processes in which the individuals' decision-unit has only partial control over the strategic factors affecting its environment. Thus, according to Ken (2001:29):

In all situations, where a decision involving the others has to be taken, in the case of generals engaged in battles, diplomats involved in bargaining and negotiation, politicians trying to influence the voters, legislators making effort to organize group or coalitions, the game theory has a role to play.

In a game situation, the players or decision makers try to maximize their gains or minimize their losses; they want to get as much as they can out of the game (Isaak, 1999:239). Each player is guided by the rules of the game which described how the resources may be utilized. "A rule of the game", according to Roger (1991:288) can be defined as "a distribution of resources and the strategic possibilities open to each player in the employment of these resources". Another important concept in game theory is "outcome". This is usually the relationship between the players and price or the objective they aim at. In certain games, like election, there can be only two possible outcome either you win or you lose. There could be larger number of outcomes in other games. This leads to another core concept of game theory strategy. In the word of Goodman (1987:27), strategy is "an overall programme of action which a player adopts in order to achieve a desired outcome or series of outcome under adverse or conflict condition", and consists of "all the different contingent plans that the player has for deciding along the way how to act next". In most games, a number of strategies are open to each side, the objective is to choose the one that maximizes gains and minimizes losses.

In Nigeria, game theory are used in several areas both public and private sectors, like in budgeting or execution, official decisions, federal appointments, political arrangements, lobbying at the law making levels, state or local government creation apply game theoretic model in achieving ones objectives. The list is unending and the outcome are regrettable when hatched, yet, the contenders in some cases decide to play along in order to get the benefits due for the proper playing. In other cases, it is played to thwart the action of a larger group by the few, change policy, digress from the real and or applying game theory to problems dealing with counterfeit goods, parallel importation and cyber squatting. It usually, tries to avert the rule, constitution, belief, tradition and human rights. Much is invested to make it a real game. Obasanjo third term bid applied game theory to second vent the constitution to suit his personal or group ideologies. The factors affecting political and socio-religious development in Nigeria bothered on the applicability of game theoretical model in its policy and implementation.

Therefore, this work was limited to zero-sum and its significance can never be undervalued. It has the ability to expose the general public on the evil effects of game practice on the activities in Nigeria which are in conflict with Nigeria's development. The work will also be an eye opener to Nigerian criticizes on the major causes of religious and political crisis in the country. The objective of the study was to examine the implications of the zero-sum game on the religious and political activities in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i). briefly state the history of game theory,
- ii) examine the implications of the zero-sum game on the religious and political activities in Nigeria and
- iii) recommend ways forward for Nigeria unity.

History of Game Theory

According to Dixit and Nalebuff (2004:191), the earliest example of a formal game-theoretic analysis is the study of a duopoly by Antoine Cournot in 1838. The mathematician Emile Borel suggested a formal theory of games in 1921, which was furthered by the mathematician John von Neumann in 1928 in a "theory of parlor games." Game theory was established as a field in its own right after the 1944 publication of the monumental volume of "Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour" by von Neumann and the economist Oskar Morgenstern. This book

provided much of the basic terminology and problem set up that is still in use today. In 1950, John Nash demonstrated that finite games have always had equilibrium point, at which all players choose actions which are best for them given their opponents' choices.

Jeremy (2005) and Wikipedia (2013) summarised the tenets or features of game theory and a few of the most common are listed here:

- i. **Number of players:** Each person who makes a choice in a game or who receives a payoff from the outcome of those choices is a player.
- ii. **Strategies per player:** In a game each player chooses from a set of possible actions, known as strategies. If the number is the same for all players, it is listed here.
- iii. **Number of pure strategy Nash equilibria:** A Nash equilibrium is a set of strategies which represents mutual best responses to the other strategies. In other words, if every player is playing their part of Nash equilibrium, no player has an incentive to unilaterally change his or her strategy. Considering only situations where players play a single strategy without randomizing (a pure strategy) a game can have any number of Nash equilibria.
- iv. **Sequential game:** A game is sequential if one player performs her/his actions after another, otherwise the game is a simultaneous move game.
- v. **Perfect information:** A game has perfect information if it is a sequential game and every player knows the strategies chosen by the players who preceded them.
- vi. **Constant sum:** A game is constant sum if the sums of the payoffs to every player are the same for every set of strategies. In these games one player gains if and only if another player loses. A constant sum game can be converted into a zero sum game by subtracting a fixed value from all payoffs, leaving their relative order unchanged.

This central concept of non cooperative game theory has been a focal point of analysis since then. In the 1950s and 1960s, game theory was broadened theoretically and applied to problems of war and politics. Since the 1970s, it has driven a revolution in economic theory. Additionally, it has found applications in sociology, psychology, politics, religion and established links with evolution and biology. Game theory received special attention in 1994 with the awarding of the Nobel Prize in economics to Nash, John Harsanyi, and Reinhard Selten. At the end of the 1990s, a high-profile application of game theory has been the design of auctions. Prominent game theorists have been involved in the design of auctions for allocating rights to the

use of bands of the electromagnetic spectrum to the mobile telecommunications industry. We shall specifically look at the two types of game theory that would be applicable to our study, that is, non-zero game and zero sum games theory.

Non-Zero Game

In non-zero game, the gains and losses of the two players do not cancel out, they do not equal zero. It allows a wide variety of possible payoffs, including situation where both players gain and where both players loses, www.modelbenders.com/papers/smith_game_impact_theory).

Zero-Sum Game

Zero-sum game is a special case of constant-sum games, in which choices by players can neither increase nor decrease the available resources. In zero-sum games, the total benefit to all players in the game for every combination of strategies, always adds to zero (more informally, a player benefits only at the equal expense of others). In this type of game, there are normally two players or more, the gain of one will equally be the loss of others, for example, two handed poker game is of sort: if player A wins #100 then player B has to loss #100. A political situation that can fit zero-sum condition is a two or more contestant in an election, where each candidate is rational and is trying to win. One candidate will win and others will loss.

In game theory, we talk about maximin and minimaxi. The two are distinct from each other. Minimax is used in zero-sum games to denote minimizing the opponent's maximum payoff. This is identical to minimizing one's own maximum loss, and to maximizing one's own minimum gain. In other words, an unequal distribution can be just when it maximizes the minimum benefit to those who have the lowest allocation of welfare-conferring resources, (Arrow (1973:245-263) and Harsanyi (1975:594-606)).

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GAME THEORY IN NIGERIA

When leaders have a zero-sum approach, i.e. one man's gain is another man's loss, the result is always an intolerant religion/political and an intolerant nation. The religious and political implications of this game will be highlighted in the light of zero-sum game as follows:

Religious and Political Crises

Religious and political crises have been noted as the consequences of the zero-sum game. It will be recalled that since 1999-2012 almost 80% of these religious crises were fueled by political factors (Igwe 2012). For example, center for reduction of religious-based conflict observe that:

Political and sectarian violence has claimed more than 16,000 lives since the end of military rule in 1999. Protests by opposition supporters in 12 northern states following the April 16 presidential election degenerated into three days of violent, riots and sectarian killings between Christians and Muslims that left hundreds dead, including at least 680 in Kaduna State.

Since the inception of civilian rule, religious crises caused by politics have been the order of the day. Let us look at the table below and see when, where, causes of the crisis and casualty.

Table 1: When, Where, Causes and Casualties of Religious and Political Crisis in Nigeria

YEAR	LOCALITY	CAUSES	CASUALTIES
1999	Kafanchan	Appointment of a Caretaker Chairman	30 people injured, 3 cars, 1 church and 4 houses burnt
2000	Kaduna	PDP Youth Leader (Christian/Muslim)	4 to 25 people died, Churches and Mosques burnt
2001	Jos	Ward Councilor (Christian/Muslim)	6 houses, 3 cars were burnt, and varying degree of injuries
2002	Kano	Argument over Politics	20 people were injured and 1 car was burnt
2003	Tafawa Belewa	Argument over Politics	5 people killed, 18 injured and 8 houses were burnt
2004	Bauchi	After a town hall meeting with the governor (Christian/Muslim)	Churches and Mosques were burnt

2005	Maiduguri	PDP/ANPP	2 killed, 6 cars were burnt and many injured
2006	Yola	Chairman vs. Deputy	Chairman's house burnt and 10 injured
2007	Tooto (Nasarawa)	Political argument among students	1 person killed
2008	Douma (Nasarawa)	Rumour on Sharia	3 died, 5 cars, 3 houses burnt and 20 injured
2009	Yobe	Prayers after meeting (Christian/Muslim)	22 people killed, 500 persons internally displaced and several property destroyed
2010	Kastina	Campaign over 2011 Elections	2 died, property worth millions of naira lost
2011	Most of the Northern States	Over April election	At least 680 died, Vice-President's residence burnt, Churches and Mosques, INEC offices also burnt down with varying degrees of injuries.

Sources: Human rights watch magazine 2012, New Nigeria (2002:14) and National Mirror (2011:2-3, 53)

From the table above, the religious upheavals since 1999 have claimed several lives and destroyed property worth billions of naira. For example the table revealed a total of 740 persons killed, that is, those recorded at the scene by the press. More than the number may have died in the hospitals or unidentified. Ninety eight persons were found with varying degree of injures by the press. Twenty three houses were completely burnt down, 17 cars were burnt, 520 persons were displaced and injured, INEC offices in most Northern states, Churches and Mosques were also burnt. These were in the bid to ensure a zero sum game in the polity. The level of devastations and economic waste involved do not matter at all for the perpetrators and sponsors of the acts. The

“Strong men” in Nigeria hid under the coverage of religion and politics to force themselves to the leadership position in the country, especially, when they failed election. As noted by Iwundu (2010:311), “right from the first republic till now, considerations on religious background of the contestant had been there...Religion has a strong history of influence over voting pattern...”

Disunity in Worship Places

Both Christians and Muslims are actively involved in campaigns of calumny against each other. This is manifested in various forms including: incitement, distortion of fact about each other, blocking each other's chances, hatred and blackmailing (Sam.2007:8). All these are the result of the winner takes all attitude in game theory which brings disunity among people of different ethnic group, religion, tribe, political party and among members of the same Church, Mosque or tribe.

Dominant Strategies

Over the years till now, Muslims have been trying to dominate Nigeria by the use of violence strategies using various names but pursuing the same goal. According to Abu (2004:45):

An Islamic cult known as the Maitasine, (one who curses), which started in the late 1970s and operated throughout the 1980s sparked riots in the north. Their aim was to control the activities there and to impose Islam to non Muslims. The disturbances caused by this group resulted to the death of over 4,177 in 1980s. The members of the Maitasine sect felt that, Islam was the appropriate solution to fix the declining Nigerian society. The leader of this sect, Muhammed Marwa, was an Islamic fundamentalist scholar who migrated from Cameroon to the city of Kano in 1945.

For the members of this sect, Islam is the right religion for Nigeria, and the country should be theoretically ruled by Islamic principles, pattern and laws.

Another dominant strategy applied by Muslims, according to Kastfelt (1994), took place in January 1986, under the leadership of General Babangida, a northern Muslim, when he secretly registered Nigeria as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC). The OIC guidelines require that a member country be predominantly Muslim, with a Muslim head of state. Violence in Northern Nigeria during the democratic setting was essentially triggered by the

planned application of Sharia law in judicial proceedings. In January 2000, the governor of Zamfara State implemented legislation authorizing Sharia in the criminal domain applicable to all irrespective of ones religion. The full introduction of Sharia was defended by northern muslim elite, including ex-heads of states, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and General Muhammadu Buhari. (Suberu, 2001:35).

Currently, Boko Haram is seeking to impose Sharia law in Nigeria. It purports that Western or non-Islamic education is “sin” and would wipe all western civilization in the country. To achieve these objectives, they have kept the police, army and all the security set ups in the country including the government uneasy. They burnt houses, churches, mosque, police posts, vehicles, killing innocent and defenseless children, adult and some young energetic Nigerians who were on national youth service both in the day and at night without any of their members being arrested, (Danjibo 2010). Even when they are arrested, according to Omipidan (2012:12), their release took place anyhow like:

The story of the arrest of Kabiru Sokoto, the alleged mastermind of the December 25, Madalla Church bombing, at the Borno State Governor’s Lodge, Abuja. Daily Sun learnt, was rather dramatic. But the escape of the same suspect from the hands of the police barely 12 hours after his capture, was even more curious, intriguing and scandalous, especially because it happened just when the state government was about raising posers about the arrest of Sokoto. Although the police attempted a fibbed defense of the situation, Nigerians now appear to know better. In an apparent move to save its face the Inspector General of Police has since declared Sokoto wanted, a suspect, whose photograph was never taken as at the time of his arrest, Daily Sun can authoritatively reveal.

From the above strategies, it is clear that, Muslims are using the zero-sum game dominant strategy to dominate Christians and adopt Islam. No wonder, Ojo (1998:78), noted that, Christians believe that the Muslim political leaders who initiated these political moves were trying to make Nigeria an Islamic state where Sharia law would be applied even to non-Muslims.

Judiciary Lapses

The zero-sum game syndrome has made the government to interfere in the judiciary system because they have all the powers. Ndibe (2012), recall that Nigeria made only limited progress with its anti-corruption campaign since inception. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had arraigned more than 35 national prominent political figures on corruption charges since 2003, a former federal minister in 2011, four former state governors and a former speaker and deputy speaker of the House of Representatives. But executive interference with the EFCC, a weak and overburdened judiciary, and the agency's own failings have undermined the effectiveness of its work. And the height of this mess is that if you interfere in a case involving a Muslim, you must do the same to Christian or there will be trouble. It is unfortunate that the commission had only secured few convictions of senior political figures, and they faced relatively little or no prison term. The EFCC seemed to have failed to prosecute other senior politicians widely implicated in corruption, squandering and siphoning the country's wealth, leaving the citizens suffer in abject poverty, malnutrition and sometimes death simply because of zero sum game already applied to balance the corruption by the 'top class'.

Selfishness

According to Ekwunife (1992:8), the cause of religious crises lies not in Christian, Islam or African Traditional Religion (ATR), but in the unpatriotic approach to religion by their adherents to score political, economic, social or religious gains. What indeed breeds intolerance among different religious groups or some members of any group is selfishness. Chuta (2004:44), described selfishness as the practice of caring about oneself and not about others; of attracting benefits to oneself first or in a disproportional manner to favour oneself. Many a time, our leaders divert public funds to their personal account, some build houses, buy expensive cars, send their children to the best schools abroad, a practice identical to minimizing one's own maximum loss, and to maximizing one's own minimum gain, all in the spirit of winner takes all of zero-sum game.

THE NEED FOR NIGERIAN UNITY

It must be noted that Nigeria as a nation is bigger and stronger than any religious or political group, ethnic area and or powerful individuals or god fathers. therefore, careful measures should be taken to ensure peace, tranquility, law and order in Nigeria body polity to attract even and meaningful development. Prominent citizens and politicians have seen this need and called for peace. For example, Governor Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso of Kano state believed that "A stringer brotherhood among Nigerians is the basis for peace and progress", (KNSG, 2012). The neglect of this call has, according to Obahiagbon, (2012) made

the search for national unity in Nigeria become a will-o'-the-wisp, due to the deprecatory recourse by our narcissistic and jejune political class to politics anchoring on ethnic gambadoism, religious belligerency, disparate cultural osmosis, gangrenous regionalism and even a philistine resort to a paraplegic sense of parapoism in the sociological, political and economic resolution of who gets what, when and how. Little wonder we have suffered from a needless internecine civil war, gone through a macabre armed struggle by Niger-Delta militants and currently been asphyxiated by a daily rampaging and daring Boko Haram armada from the Northern part of our country.

The Benue State governor, Mr. Gabriel Suswam, also stated that the only way Nigeria can attain its rightful position among the comity of nations, is when all the ethnic groups in the country come together to live in harmony and peace. According to him, "as Nigerians, we have lived through those challenges, we have fought the civil war, gone through political turmoil, but have remained as one indivisible entity," adding that "our coming together is not by mistake it is ordained and we must use this as a strength of our nation not to destabilise us," (Babjide 2012).

The United States Diplomatic Mission to Nigeria, Terrence P. McCulley, in the same way tasked Nigerian leaders at all levels, on the need to promote unity. According to him, Akinola, (2012) states:

People of different faiths, political background and ethnic areas contribute to the fabric, strength and character of the United States in all walks of Life. And I believe Nigerians must also work together to build their nation, irrespective of their religious beliefs. If one puts continuous emphasis on differences, rather than working toward overall betterment while co-existing, one risks chipping away the very fabric of the nation,

The crisis in the country has continued because the vision of the founding fathers was frustrated and scuttled by leadership challenge that manifested itself in sincerity and greed. For the nation to grow well, and for peace and tolerance to become supreme, we need to purge ourselves of insincerity, greed and perverted notion of service. Our leaders, including top civil/public servants, political office holders, heads of institutions and ministries should handle issues with sincerity, honesty, passion, determination, and avoid favouritism, nepotism, tribalism because this will go

a long way to resolve issues, conflicts and crises, (Soeze 2012). Leaders using game theory (zero sum game) where the players or decision makers trying to maximize their gains or minimize their losses or trying to get as much as they can out of the game (situation), according to Isaak, (1999:239) should be avoided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having explored some of the nifty gritty of religious and political implications of games theory for Nigerian nation, the following recommendations might serve as a check to the identified failures of the state:

- i.** Nigerians should love and respect one another irrespective of place of one's political affinity, origin and religion. These have caused political and sectarian violence claiming lives and properties.
- ii.** Law should be made to stand against any religious leader found to have incited, distorted fact about each other, blackmailed, or blocked each other's chances thereby frustrating the spirit of co-existence, peace and freedom in religious worship.
- iii.** No religious group should use dominant strategy, inflicting injuries on others, destroying or causing harm and disunity to the entire nation.
- iv.** Persons prosecuted and found implicated in corruption, squandering and siphoning the country's wealth, should be dealt with in accordance to the law irrespective of the zero sum game applied.
- v.** There should be tolerance among different religious groups, eschewing bitterness, selfishness and greed. The various religious leaders should teach their followers Gods' own kind of love which was shed abroad for all.
- vi.** The application of non-zero-game theory in the scheme of things by players which means that the gains and losses of the two players do not cancel out. That is, the losers don't necessarily lose all. However, a combination of a zero-sum game and non zero-sum game would produce a better result that could radiate peace and tranquility in Nigeria.
- vii.** Religious intolerance is a bane to our national unity. There should be seminar for our politicians to educate them on how to separate politics from religion. Politicians should

not apply the game theory, using religion as a base to cause trouble when they failed election.

CONCLUSION

Game theory is relevant in the study of religion and politics in Nigeria because it analyses conflict situations where two or more actors are competing for values. It has a strong support for Issak (1999:238) who states that “a decision maker might use game theory to help formulate the best strategy in every situation”. In such situations minimax and maximin game is applied in order to minimizing one's own maximum loss, and to maximizing one's own minimum gain. The study identified the application of game theory to religious and political practices as leading to crises which results to the death of many people, rendering many homeless, jobless, powerless and poor. It also found that disunity among practitioners of different religions, dominant strategy, judicial lapses and selfishness were among the implications of game in religion and politics in Nigeria. The study however suggests among others that Nigerians should love and respect one another irrespective of place of one's political affinity, origin and religion. These have caused political and sectarian violence claiming lives and properties. Also, law should be made to stand against any religious leader found to have incited, distorted fact about each other, blackmailed, or blocked each other's chances thereby frustrating the spirit of co-existence, peace and freedom in religious worship.

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