

Religion, Politics, and Reconciliation Challenges in Nigeria's Political System

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Abstract: Religion is a set of beliefs and practices through which individual worship the Supreme Being (GOD). Politics is a path to democratic governance, the system allows, accept, and embrace individuals who are charismatic in controlling and managing both man and the natural endowments for the sustainability and the preservation of the environment for human existence. Differing faiths and ethnic affiliations make politics a fierce contest. Man has agreed that conflict is part of his existence. But he has not understood how to deal with it for peaceful interactions. This study adopted qualitative method to explore religion, politics and reconciliation challenges in Nigeria's political system. Three research questions were raised: Has religion pose a threat to the reconciliation of political gladiators in Nigeria? Do the personal ambitions of political gladiators hinder political reconciliation in Nigeria? Does the Nigerian government or the ruling political party pose a threat to the reconciliation of political actors in Nigeria? The data collection involved both primary and secondary sources such as political actors' statements, documents, religious text, media reports and other relevant sources. The findings revealed that religions pose no threat to the reconciliation of political gladiators in Nigeria. The results show that personal ambitions of political gladiators hindered political reconciliation in Nigeria. The study concluded by recommended that the politician must move from personal, regional, and identity driven politics to ideological, policy driven agendas that addresses the needs of the Nigerian citizenry irrespective of belief system, class and status.

Keywords: Development, peaceful-coexistence, politics, reconciliation, religion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relation between religion and politics continues to be an important theme in political discuss, despite the emergent consensus on the right to freedom of conscience and on the need for some sort of separation between religion and state (Onebunne, 2018, p. 128, Lahore, 2009). One reason for the importance of this research is that religions often make strong claims on people's allegiance, and universal religions make these claims on all people, rather than just a particular community. As reported in Internet Encyclopedia Philosophy (2023) that Islam has traditionally held that all people owe obedience to Allah's will. Thus, it is probably inevitable that religious commitments will sometimes come into conflict with the demands of politics. However, religious beliefs and practices also potentially support politics in many ways. The extent and form of this support is as important to political philosophers as is the possibility for conflict. Moreover, there has been a growing interest in minority groups and the political rights and entitlements they are due. One result of this interest is substantial attention given to the particular concerns and needs of minority groups who are distinguished by their religion, as opposed to ethnicity, gender, or wealth.

Religion and politics in Nigeria are deeply intertwined, with Islam and Christianity often shaping voting patterns, party structure, and ethnic tensions. This *siamese twin* relationship as observed by Hassan, Babayo & Kashere (2023); Akindolie (2019); Olusegun (2024); Compton & Gordon (2026); Lahore (2009); Saipul et al (2024) fuels political volatility, causing

power-sharing struggles, marginalisation, and conflicts. Effective reconciliation is difficult due to entrenched mistrust, regional disparities, and the manipulation of faith by political elites.

The major religions of the world emphasise peaceful coexistence of man in the world space. There is no religion either the religion of the east (Christianity and Islam) or the indigenous system (African Traditional Religion) that supported injustice, corruption, non-participation, violation of laws, non-transparent of decision making or in-openness, unaccountability and ineffectiveness. This means all the religions in the entire world emphasises and enjoin all its adherents to exhibit in their conducts, good behaviours that if the similar is exhibited onto them, it will sooth their minds and have pleasant reactions.

Religion and politics are two main distinct activities with each operating without the interference of the other. Oloyede (2008) defined politics as the activities, actions, and policies used to gain and hold power in a government or to influence a government. It aimed at improving government, public policy, and political beliefs or practices of individuals groups (Eleagu, 2018, p. 319). However, there can be politics within the religious setting especially in formalising the religion's body as an institution, as we see in religions like Christianity, Islam, Confucianism and Hinduism (Oke, 2024, p. 271). But in politics, especially in party politics of a country where there are diversity of cultures. It will be difficult to use religion as identity to establish power in multicultural and multilingual nations like Nigeria. For instance, in the southwest Nigeria, there are families with the three religions and lives happily without any misgivings politically. The most commons are the two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam). Take the winner of the 2023 Presidential general elections and the flag bearer of All Progressive Congress, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a Muslim and his wife, Remi Tinubu, while, Remi, a Christian. So, it is in most family in the southwest Nigeria. However, it is contrary in other regions, especially in the northwest and southeast of the country where the Muslims and Christians were the majority. The clamour against the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the President and Vice President of the ruling party (APC) in 2023 election was a political shout or noise to canvas and win the vote of the minority Christians in the northern regions with the majority Christians in the three regions in the south and dislodge the ruling party at the central.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa and black nations of the world, experienced in its politics of the year 2023 pre-election preparation or campaign by the political gladiators seeking the votes of the electorates in the various positions especially the presidential seat which is the highest seat of power in the country. The primary election was turbulence for all the contestants at the party's primary level and the similar situation played out even more at the party's flag bearer level-at the election proper. The campaign strategy adopted was aggressive especially in the social media like never before. The most difficult of the situations was the use of religion as a strategy for canvassing for votes (Jabo, 2025, p.135). Although the strategy was explored covertly, the social media exposed the actions. Also, is the popular saying that *no permanent friend and no permanent enemy in politics but permanent interest*, that was the scenario in the year 2023 general elections. However, one must wonder: does the concept of *permanent interest* genuinely serve the needs of the people, or is it merely political rhetoric?

The opposition campaign strategy on religion point of view might be unconnected with the single faith ticket of the first and the first runner-up of the ruling party (APC): And an opposition Presidential contestant holds and campaign that a *religion* should take back its position on the governance that belongs to it. This statement affirmed the argument of Saipul et al (2024) that religions do influence the people's political choice. They argued further that in many societies, leaders who claim divine endorsement or pursue policies aligned with specific religious values tend to gain more excellent public support. This suggests that religion is often used as a political tool to mobilise supporters or marginalise opponents.

Since return to democratic system in 1999, there have been issues of marginalisation from one ethnic group, geopolitical zone, and even on religion group and another on political administration of Nigeria. This marginalisation has led to series of actions like; press release, civil disobedience, civil protest, vandals, violent protests, pipelines vandals, secession groups, dialogues, and constitution conference (Abada, et al, 2020; Ishola, 2026; Osaretin, 2019; Odum, 2018; Awofeso, 2017; Bayo, 2017; Nwanegbo, 2016). Uwaifo, (2019) submitted that politics of imbalance, poor leadership at various level of governance, as well as politics of uneven wealth sharing formular, problem of underdevelopment, poverty, social insecurity, feeling of marginalisation and deprivation propelled different security challenges in the country. It was reported that the banditry activities especially in the northern part of the country was allegedly politically motivated. Saipul et al (2024) submitted that there is potential for religion to fuel political conflict especially in an area of high religious diversity or where religion has long been associated with national identity (Hassan, Babayo, & Kashere, 2023.). In some states and geopolitical zones, political actors often exploit tensions between religious groups to strengthen their power base, fuel conflict and

manipulate public opinion (Jabo, 2025, p.136) As explained earlier that politicians do not confine to anything than their interest, especially winning elections to remain in power or relevant. Therefore, exploitation of those indices like religion, ethnicity, region or zone to support their move in Nigeria political power achievement was always high.

There is unwritten agreement on power rotation amongst the political actors from the north and south in Nigeria. This was as a result of long number of years the northerners have engaged in the number one sit (President/Head of State) of Nigeria. As described by Jabo (2025) that zoning was created for fair play and ensuring that ethnicity, religion and regionalism could not be used as a tool for perpetuation and ascendancy for power. The friendliness among the politicians broke away when a strong opposition party in Nigeria politics, Peoples' Democratic Party saw five of its governors tagged as G-5 decided to remain in the party but became *opposition* within their own party based on the unwritten agreement that the position of presidential candidate of the party should be zone to the southern part of the country.

This made reconciliation of the G-5 governors and their supporters difficult and impossible. The strong PDP of yesterday, the big and self acclaimed the populous party in Africa became weak and feeble away in Nigeria political space. This problem of reconciliation does not affect only one party in Nigerian political space but most popular political parties that has elected members in national assembly of the countries – Labour Party, APGA, NNPP, and ADC. The irreconcilable of the members of the political parties in internal crises that are political actors does weak the political parties they are and the opposition they will be. Lack of opposition party or parties in a political system turn a country to one party system, which is dangerous to democracy and good governance in that country. The need for reconciliation of aggrieved political actors in any political parties the better for the political participation practices and peacebuilding in internal democracy of the political parties and political system of the country. The questions the study raise here is that has religion pose a threat to the reconciliation of political actors in Nigeria? Do personal ambitions of political gladiators hinder political reconciliation in Nigeria? Does the Nigerian government or the ruling party pose a threat to the reconciliation of political actors in Nigerian? It is on this backdrop that the study investigates religion, politics, and the problems of reconciliation in Nigeria political system with the view to make practical and policy oriented implementable suggestions.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to use the threshold of 2023 pre-election campaign strategy in interrogating the religion, politics and reconciliation in Nigeria political system. The study also examined how religion was instrumentalised to explore politics; its implication for national reconciliation; and propose governance-based reconciliation framework.

Justification of the Study

Nigeria is multi-ethnic nationality and the most populous nation in Africa as well as in black nations in the world. It grows in number of independence year, over sixty three years, should have focus on the need for peace, unity and development of Nigeria as a nation. The strategy of using religion as a point for securing the peoples mandate was a case for anarchy and the break apart of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The study will strengthen electoral stability through internal democracy and peacebuilding in party politics, it will equally entrench democratic consolidation, relevant policies and good governance.

Conceptual Clarification

The constitution of most nations does not compel any individuals to a particular religion or for a state to have its own religion; though each people with its own culture, which make a particular state multi-ethnic nationality. Akindolie (2019) described religion as a system of beliefs, practices and a communion with supernatural. He argued that sociologically, it is beyond receiving messages from deities and answering existential questions for man, religion acts as anything that gives solace and identity to man. Dzurgba (2009) submitted that religion is associated with every social institution that man engages within the society. For instance, politics, marriage, burial, carrier, homes, businesses, schools among others are influenced by religion (Akindolie, 2019, p. 2). Eleagu (2019) quoted McGee (1980, p. 336) defined religion as “a set of actions organized around the sacred that is a non-empirical source of power, transcendence, mystery or awe”. Another attempted by Durkheim as explained by Eleagu (2018) that religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church and all those who adhere to them”. Thus, he theorised that religions are cultural phenomena comprised of social institutions, traditions of practice, literatures, sacred texts and stories, and sacred places that identify and convey an understanding of alternate meaning (Ayantayo, 2025, p. 25).

Openlearn (2023) explained politics as a broader concept seen beyond social and public activities. It argued that in attempt to stretch the meaning of the concept or term might lose its meaning, becoming everything and anything one can imagine. Andrew (2013) described politics as a social activity. An activity one engages in together with others. Considering this, politics is always a dialogue, and never a monologue. Fishman (1990) argued that politics does not have an essence. It does not have an intrinsic nature or an indispensable element according to which we can definitively, and in all circumstances, identify something as political. Therefore, there is no perfect example of politics, subjects, or places. Politics is seen as the interactions that emerge between people – the ‘events’ that emerges through the interaction with each other, or through the ways that the individual actions and perspectives are aggregated into collectivities (Openlearn, 2026).

Action beget reaction, the reactions to any contrary view can make or mar the relationships between the interaction parties. There are series of conflict handling strategies that recreate and or restore the conflicting parties back to earlier position or level. Darrel (2007) submitted that the term reconciliation has several meanings and applications, he held an individual can be reconciled her fate; members of an association can reconcile after some internal strife within the group; or reconciliation can be pursued as a political goal – most related to the study. The research uses the term reconciliation for political realisation and societal emancipation, taken as a normative ideal, a goal that polity might pursue through its public policy. Darrel (2007) explained that reconciliation comprises both backward and forward-looking aspects – A reckoning with the past is required, but so is the basis for reasonable hope about the future (Darrel, 2006, p. 206). According to Uche (2009) reconciliation is a highly contested term, like the concept peace. It is a very complex term that can be understood in different perspectives: religious, theological, spiritual, ethical, moral, social, historical, psychological, and other nuances. Although, Uche’s work is more on theology, he posited that reconciliation is a deeply differentiated phenomenon that embeded continuous processes and patterns of interaction in divers areas of socio-religious activities, and as well in socio-political activities.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In explaining the relationship between politics and religion in theoretical point of view – the study considered the instrumentalism and political mobilization theories. Instrumentalist theory propounded by John Dewey (1859 – 1952) is a philosophical view that emphasised the practical usefulness of ideas or beliefs and their role as instruments for solving problems rather than their truth or correspondence to reality (Ghersa, 2023). Instrumentalism in politics is a theory that views political institutions, identities, and actions not as inherent, fixed, or deeply emotional, but as fluid tools (instruments) used to achieve specific ends. Such as, power - through political participation by contesting during electioneering, wealth – as a business individual or policy goals. Onyedikachi (2025) argued that politics is essentially about maximizing benefits and achieving desired outcomes rather than upholding absolute truths or primordial identities. Instrumentalist theorists argued that ethnic, religious or national identities are not fixed or primordial but are strategically mobilised by political elites to gain power or access resources (Akanle, 2023; Ghersa, 2023; Onyedikachi, 2025). These were greatly explored by the political gladiators in 2023 general elections, all for the sake of occupying a sit of power.

Khumar & Vaseekavan (2020) explained political mobilisation as a process by which an individual is motivated to become an active political actor. As individual is a product of.. and interact with the society in different capacities. So also is that all the societies expected the individuals to interact among them in the capacity of a political actor. They argued that the process of making an individual into political actor has three dimensions in political mobilization theory. The first is the cognitive dimension also known as the process of interest formation, which is akin to Marxist concept of class formation and class consciousness (Dalton, 1996, p.24). The second theoretical dimension is affective dimension – It is the process by which emotional attachment is created among the individuals toward the cause. According to Weber (1968) the individuals’ inclination towards charismatic leadership creates an emotional bond between them and the elites and thus mobilisation of the individuals is fostered easily. The third dimension in the political mobilization theory is institutionalised, the strategies in which organisations or political parties mobilise the individuals towards a political actions. This indeed played out in the pre 2023 general elections – The Labour Party mobilised former APGA member and Anambra State Governor Peter Obi – The APC institutionalised dimension the break off of the PDP through the G. 5 Governors – Nyeson Wike (Rivers), Seyi Makinde (Oyo), Samuel Orton (Benue), Okezie Ipeazu (Abia), and Ifeanyi Ugwuayi (Enugu). As well as the NNPP flag bearer in 2023 elections, Sen. Musa Kwakosho – the two terms governor and Minister of Defence in the first term of President Muhammadu Buhari administration.

3. METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative method to investigate politics, religion, and the problem of reconciliation on political actors. The qualitative approach allows for deep and interpretive method with qualitative analysis to understand both the 'why' and the 'how many' of these complex social phenomena (Levine, 2021; Alberta & Emanuele, 2014). The data collection involved both primary and secondary sources, such as political actors' statements and documents, religious text, media reports (both prints and online), and transcripts, to identify themes of conflict and reconciliation.

Nigeria Political System

A system involves government and its politics that includes the members, who possess the power within a country. Onyeji (2023) explained and corroborated by Research Clue (2020) that a political system is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. Most common features or characteristics of political system are legitimate use of force, interactions, interdependence, comprehensiveness, and change of boundaries; Pressbook (2016) considered political system to be the boundaries (governance rules) that limit opportunities for participation in government processes, the type of government under which people live has fundamental implications for their freedom, welfare, and thus their lives. The major political systems in the world include; democracy, monarchy, authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

The system of government adopted by the political leaders in Nigeria in transiting power from the colonial masters in 1960 was parliamentary democracy, republic and mixed presidency (Kifordu, 2013 p. 8). The constitutional reform of 1963 proscribed certain clauses in the independence constitution and replaced them with republican tenets. The principle behind changes was to eliminate the inconsistent and undesired (unbridled) aspects of the British legacy and move government nearer to the people. The reform eliminated the G.G office and Privy Council, headed by the British Queen, and instituted a presidential office, thereby inaugurating a semi presidential system (Kifordu, 2013, p.9).

It was reported that in 1964 general election campaign, politicians used ethnics symbols (common identities of origin, language and habits) to appeal for votes among their respective ethno-regional groups. This attitudes and behaviours, especially by the executives and legislatives revealed a detour pattern from constitutional norms and social preferences. Serious power tensions actually arose between the President and PM in 1960-63 political system. According to Kifordu (2013), intense power tussle at the political executive level operated with electoral malpractices, corruption, socially harmful patronage exchanges and ethnic oriented politics to setback institutional dynamics during the first civilian regime that collapsed under military coup in 1966 (Jabo, 2025; Kifordu, 2013, p.10).

The First Military Rule 1966 – 1979

Nigeria as a young emerging and economic prosperous nation experienced its first military rule through blooded coup d'état. The three different military governments came up through coup and lasted 10 years (1966-1976). The first under General Ironsi lasted roughly six months the second by General Gowon extended up to nine years while the third was Gen. Muritala Ramat Muhammed and General Obasanjo lasted four years. Kifardu (2013) reported that the first military government actually laid the autocratic structure of rule for the succeeding military governments. The junta in all the military government was responsible for every major decision related to agenda control and policy initiatives. It combined the role of the executive and the legislative powers and subordinated the bureaucracy and judiciary to the regimes control, through different decrees, coercion and manipulations (Oluwabiye & Duriyi, 2021; Kifardu, 2013, p. 11).

However, the second military administration General Yakubu Gowon, denounced some policies of the first military administration and continued the centralised structural practices. Considering the civil war exigencies that attended the second military government, the four regional divisions (North, East, West and Mid-West) were broken or divided to twelve (12) states in 1967. The third military government General Murital Muhammed adopted the previous structure of the *Supreme Military Council* and *Federal Executive Council*, however with some modalities. For instance, except on invitation, the structure excluded bureaucrats from the decision-making hierarchy, and all military governors were withdrawn from the *SMC* and integrated in the new Council of State, thereby creating an intermediary power structure between the *SMC* and *FEC*. The General Muritala regime achieved what his immediate predecessor was unable to accomplish under nine (9) years with in seven (7) months of his administration. Col. Olusegun Obasanjo implemented the transition to civilian rule by first setting up a Constitution Drafting Committee (*CDC*) that suggested a presidential system of government instead of the initial Westminster system (Kifardu, 2013, p. 12).

Emergence of the Presidential System

1st October, 1979 marked the beginning or introduction of the presidential constitution and government system.. The first experiment with presidential system of government turned out to be an antithesis of the constitution treatise to guarantee a less personalised form of government, or rather, a more democratic form of accessing and exercising political power and roles (Falola, 2026; Kifurdu, 2013, p.15). In this period, there was less religious issues in Nigerian political space but politics of ethnicity was persistent and reflected in political parties formation and realignment.

Second Military Dictatorship

The unexpected interruption of the 1979 Second Republic constitution (by military fiat) opened the way for another succession of military rules that lasted up to 1999. With a similar pattern but differing styles of authoritarian rule, various military regimes either promised or engaged in constitutional reform to re-establish democratic rule. The ban on democratic system as well as cancelation or shifted of democratic plan by the military junta at this period (1979 – 1999) blocked any religion's interference on political situation in the country. The major concerns of Nigerian citizenry were for the military to set the ground and return to the barracks, most importantly after the annulment of 1993 general elections agreed won by MKO Abiola. (Osiki, 2010).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In explaining if, religion in any way pose a threat to the reconciliation of political actors in Nigeria – Saipul et al (2024) opined that the Qur'an is not only a sacred text for the Muslims but also a source of law and a guide to life. The Qur'an, contextually is a way of life for the Muslims irrespective of individuals calling, it is a unifier, a building capacity, and separate the truth from falsehood. In a similar vein, Bolarinwa, Olamide & Idowu (2023) explained that God tells humanity that He *was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them* in 2 Corinthians 6: 11-21. This has shown that if God could reconcile men to Himself then He had enjoined men to always find a way of reconciliation when they are in dispute. The findings shown that religion pose no threat to the reconciliation of political actors in Nigerian political space. It has enjoined the political actors to be mindful of the injunctions of God in the two major religions scriptures to do unto others what they want others do unto them (Mathew 7:12; Q. 41:34; Sahih al-Bukhari, 13).

The research question, do personal ambitions of political gladiators hinder political reconciliation in Nigeria was affirmed by the works of Darrel (2007), Onuigbo, Okoye, & Anemje (2023) that the selfish ambitions over unity, peaceful coexistence and socio-economic development of the country by the political gladiators made political reconciliation difficult. They argued that influence of *political godfather* and their personal ambitions often creates disharmony and conflict in Nigerian political space, preventing and making reconciliation difficult particularly when personal interest of being a sole political job creator in that region like River, Kano, Benue and other states that have similar political issues. The study revealed that personal ambitions of political gladiators as well as godfatherism, which Onuigbo et al (2023) described as *political merchant*, while the godson this study tagged *political desperate* who have surrendered insideout to a political tin god or merchant can find it difficult for reconciliation when political conflict broke out.

The findings also revealed that accusing fingers are being pointed at the government in this administration (2023-2027) doubled as the ruling party – All Progressive Congress (APC) for undermining political reconciliation and multi party democracy (Jabo, 2025; Nigeria Politics and Security, 26/08/2024; Emmanuel & Ayodele, 2026). The study observed that PDP and the Labour Party struggled for reconciliation of their members and resolution of their political differences but the leaderships of the factions' group within the parties instead approached the courts of law for adjudication power that rests on win-loss situation, while reconciliation that will considered the parties members' interests and relationships as well as mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence of the parties' members were neglected and jettisoned. The study shown that it is the decisions by the court that gave the political parties the status-quo not the government in power or the ruling party.

The Problem of Reconciliation

The political stakeholders, including past leaders, politicians, religions leaders, traditional rulers, opinion leaders, community leaders and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) emphasised based on the fact of the campaign trajectory of the year 2023 general elections, which was majorly on religion bigotry is sufficiently for the need for national reconciliation (Jabo, 2025). However, an opinion expressed in one of the dailies editorial comments that the polls (*Year 2023 Elections*) could be described as the most divisive electoral contest ever held in the country since the advent of self-governance. It

went further that the elections were ethnically charged and deeply polarising along religious lines (Premium Times, 2023). The major concern of any politician in Nigeria context is the interest on the position the candidate is aspiring to occupy. Whatever strategy to use in winning the election is welcome to the candidate and the party. As opined in one of the editorial submission that a number of the leading political parties and their flag bearers mobilised ethnic and religious sentiments through their comments, and some cases Freudian-slips, to garner votes. Some religion elite including leaders turned the presidential election into a struggle between the forces of good and bad (Premium Times, March 27, 2023)..

Recent studies indicate that there is need for national reconciliation (Dim, 2023, FER (2017). Former President Olusegun Obasanjo described the year 2023 elections outcome as a *sickening show of shame* and urged the incoming administration to put measures in place that would foster national reconciliation. He said efforts are required to rescue the country from its launch into dystopia, adding that it would only be possible with a common vision (Mom, 2023, April 6).

Undoubtedly as posited earlier, reconciliation indicates the realignment of the parties members or the people that were in good relationships before those events or happenings that torn apart the cordial relationships of the political situation of the party members and the party politics of the nation. However, one fundamental principle of reconciliation is re-establishment of cordial relationship between the conflicting parties or people. Then, it is practically impossible to reconcile the political parties' members that based their campaign on religions tenets or bigotry for peoples' vote but lost the election and attributed the defeat on elections malpractices. Or is it logically possible to reconcile the entire people of the country as a result of the politicians' attitudes during campaign who will later cross-carpet from their political party to another for personal interest? These and other pertinent questions are begged for answers on the political/ethnic reconciliation that people are clamouring or agitating for. However, there is need for reconciliation where the people of an ethnic nationality have been wronged through political marginalisation.

The True Reconciliation

The findings shows that the current political platform in Nigeria calls not only for lip service to reconciliation but actual practical reconciliation rooted in unity in diversity, religious tolerance and humanistic neutrality, independent of regionalist sentiments. However, reconciliation in this context should transcend elite politics and political realignment - it needs to be realised in practical dividends to all citizens. Realistic reconciliation should resolved those areas of differences that affects the socio-economic development of the country in the areas like human security, socio-economic equity, ethnicity bias system, human rights, political participation, justice, and institution reforms (FER, 2017).

Nigeria can hope to look forward to a united and better tomorrow free from violence and wars. Reconciliation cannot only be a political imperative but a moral imperative on the part of any government committed to healing Nigeria's cleavages and providing its citizens with a better tomorrow. The time to take action is now.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Every electioneering year in Nigerian political system always come along with threats and tensions during party primaries of political parties and by extension, pre election campaign of political transition exercise. The *do-or-die* affairs of the political gladiators and their supporters in winning at all cost and through any means without adequate consideration to the rules and regulations exercise and most important the unity and peaceful coexistence of the multi-ethnic nationalities of the country have become a great challenge that need adequate and critical strategies for a political system devoid religious bigotry, ethnic manipulations, and politics of bitterness. The best antidote for the religion, ethnic, and political offences committed by the politicians within political parties as well as those that affects the nation call for realistic and practical reconciliation in Nigerian political system.

As rightly pointed out, in order to strengthen Nigeria's political system, there is need for urgent, realistic, and practical reconciliation and reforms to separate political participation and governance from religions/ethnic identity. The study thus recommended that:

- i. The government must strictly adhere to constitutional provisions that prevent the adoption of any religion as state policy, ensuring all faiths are treated equally. The paramount concern is humanity, which are Nigerian citizenry.
- ii. The religious leaders must act as moral watchdogs rather than parties' actors, government should legislate a law that will stop the politicians using religious platform to seek electoral legitimacy.
- iii. The political parties' gladiators must move from personal, regional, and identity-driven politics to ideological, policy driven agendas that addresses the needs of the Nigeria citizenry irrespective of belief, class, status, and all other indices.

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