JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 2, Issue 4, No. 1 / December 2024
https://www.jopd.com.ng

ANALYSIS ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY ON 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN NIGERIA

AMINU SALISU
Department of Social Studies
School of Secondary Education Arts and Social Sciences
Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano
Phone no: 08084077483. EMAIL; aminusalisu136@gmail.com

IBRAHIM IDRIS IBRAHIM
Department of Social Studies
School of Secondary Education Arts and Social Sciences
Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano
Phone no: 07036186774. Email: Ibrahimidrisibrahim6774@gmail.com

SULAIMAN YUSUF
Department of Social Studies
School of Secondary Education Arts and Social Sciences
Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano.
Phone no: 08025250479. EMAIL: ysuleiman102@gmail.com

IBRAHIM ADAMU IBRAHIM
Department of Social Studies
School of Secondary Education Arts and Social Sciences
Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano.
Phone no: 08038945845. EMAIL: ibrahimabusaif3@ gmail.com
&
USAINI HALLIRU SANI
Department of Social Studies
School of Secondary Education Arts and Social Sciences
Aminu Kano College of Islamic and Legal Studies, Kano.
Phone no: 08060734210.EMAIL: hhdanisa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The study examines the influence of religion and ethnicity on the voting patterns of the Nigerians. The researchers employed the content analysis approach being the method to evaluate the content of various papers, journals, books etc relevant to the topic under review to establish link between the previous researchers and then one on the process. Here the outcome of the 2023 elections shows that ethnicity and religious affiliation played significant roles in the votes casted on the individual candidate. The researchers' highlighted various scholars' opinion and views on election, and Nigerian voting pattern. Since democracy is a game of numbers, it might be relatively difficult for minority tribe to become Nigerian President without the support of the other ethnic groups in the country, this is because the number of major tribes doubled that of minor tribe in terms of population. So, Nigerians should consider the competence of the candidate for the political offices rather than religion and ethnicity for social development. Finally, this paper recommended that religion should be used as tool for national unity and ethnicity also should be used to address national problem such tribal clashes, ethno- religious crises, farmers herdsmen clashes and the rest. The use of religion and ethnicity in the allocation of political offices such as ministerial

appointment, special advisers in Nigerian polity should be avoided and be based on experience and competence not on geo- political region which mostly represents ethnicity and religion in the country.

Keywords: Analysis, religion, ethnicity, presidential election and voting pattern.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a multi-lingual society having about 374 ethnic nationalities that speaks different languages, with an estimated population of 221,730,417 individuals (worldormeter, 2023). It is part of the Nigerian culture for children to show respect to their parents and the elderly one's in society, but the way and manner this respect is demonstrated among Nigerians differs from one tribe to the other. Since independence, Nigeria experiences several problems in includes those concerned with state creation and issue of succession and inability of some ethnic groups to attained certain political offices. Jiboku&Jiboku, (2018), these constituted an impediment to socio-political development in Nigeria at different periods in its history instead of alleviating its ethnic problems have further fuelled the political challenges in the country. Each ethnic group in Nigeria has a set of values that distinguishes it from the other, and no community is ready to compromise its cultural identity in the interest of others. Omu (2018) noted that ethnicity usually undergoes an evolutionary process whereby it starts as a latent and accommodating feeling and later become instigated or propelled as a weapon of hostility, conflict and bitter tension.

Ethnicity and religion have considerable influence on the voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate, although Federal Government often stresses the need for the citizens to put national interest above ethnic and religious considerations, yet there is no politician in Nigeria who can win election without the full support of his or her own ethnic nationality and religious affiliation. This is why most politicians tend to give priority attention meeting needs of their religious affiliations and ethnic nationalities even at the detriment of national interest. Unfortunately, the present Nigerian political system has no provision for minority ethnic group to produce president in Nigeria without the full support of the majority ethnic nationalities. This might be one of the fundamental reason behind the ongoing agitations for secession and the call for re-structuring the Nigerian political system by some ethnic nationalities. The politicization of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria has shown an unending crisis scenario, especially where high level of intolerance exist which divides the dominant religions. Until where there is wide acceptance for candidature seek elective office will continue to have the colouration of religion. There will be continue to be suspicion, and hence great features of an end angered society.

Religions and ethnicity plays a vital role in shaping political and power dynamics in Nigeria, some Muslim and Christians fear demographic and political domination by the other. Nigeria's ethnically diverse population contribute the interest of the regions and religious group is an ongoing challenge. Various umbrella organization and initiatives work to promote interreligious harmony, but their capacity and the outcomes of their work are difficult to assess and the national or local levels of government but few who garnered wide support. Religious tolerance is a matter of national pride, but religious tensions are today an unmistakable aspect of Nigeria's social and political landscape. Politics today in Nigeria is a do or die affair. The scramble for political power and control at the centre has over-heated the nation's polity and created unnecessary tension which has resulted to bigotry between and among regions. Political toughie are recruited and armed by these same politicians these arms are used on defenseless citizens (Ilesanmi,2014).

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

It is highly significance to understand and have the conception of these operational terms Religion, Election and Ethnicity for the Purpose of Clarification.

Religion: Yesufu, (2018) sees religion as the service and worship of God or gods. Meanwhile, Karl Max see it as the opinion of the people. A palliative used by the leaders to hold the masses in check, in the hand of a villain, religion can be a cog in the wheel of progress and massaging of the ego and dehumanization of the people while in the hand of a saint it becomes an instrument for humanization (Ogugua&Ogugua, 2018).

Ethnicity: Cohen (2015) defined ethnic group as an informal interest group whose members are distinct from the members of other group within the larger society because they share Kinship, religious and linguistic ties. Similarly, Thompson (2016) define ethnic group as a community of people who believe that they possess a common identity based on issues of origin, kinship ties, historical experiences, traditions and cultures, and perhaps share a distinguished by the communal character of their edges.Ethnicity is a discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth. Today, ethnicity has become a population subject of intellectual exploration to scholars in different fields both in developed and developing countries particularly the third world countries, as it is often considered a prominent factor in the governance and developmental process of many countries. Jiboku and Jiboku (2018) also observed that the inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria has been one of conflict largely caused by ethnic jingoism, which manifested in the form of ethnic nationalism there is no doubt that this has implications for the survival of democracy and development in Nigeria.

Election: Election is a process in which people vote to choose a person or group of people to hold an official positions. Moreover, election is an act of choosing or selecting candidates who will represent the people of a country in the parliament and in other position in government as the process of choosing qualified candidates into an existing vacant political post following due democratic process.

VOTING PATTERN IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

1. Northwest geo-political zone: This comprises of seven (7) states namely, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa and Zamfara. The zone was dominated by Hausa/Fulani ethnic group and practice Islamic religion with minor Christian and minor ethnic groups. For instance in Kaduna there is Jaba, Gbagi and other ethnic groups.

2. North-east: Thiscomprises of six (6) states namely; Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. This zone is multi-ethnic in nature were Borno and Yobe is predominantly by Kanuri and practice Islam with minority ethnic groups practicing Christianity, while Adamawa, Gombe and Taraba were dominated by Fulani and other ethnic groups, such as Jikum, Mumiye while in Gombe there is Tula and Tangale, while Bauchi was dominated by Tangale, Waja, Fulani and Hausas and Islam is the first most followed religion followed by Christianity and traditionalist.

3. North-central: Thiscomprises six (6) states namely, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, Kwara and Plateau. The zone was predominantly Christian followers and minority Muslims, for instance in Benue there is Tiv, Idoma other. While in Nasarawa there is Aguta, Alago and others and in Niger there is Igala, Idoma, Nupe and others, Kogi there is Igbira, Igala and others, while in Kwara there is Yoruba, Fulani and others, while in Plateau there is Biron, Tarok, Angas and others.

4. South-west: Thiscomprises six (6) states namely Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti Lagos and Ogun. The zone was occupied by Yoruba speaking people where 64% of the inhabitants both indigenes and immigrants are Muslims, while 28% practice Christianity and 8% practice Africa traditional religion, Nolte, Jones, Taiyari &Occhiali (2016).

5. South-East: Thiscomprises five (5) states namely Anambra, Enugu, Imo Abia and Ebonyi, this zone was occupied by Igbo speaking people, majority of them are Christian.
6. South-south: Thiscomprises six (6) states namely Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, CrossRivers, Edo and Delta. This is another multi-ethnic zone such as Ijaw Itsekri and other ethnic group where Christianity is the major religion practice in the area followed by African traditional religion and Islam.

Flash back to 2015 presidential election it can understand that the influence of religion and ethnicity in Nigerian polity is an oldest phenomenon, the study revealed how ethnicity and religion influences the chances of politicians winning election. Electioncampaign provided the platform for the candidates to advertise their ideologies and manifestos of their respective political parties. For example, Former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan contested under the platform of the Peoples Democracy Party (PDP) and used the public media for electioneering campaign. While, Gen. Muhammad Buhari, the outgoing President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, contested in the election under the auspices of the All Progressive Congress (APC) being the main opposition party in the election. PDP in the 2015 presidential election was on the need for the Nigerian electorate to vote for president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to enable him complete the transformation agenda his administration started in the public and the private sectors of the nation's economy. On the other hands, the APC requested Nigerians to vote for a change to enable the citizens enjoy the dividends of democracy.

Muhammadu Buhari won the 2015 presidential election because of the overwhelming support he received from the three Northern geo-political zones, including the South-west zone of Nigeria. The appointment of professor Yemi Osinbajo as the running mate to Muhammadu Buhari account in addition with promise of shifting power to the zone after completion his two-term tenure, and the common sense of revolution as a technique adopted by the APC where by its candidates focused on the failure of Jonathan's administration during that election campaign without the candidates explain to Nigerians the changes government intends to enact when elected into political office. The official presidential election report released by the independent National Electoral commission (INEC) in 2015 clearly stated the influence of religion and ethnicity in Nigerian politics.

Table 1
Analysis of 2015 Presidential Election results in the Six Geo-Political Zones and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Geo-Political Zone	PDP	APC	Total	Differences
North Central	1,558,623(39.26%)	2,411,013(60.74%)	3,969,636(14.12%)	852,390
North East	796,588(21.85%)	2,848,676(78.15%)	3,645,264(12.96%)	2,052,088
North West	1,339,709(15.85%)	7,115,199(84.15%)	8,455,108(30.07%)	5,775490
South East	2,464,906(92.56%)	198,248(7.44%)	2, 663,154(9.47%)	2,266,658
South South	4,714.725(91.85%)	418,590(8.15%)	5,133,315(18.25%)	4.296,135

South West	1,821,416(42.81%)	2,433,193(57.19%)	4,254,609(15.13%)	611,777
FCT Abuja	157,195(1%)	146,399(1%)	303,594(1%)	142.796
Six Zones + FCT	**12,853,162**	**15,511,318**	**28,121,086(100%)**	**2,718,156**

Source: Premium Times, reported by Hassan Adebayo on March, 31, 2015.

Discussion

Peoples Democratic Party Presidential Candidates was Good Luck Ebele Jonathan born in Otuoke, Ogbia Local government area of Bayelsa State South-south Nigeria, a Christian and Ijaw by tribe and his running mate was Muhammad Namadi Sambo was born at Zaria Kaduna state North-west geo-political zone, a Muslim and Hausa by tribe. While All Progressive Congress endorsed Muhammadu Buhari as presidential candidate and Yemi Osinbajo as his running mate, Muhammadu Buhari was born in Daura local government area of Katsina state North-west geopolitical zone, a Muslim and Fulani by tribe while his running mate Yemi Osinbajo was born in Lagos state south-west geo political zone, a Christian and Yoruba by tribe.

The People Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, has the highest number of votes in the FCT, the South - South and the South-East geo political zones,while President Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressive Congress (APC) polled the highest number of votes in the South-West, North-West North Central and North-East geo-political zones. Data revealed that Jonathan had the highest number of votes in the South-south region of Nigeria, polled 4,714,725 votes. While Muhammadu Buhari had the highest number of votes in North-West zone, where he polled 7,115,199 votes as an indigene of the zone. Each of the candidates that contested in the 2015 presidential election received the highest number of votes from the states comprising the ethnic nationality and region of the candidates' concern.

Confirming that there is a positive correlation between the chances of politicians winning election in Nigeria and their states of origin. Based on this statistic's of 2015 presidential election, it looks like a win-win situation for the Nigerian citizen of Hausa-Fulani origin contesting for the office of the president of Federal Republic of Nigeria, so long the candidate has the full support of the three geo-political zones in the northern region, whereas it is a no-win situation for a candidate from any of the three geo-political zones. It is worth nothing that (46%) of the votes upon which Muhammadu Buhari emerges the winner of May 2015 presidential election were realized from the north-west geo-political zone. In 2015 presidential election, All Progressive Congress (APC) won in (16) out of (19) Northern states, the party lost in three (3) states and Federal Capital Territory. The states are as follows plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba, where majority of the populace are Christians and multi ethnic in nature.

Table 2

Analysis of 2019 Presidential Election result in the Six Geo-Political Zones and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Geo-Political Zone	**APC**	**(%)**	**PDP**	**(%)**	**Differences**
North - East	3,238,783	74.36	1,116,873	25.64	2,121,910
North- Central	2,313,375	54.92	1,763,772	45.08	549,603
North - West	5,995.651	72.45	2,280.465	27.55	3.715,186

South - East	403,968	19.26	1,693,485	80.74	1,289,517
South - South	1,051,396	32.01	2,233,232	67.99	1,181,836
South - West	2,036,450	53,41	1,776,670	46.59	259,780
FCT Abuja	152,224	36,77	259.997	63.23	110,773
Six Zones + FCT	**15,191,847**		**11,262,978**		**3,928,869**

Source: Premium Times, reported by Azeezat Adedigba February, 27, 2019.

Discussion

In 2019 Peoples Democratic Party endorsed Atiku Abubakar flag bearer and Peter Obi as his running mate, Abubakar was born in Ganye Jada local government area Adamawa state North-East geo-political zone, a muslim and Fulani by tribe and his running mate Peter Obi was born in Onitsha Anambra state south-east geo-political zone, a Christian and Igbo by tribe. While All Progressive Congress maintained Muhammadu Buhari and Yemi Osinbajo as their respective presidential and running mate candidate.

The above table shows that Muhammadu Buhari of APC received highest votes in North East and North West to emerge victorious while Atiku Abubakar of PDP secured major votes from the South -East and South-South. This is because President Muhammadu Buhari is perceived in these two regions as religious bigot and ethnic jingoist, while Atiku Abubakar of PDP as a genuine nationalist with political alliance across the country and because of the fact that PDP has been the dominant party in the regions since the beginning of the fourth republic in 1999 and the subsequent presidential candidates won in a landslide victory in the regions under the platform of PDP. The remaining two geopolitical zones of North - Central and South -West were shared between the two major candidates. The voting pattern takes another dimension in 2023 when the presidency was shifted to South -West where a large turnout was witness and a lesser one in the North. This will be so because each region in the country voted massively when a candidate is from their region at the same time with similar religion and ethnic group since the country'spolitics of manipulation of religion and ethnicity gained ground beyond salvation for many decades in Nigeria.

Table 3

Analysis of 2023 Presidential Election results in the Six Geo-Political Zones and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

Geopolitical Zone	**APC**	**(%)**	**PDP**	**(%)**	**LP**	**(%)**	**NNPP**	**(%)**
North -West	2,652,235	(40.18)	2,540,802	(35.30)	350.182	(5.30)	1,268.250	(19.22)
South -West	2,279,407	(55.81%)	941,941	(23.06)	846,478	(20.72)	16,644	(0.41)
South - East	127,605	(5.85)	91,198	(4.16)	1,960,589	(89.62)	8,211	(0.37)
South - South	799,957	(29.14)	719,908	(26.15)	1,210,673	(44.09)	17,167	(0.62)
North - East	1,185,458	(35.23)	1,737,846	(51.65)	315,107	(9.37)	126,343	(3.75)
North - Central	1,760,9	(40.03	1,662,	(26.42)	1,41	(32.1	60,056	(1.37)

	93	)	087		5,577	8)		
FCT Abuja	90,902	(21.13)	74,194	(16,43)	281,717	(62.39)	4,740	(1.05)
Six Zones + FCT	**8,896,555**	**(37.13)**	**7,276,976**	**(30.36)**	**6,290,323**	**(26.25)**	**1,501,411**	**(6.26)**

Source: - Premium Times, reported by Abdul Kareem Mojeed March, 1, 2023.

Discussion

In 2023 presidential election Labour Party endorsed Peter Obi and Datti Ahmad as their presidential candidate and running mate. Obi from Onitsha Anambra state from south-east, a Christian and Igbo by tribe, while his running mate Datti baba Ahmad from Zaria Kaduna state North-West geo-political zone a Muslim and Hausa by tribe. Peoples Democratic Party endorsed Atiku Abubakar and Okowa as their presidential and running mate. Abubakar from Jada Adamawa state North-East geo-political zone while Okowa was born at Owa-Alero in Ika north-east local government area of Delta state, south-south geopolitical zone a Christian and Igbo by tribe. New Nigerian People Party endorsed Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and Isaac Idahosa as their presidential and running mate. Kwankwaso was born at Madobi local government area of Kano state, North-West geo-political zone. While his running mate Isaac Idahosa was born in Mina, Niger State North Central geo-political zone a Christian and Osagie by tribe.

All Progressive Congress (APC) endorsed Bola Ahmad Tinubu from South -West was born in Lagos state a Muslim and Yoruba by tribe and his running mate is Kashim Shatima was born in NimeriKorongoso Lamin Sula Shehuri north local government area of Borno state North- East geo political zone, a Muslim and Kanuri by tribe. The party's presidential candidate endorsement was quite different from the two general elections where the composition of Muslim and Christian appeared in their presidential nomination forms, but in 2023 they picked a Muslim candidate from southern part of the country and they highly need the vote of the northerners where Muslim are the majority in the area, therefore (APC) has no option rather than to picked running mate from Muslim community if they really want to win election in which that calculation pave way to win election.

Muslim-Muslim ticket endorsed by the All Progressive Congress of Nigeria overheated the Nigerians polity which led the country to be divided into ethnicity nationalities and religious affiliation, where the Muslim communities fully supported the Muslim-Muslim ticket, while the Christian communities supported Labour Party Presidential Candidates in person of Mr. Peter Obi and his running mate Datti Ahmad, for instance, the elected president Alhaji Ahmad Bola Tinubu, had the highest number of votes in the south-west, North-West and North-Central, while the Labour Party candidates had the highest number of votes in the South-East and South-South. Moreover, the People Democratic Party Candidate Alhaji Atiku Abubakar scored the highest number of votes in the North-East zone and 1,737,846 representing (51.65%) of the total number votes cast in the zone. Where APC presidential candidate received the highest number of votes cast in the South-West geopolitical zone recording 2,279,407 representing (55.81%) being an indigene and political gladiator of the region, Meanwhile, Tinubu had the highest number of votes in the North-West geopolitical zone recording 2,652,235 representing (40.81%) as a result of religious affiliation. All Progressive Congress of Nigeria's candidates and the elected president had the highest number of votes cast in North -Central region of Nigeria recording 1,760,993 representing (40.03%). While Labour Party Flag bearer Mr. Peter Obi had the highest number of votes cast

in the south-East geopolitical zone being an indigene and former Governor of Anambra State recorded 1,960,589 representing (89.62%) and recorded the highest number votes cast in the South-South geo-political amounted to 1,210,673 representing (44.09%). The last but not the least the fourth contestant who is the flag bearer of New Nigerian People Party (NNPP) is Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso had the highest number of vote cast in the state where he governed and Tinubu become second likewise, Peter Obi won Lagos despite Tinubu is a Former Governor of Lagos, he also won FCT, Nasarawa, Plateau and Benue State just for religious affiliation.

THE INTER PLAY OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Today religious contention between Muslims and Christians is without doubt a single and must significant political challenging issue in Nigeria. It has become a major factor of political identity. The country witnessed more religiously rooted crisis than any kind, whether political, ethnic or economic. Elite manipulation and quest for political power has often triggered the populace against each other. Religious fundamentalism has denied any form of artistry in the entire political settling of the nation.

Manipulation becomes very easy to carry out with the level of illiteracy the people are exposed to, the people follow based on the cover of Muslim or Christian but not capacity. This notwithstanding, the stern of conflicts in Nigerian politics, has a base in the use of religion by politicians to instigate support and voting. Considering the picking of candidates that will represent political parties, religious consideration becomes necessary in states with dual faithdominance. The picking of same religious faith advocates for a particular post in election might pose tension in the polity as it is in the case of Kaduna state in 2019 with All Progressive Congress of Nigeria (APC) gubernatorial candidate.

In fact, political setting has because religious diverse it is found that religious leaders, especially those who represent long-dominant religions majorities, often discouraged religious tolerance. This context characterizes liberal democracy in hopes of preserving or gaining a privileged place for their religious institutions, religious leaders believe that they would be better off if they promote the growth and influence of their own religious institutions by encouraging civic engagement, respect for religious freedom and separation of religion from state authority than by seeking cultural and political dominance. In this way, Muslims and Christian religious leaders have contributed positively to the prospects for liberal democracy, Dowd, (2015). For instance, Boko Haram sect members mobilization of voters for the 2003 gubernatorial election in Borno state, then Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) mobilization of votes for preferred candidates through published national prayers. To mention but a few. Critically, looking at the three presidential election result under review one will conclude by affirming that religion significantly influence the election outcome in Nigeria, especially the 2015 and 2023 presidential election where (APC) Muslim-Muslim ticket overheated the polity and it really affected the end result.

ETHNICITY AND STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL POWER

The country's democratic experiment has thus far, not translated into its political development and improved standard of living for the citizenship (Vande ,2012). Ethnicity has been found to be the most powerful force shaping the political and social relations in Nigeria. It brings about conflict and distrust among the three major tribal groups in Nigeria. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo which has led to question of the Nigeria nation by these ethnic groups as a national cake to be share among them (Iyanga, 2018). Ethnicity had a lot of negative consequences for the nation movement towards democratization to the extent that it remains an enduring threat to institutionalization of democracy and socio-political development in

Nigeria. Among its resultant negative consequence as observe by Seiyeta (2020) include the Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urohobo crisis which lasted for seven years as a result of political tension related to senatorial primaries and local government headquarters location. At the root of this ethnic crisis was the manipulation of the desire for political supremacy between these groups in Delta state by complicit politician as a means of achieving political objectives among others.

CONCLUSION

The 2023 presidential election was keenly contested, with each contest having a firm grip of his ethnic and religious base. An analysis of the presidential election results shows that each candidate had bloc votes from his geo-political zone, it has been demonstrated that religion and ethnic group bloc voting is inimical to Nigerian democracy as well as efforts aimed at uniting andintegrating the country. To establish a sound democracy and a strong united country, the menace of ethnicity and religious bloc voting should be addressed. To achieve this, efforts should be in testified towards providing a set of principles for nation building which should be included in the constitution. In Nigeria, the choice of who will become the president of the country is often decided by a group, comprising the retired generals, traditional rulers and high-profile personalities. It is the preferred candidate of this group that subsequently emerge the winner in the general election. Therefore, one tends to wonder what is democracy to Nigerian where few individuals imposed candidate on a party, ignoring primary election and even the parties organize primary election is influenced by either religion or ethnicity. These appears that the Nigerian electorate has no choice of who becomes the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, so long ethnicity and religion remain the major consideration in the Nigerian politics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers proposed the following recommendations

1. Religion should be used as a tool for national unity and ethnicity also should be used to address national problems in Nigeria such as tribal clashes, ethno- religious crises, farmers' herdsmen clashes and the rest.
2. The appointment of political office holders such as ministers, special advisers etc should be based on competence and experience not on geopolitical zone, ethnic group and religion.
3. Nigerians should vote candidates at all level of government based on merit not on ethnic or religious affiliation for proper social development in the country.
4. Social science subjects such as civic education, social studies, should be reviewed to teach students at all about patriotism, dedication, honesty, national unity and love of one another
5. There should be commitment to even distribution of socio-economic and infrastructural facilities for social development.
6. There should be programs to re-orientate those that are divided along religion and ethnic lines to promote good relations among the different ethnic groups and religious affiliations

in the country.

REFERENCES

Ajayi, J. O., &Owumi, B. (2013). Ethnic pluralism and internal cohesion in Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability, 2(2), 926-940.*

Barret, R. S. (2015). Issues and perspective on religion, In J. K. Olupana and T. Falola (Eds.). *Religion and society in Nigeria* (pp. 34 – 50). Ibadan, Spectrum Books.

Cinjel, N. D. &Chujor, F. O. (2017). Secularism, religion and the rising challenges of national cohesion in Nigeria, 2000-2015, *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice, 3*(1), 1 – 11.

Cohen, A. (2015). *Urban ethnicity, Islam and liberal democracy: Lesson from Sub-Saharan Africa*. New-York, Oxford University Press.

Familusi, O. O. (2012). Christian involvement in politics in Nigeria. *Orita Journal of Religious Studies, 44*(2), 23-44.

Ilesanmi, A. G. (2014). Ethno-religious crisis and socio-economic development in Nigeria; Issues challenges and the way forward. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies; 10*(1), 163 – 174.

Iyanga, V. (2018). *Challenges of nation building in plural society, the case of Nigerian Nation State*. Texasi Pan University Press.

Jiboku, J. O., &Jiboku, P. A. (2018). Ethnicity and multi-party democracy, the Nigerian experience. *Journal of Social Sciences, 55*(1-3), 12 – 24.

Ogoloma, F. I. (2017). Secularism in Nigeria: An assessment. *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities, 13*(1), 132 – 159.

Ogugua P. I., &Ogugua, I. C. (2015). Religion and politics in Nigeria society problems and prospect. *Open Journal of Philosophy, 5*(3) 193 – 204.

Premium Times (2015). Six geo-political zone breakdowns of 2015 presidential election results. Available at httpp/www.306145 /geo- political- breakdown - 2015- presidential election results.

Premium Times (2019). Six geo-political zone breakdowns of 2019 presidential election results. Available at httpp/www.306145/geo- political- breakdown-2019- presidential election results.

Premium Times (2023). Six geo-political zone breakdown of 2023 presidential election results. Available at httpp/www.306145/geo - political – breakdown -2023 - presidential election results

Perouse Demontclos, M. (2014). *Boko Haram and politics; from insurgency to terrorism in Nigeria*. Ibadan; African Studies Centre, 135-157.

Seiyefa, (2020). *Why organized violence thrives in Nigeria: The problem of elite in political culture*. Cambridge, England Scholars Publishing.

Thompson, A. (2016). *An introduction to African politics*. London: Routledage.

WWW. Woldometers. Information .faq (2023) How many people are in the world.

Yesufu, M. L. (2016). The Impact of Religion on Secular State, the Nigerian Experience. *Studia Historical Ecclesiasticae journal. 43*(1), 36 – 46.