

# Religion, Politics and Human Rights in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Religion, politics, and human rights in Nigeria intersects in complex and deeply influential ways, shaping the nation the nation's socio-political scene and contributing to both progress and tensions. Nigeria's multi-religious composition-principally Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion-plays a significant role in political identity, leadership struggles, policy formation, and public morality. While religion often serves as a moral compass and a source of social cohesion, it has also been instrumentalised by political actors to gain legitimacy, mobilise followers, or justify exclusionary agendas.

The entanglement of religion and politics has significant implications for human rights. Issues such as freedom of religion, gender equality, minority rights, and freedom of expression often emerge at the centre of national debates. In some instance, the adoption of religious-based legal systems, such as the application of Sharia in parts of Nigeria, have sparked controversies around the protection of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution and international human rights conventions. Furthermore, electoral violence, ethno—religious conflicts, and insurgencies—most notably Boko Haram—demonstrate how manipulation of religion for political ends can escalate into severe human rights abuses. Despite these challenges, Nigeria's constitutional framework provides mechanisms for safeguarding human rights and ensuring secular character of the state.

This study explores the dynamic relationships among religion, politics, and human rights in Nigeria, highlighting the need for balanced governance, interfaith engagement, and robust legal protections to sustain national unity and promote human dignity.

**Key words:** Religion, Politics, Human rights, and Nigeria

## Introduction

In years past many theorists of religion made different submissions insinuating or pointing to the fact that, with the modernisation process of the society religion will recede public domain; in other words, their theories held the position that religion will eventually lose relevance as the society progresses and humans becoming more rational, however, religion has continued to be a force that cannot be ignored. Politics on the hands, concerns the state and its activities, that is, the leadership structure and the intrigues that are akin with human endeavours. In addition, human rights have been said to be the conferment of liberties on individuals via or groups' divergent instruments.

Nigeria as a nation has been described as highly religious, of which this religiosity has manifested in different ways and spheres of the society. On the other hand, though politics is largely concerned with the affairs of the state, it seems to have a relationship or nexus with religiosity by those in leadership positions, in other words, politics has over time been smeared with things that ought not to be it concern. The question then that comes to mind is, with the romance that has occurred over the years between religion and politics in Nigeria how have human rights or liberties fared?

## Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a nation marked by religious diversity, political complexity, and human rights tensions. Although the Constitution proclaims a secular state and guarantees fundamental freedoms, the lived reality often reveals contradictions. Religion plays a powerful role in shaping political identity, influencing electoral outcomes, and informs policy making. However, the deep entanglement of religion and politics has, in many cases, contributed to marginalization, and conflict. Political wigs (i.e. actors) sometimes exploit divisive religious

sentiments for personal or party gain, thereby heightening divisions and weakening national cohesion.

Human rights concerns continue to surface as a result of these dynamics. In several parts of the country, individuals experience violations of rights such as freedom of religion, expression, movement, and gender equality due to religious extremism, political misuse of state power, or cultural-religious practices. The implementation of religious-based legal system in some states has raised the question about the compatibility of such laws with Nigeria's constitutional human rights provisions. Additionally, violent religious-political conflicts and ethno-religious clashes have resulted in loss of lives, internal displacement, and deepened mistrust among communities.

Despite the presence of legal frameworks and institutions intended to protect human rights, enforcement remains weak, inconsistent, and often influenced by political or religious influences or interests. This situation reveals a critical gap between constitutional guarantees and practical realities. Thus, the central problem of this study is the persistent and complex interaction between religion and politics in Nigerian and how this interaction contributes to ongoing human rights violations, instability, and challenges to national integration. This study seeks to examine these issues in order to propose ways of promoting peaceful coexistence, accountability, equity, and respect for human dignity

### Conceptual Clarification Religion

Attempting to define the concept "religion" is always met with much uneasiness, because the concept is laden with nuances, that is, the concept have undergone or is undergoing different consideration among scholars, it is in that regard that one may insinuate that this concept has no single accepted definition. Because, one scholar may define it from the functional perspective and another from its substantive view, nevertheless, this calls for caution in defining or clarifying the concept. Laying credence to above claim Roseline Morenike Oshewolo and Borok Andrew Maren revealed that:

Scholars of religion like Imo (1986: 1-5) do not agree on a single definition of the word 'religion' because religion is a combination of two things: the profane and the supernatural. Therefore, good definition has to take the two into consideration. Some approach its definition with prejudice while some scholars of religion do not practice one so they lack the experience. A good definition, Imo emphasizes should feature specificity and inclusiveness. He advances that religion is the varied, symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to that, which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them (2).

Deducing from the above position, it will not be out of place to state that, Imo's view of religion is not limited to the sacred as some definition may suggest, but religion (from his view I believe) involve one's belief or ascription of loyalty/allegiance even to the physical and not necessarily spiritual alone. This stipulation goes to say that, limiting the definition of the concept to spiritual may to the extent be exclusive, that is, such assertion may not convey what others consider as religion.

Jonatan Bäckelie has added in simple terms that:

When defining religion one can either turn to *what a religion is* or *what a religion does*. The former deals defines religion from a perspective where *religion x* believes in (for instance) *god y*. This is called a *substantivist* approach. The other; what religion does, focuses on what functions a religion have in people's lives – in what way do they impose an "order" on the individual or the collective? This is generally referred to as a *functionalist* approach (11).

Bäckelie's assertion is not far from what was implied earlier, in the sense that "a substantivist approach usually has its starting place in belief in God/gods." But this approach is usually adjudged to be restrictive since the focus is belief in some sort of transcendence "something above or beyond the material world. Even so, transcendence as a concept does not present a solution." On the other hand, "the functionalist approach to religion instead deals with how religion influence people's/peoples' actions and behaviour. Functionalists return to the broadest meaning of the word *religio* in classical Rome: Any binding obligation or devotion that structures one's social relations." (11-12).

However, Hamilton quoting Hervieu-L  ger observed that even some movements may qualify for to bear the name religion because: If these movements offer their followers a kind of ‘interior fulfilment’, one that can be interpreted as an individualised and secular (and therefore modern) road to salvation, is it necessary to see therein the figure of a new modern religion? Or, due to a lack of reference to any transcendence whatsoever, and because these movements are customarily lacking in a larger social project, must one deny them all the qualification of ‘religiousness’? (1999, p. 79) (Hamilton 13).

Subjecting the various views referred to above it is easy to reiterate that it is almost a Herculean task to pursue a single working definition for the concept, this largely due to the fact that while some ascribe the belief to a transcendental being or power others do not even belief in the first place the existence of such being or power, therefore, religion may pass for whatever an individual or group believe/subscribe to hold some influence over their actions or behaviours.

### Politics

Another variable in this discourse requiring clarification is politics. The sound of the word conveys different connotations to people of varying beliefs and societies, what in real sense does the concept stand for? Is it just about leadership or governance? Or the concept has a different usage? In response Oshewolo and Maren have attempted to shed more light when they postulated that:

The great philosopher and intellectual colossus, Aristotle describes man as a political animal . . . . This has to do with the conceptualization of man as being constantly engaged in the process of influencing, threatening or using threat on others and therefore directly or indirectly being engaged in politics. That is, man is political and he is inevitably involved in power play whether or not he likes it or notices the facts or is indifferent or active . . . (2).

Evidentially, from their position it may not be an overstatement to posit that, politics involves power play of humans, this hinged on the fact that man is in one way or the other engaged in influencing and probably coercing another fellow through the wielding of his personality or resources to command obeisance or compliance in one form or the other.

That being said, it is important to trace the concept from its original state to see if there is a correlation or divergence from what has been said earlier. To that end, Paul Ikechukwu Ogugua and Ogugua Ifunanya Clara highlighted that:

Politics is derived from the Greek root “polis” meaning city state. Implicitly is the idea of governance in the word “polis”. For Onyekpe (2003), “politics is about the control and exercise of power”. Madu (2004) sees it as “an integral feature of man’s social existence and interaction”. In the understanding of Ejizu (1988), it is a dynamic process whereby human and other human resources are managed, directed after due mobilization to ensure the enforcement of public policy and decision in the bid to regulate social order. Some scholars use the term politics in a congruous sense: the struggle for power and the actual exercise of authority and power (194).

Considering the views assembled by Ogugua and Ogugua in their explanation of the concept not much seems different from what Oshewolo and Maren brought to the table, because the basic idea underlying the concept is power and control either of persons or resources. That is to say, politics may be viewed as the possession of power by humans to control/managed human affairs or scarce resources of the society. This has been made clear by Madu quoted in Ogugua and Ogugua when he expatiates that:

The goal of politics according to experts of political economy is the realization of common wealth in a state. Invariably, the chief actors in any political economy are men. In fact, the existence of the web of relationship among men for mutual intercourse presupposes equally the feature of estrangement and strife among men. In a way, therefore, politics must have to come in to direct or modify their relationship to promote the attainment of the expected goals (194).

From Madu's assertion analysis politics could be likened to a tool used to ensure order of running the society for mutual coexistence considering the fact the people in the society have divergent views, needs and wants with very little or scarce resources to serve everyone in such society, in other words, the absence of it may suggest that the society will thrown in anarchy, for the weak may be suppressed or even denied his due by those

who consider themselves as superior or more powerful (Yinger 230-231).

### Human Rights

Another concept that has multiple meanings/definitions is the term human rights, it has been argued that among scholars legal jurisprudence divergent/differing views have been held as far as the meaning or definition of the concept is concerned. However, in referring to human rights, "the underlying claim is that all persons have an equal right to be treated as persons—regardless of differences in race, religion, sex, politics, or social and economic status" (Holmes 83). In other words, human rights that are conferred on individuals or groups, and are so done regardless of age, gender or race of the citizens of a given state. Martin O. U. Gasiokwu accenting to this postulation asserts that:

Human rights is a general notion embracing rights that are attributable to individuals, groups, people and mankind. There is no general accepted legal definition of human rights. Instead legal instruments usually contain different lists of rights which they are supposed to protect, secure or project. However, definitions have been proffered by learned writers in jurisprudence and legal theory, but these vary depending on the philosophical inclination of the particular authors (iv).

Deducing from Gasiokwu's position, it can be inferred that, no single definition of the concept "human rights" is the most suitable, accepted or most workable, but each definition is dependent on the context and philosophical supposition that the author may subscribe to.

Furthermore, in an effort to comprehend the concept, Gasiokwu has however advanced that:

Human rights are the result of age-long oppression and exploitation. It was out of that struggle that the first set of ethical, moral and religious rules emerged, which systemically metamorphosed into legal rules, first at municipal level, then at international level. . . . In a pluralistic world of today, a wide range of views and approaches to human rights exist. A common parameter (denominator) in this respect is sought at the international level by means of legal instruments aimed at finding common standards for all, and acknowledging the pluralistic character of human rights in a pluralistic world (iv).

The above submission suggests that, the discourse and pursuit of human rights as well as their protection has been for a long time; that is, humans have at different points in history sought different ways or means of defining, projecting and promoting of human rights in the society. Gasiokwu however, affirmed that this struggle has not been unconnected with the extremes sometimes pursued or reached by fellow humans. It is a fact that, in human society those who consider themselves as powerful (in most ramifications) trample on or abuse the rights of others in the process of expressing what they claim to be their own rights (especially conferred on them by their social or economic status). Hence, such display has continually called on humanity to the reality of forging and fostering of human rights standards using various legal instruments (though not without some challenges).

Another definition worth bringing to the discourse is that of Cyril O. Imo, as a scholar in sociology of religion his view seems quite different from the legal luminary above (i.e. Gasiokwu), Imo argued that:

Human rights are those rights that a person has by virtue of his humanity. Human rights are universal to all human beings. They are not restricted to any particular society or situation but applies at all human beings irrespective of sex, colour, or race. This makes human rights to be different from social rights. They must be possessed equally by all human beings. Occupying any particular status or relationship, such as parent, head of State or promise does not in any way make differential possession of such rights. The rights do not depend on positive laws but on natural laws and they are easily accessible to every reasonable human being (2001:28).

Key issues raised in his definition border on his advancement of that fact that, human rights are not to be possessed by an individual in one circumstance and forfeited in another, in addition, he maintained that, the occupation of a particular status or relationship cannot nullify his earlier statement that, all human must bear these rights equally on the ground that they are humans.

### Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research method as an approach used to systematically state the precise profile of individuals, events,



and situations as they occur. In the context of the topic, the descriptive method fits because it allows the researcher to observe, document, and interpret the natural interactions among religious practices, political dynamics and human rights issues within the Nigerian society.

This method involves gathering of data to describe the current conditions and relationships among the variables without manipulation. The researcher examines how religion influences political behaviour, and how political actors use religious identities, and how these interactions affect the enjoyment or violation of human rights. The descriptive approach helps in identifying patterns, perceptions, and trends that already exist.

This method analyzed secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, Nigerian Constitution and any other scholarly work. This helps in understanding the socio-political context of Nigeria.

### **Interacton of Religion, Politics, and Human Rights In Nigeria**

Having briefly attempted clarifying religion, politics and human rights, it is important to strive in order to establish how these variables are interconnected. That is, cardinal to this discourse is to underscore the influence or interaction each has on the other in light of the Nigerian context. In other words, one is at this point faced with the question of what religion, politics and human right stand for in the Nigerian terrain. This aspect seeks to show the relationship of the aforementioned forces' influence or control and their manipulation on each other.

Firstly, a closer look at the Nigerian religious and political terrain suggest that religion and politics have been espoused to one another, in the sense that religion has served the function of a double-edge sword—a tool for integration as well as division. In other words, religion is believed to be an integrative tool in a given society, it has however been observed that "a good number of Nigerian politicians, both Muslims and Christians, are not themselves committed to religion, but they try to appeal to the conscience of the populace in order to gain their votes" (Imo 25). This claim aligns with Simeon O. Ilesanmi when he explained that one of the dominant mutuality between religion and politics in Nigeria is the issue of

manipulation. He observed that "this thesis as lucidly summarized by Jibrin Ibrahim, posits that "political actors often amplify the differences and provoke confessional conflicts as part of a wider strategy for the acquisition of political power and/or enhancing the political assets of groups involved in the process of power brokerage" (316). Ibrahim's view is not out of place considering what has played out in recent years in Nigeria, to deny the fact that the masses in the country have been sharply divided along religious lines as a result of political manipulation of same will amount to downplaying the reality. Because, the current administration for example has not been able to hide from the fact it pledges allegiance to Islam, this has been made obvious in the way and manner key political appointments have been carried on (e.g. the security heads of Nigeria are all Muslims).

Furthermore, Imo citing J. O. Onaiyakan added that:

That there are many people who use religion as a war-horse to fight other battles. Politicians in the country realise that religion is taken seriously by most people. They therefore use it to their own advantage, if they can get away with it. A Christian politician running against a Muslim contender in a predominantly Christian constituency will not fail to warn his audience against "those Muslims." Similarly, a Muslim fighting against a Christian contender in a predominantly Muslim community would carefully remind his hearers of their Islamic duty to choose "him whom Allah has chosen" and hinting that Allah is not likely to prefer a kaffir to a Muslim. It may well be both of them are crooks and rogues who have neither the love of Jesus nor the fear of Allah at heart (26).

As clearly shown above, this form of manipulation is not necessarily aimed at advancing the coast of a particular religion but it is a means to an end, that is, religion becomes the horse that drives the cart, it becomes the ploy for individuals to attain targeted political positions.

Religion has also been used an instrument of pacification, however, another twist to the use of religion in politics is reinforcement of power. Even though view has been raised by Ilesanmi on citing Ibrahim's theory, Imo has nonetheless stated it better, he argued that:

The past few decades in particular have witnessed a tremendous involvement of religion in Nigeria politics. This involvement has taken several forms, including the use of religion to produce citizens who substantially abide by the norms of democracy and civility, manipulation of religion to reinforce power, and the use of religion as an instrument to produce disruptive tension and conflict. Each of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, has sought to control government. This has been clearest in northern part of Nigeria where Islam has a stronger hold, especially in the core north. Because of the large population of Muslims in the north, Muslims have tried to exert greater control over the non-Muslims population of the area (Imo 2008: 38).

Imo's position differs on the ground that, he stressed the fact that the use of religion in Nigerian politics is not just having a bearing on the acquisition of power but to reinforce and control government, on the other hand, and secondly, this manipulation has manifested more in northern Nigeria (more than any other part of the country). One may be wondering what has led to this chaos, in response, it is noteworthy to stress that manipulation of religion for political reason is not peculiar to Nigeria. Some factors have been fingered to be contributory factors, first: The transformation of Nigeria's economic base from agriculture to petroleum, a process which led to the centralisation of the country's financial resources, was an important factor in the exacerbation of all forms of struggle for political power and consequently for economic resources. As an effective weapon of social mobilisation, religion was bound to play an important role in what Nigerians call 'the distribution of the national cake', and hence the debate that arose over the politicisation of religion (Ibrahim 127).

Convincing as this assertion may be there appears a greater force than the change of economy source, religion itself, it wields greater influence than the mere seeking of power may lead individuals to want occupy political positions. This so in the sense that: Religion is not a fossil or plant, which can easily be put aside as one, deals with it without any serious consequences. It involves convictions, feelings and dedicated action. These are usually handed from generation to generation of forbearers. Traditionally,

religion deals with the value level of human life, which is difficult to change. A value is a priority or worth, which a man gives to persons, things, or actions. Values are inter-related and forms a hierarchy in people's minds (Imo 2000:31).

The value that Nigerians attached to religion has been adjudged to be greater than their allegiance to the state of constituted authority of the state. And as argued above, values define the premium an individual place over a thing or even a course of action/behaviour:

Unequivocally put, the picture in the present day Nigeria is however not different from what it used to be. Nigerians have demonstrated stronger link or alliance to their religious organisation than the political body. This perhaps, accounts for why Nigerians have been adjudged the most religious people on earth. The fact remains that this tendency, rather than stabilising the polity reinforces differences and ethnic variations. The ferocious gyration of Nigerians about religious matters which will not be replicated when it comes to national interest has weakened the Nigerian state (Oshewolo and Maren, 7).

Nigerian politicians who have come to understand this magic wand have indeed maximise its usage, because, there is hardly any political discourse or strategy that can be said to be free from the touch of religion, one would have imagined that the modernisation process of the society will loosen such grip on people, if it has in other societies the scenario in Nigeria seems to suggest that not much have changed, in other words, religion still permeate every fabric of the society and that has been made more obvious in Nigerian politics—in Nigeria religion commands more respect and allegiance than the State.

Nigeria being a pluralistic state of religion, political ideologies among other things, which will not be void of competition to meet needs and wants by groups or individuals, one is then confronted with the challenge of addressing how human rights have either been promoted or inhibited in such a society. In other words, it is important to answer the question, to what extent are human rights enjoyed, trampled or denied in a society such as Nigeria, because, pursuance of political power is largely influenced by one's religious inclination and with that in mind what happens to others that do not share the same religious views with the said leader is a matter to be taken seriously.

Laying a foundation to the matter Barbara Ann Rieffer quoting Paul Gordon Lauren has presented a template by stating that:

All of the major religions of the world seek in one way or another to speak to the issue of human responsibility to others. Despite their vast differences, complex contradictions, internal paradoxes, cultural variations, and susceptibility to conflicting interpretation and fierce argumentation, all of the great religious traditions share a universal interest in addressing the integrity, worth, and dignity of all persons and consequently, the duty toward other people who suffer without distinction (Lauren 1998: 5 quoted in Rieffer 36).

Analysing Lauren's postulation, the writer would no doubt assent to the fact that, that is the ideal, but the Nigerian situation appears to be complex, in the sense that, what seems to obtain is quite the opposite. Because, in case of Nigeria not all religions may qualify to have stick to that position, since some consider themselves superior than others (especially on matters of power sharing).

Observers of church's participation in advancing the course of human rights in Nigeria like Imo have submitted that, the church has had a fair share of voicing out on matters that relate to human rights with, he stated that such position date back to the Christian creed (the Bible), but narrowing it to the Nigerian context he however, maintained that the church has not done much, his argument is hinged on the fact that much of the statements regarding rights have largely been heard from the Catholic Bishops. He further expatiated that the Pentecostal and New Religious movement focus more on prosperity messages than teachings on human rights (2001: 32-35).

Nevertheless, credit should not be denied those that deserve credit, for instance, Christianity has in recent times champion the course of leading advocacy role in speaking against any perceived illegality that amount to infringement of rights of others in the society; even though such moves have often been greeted without frown faces from Islam to be precise. In consonance with the above claim, it is agreeable that Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) lately has refused to take the back seat in speaking against some policies of the current administration. Few among these instances are, federal Government's taking of an Islamic financial Bond to finance some

projects—CAN's argument is based on the ground that Nigeria is a secular state (in principle) and should not take such loans. Secondly, the killings of innocent lives by herdsmen prompted the association to speak against the complacency of the apex government to bring these marauders to book.

To absolve this paper from been partial it is only wise to attempt seeing if there exist any form of promotion or inhibition of human rights from the Islamic, Dogara Gwamna's findings gives a lending hand to this effect, he highlighted that with the introduction of Sharia in Nigeria, non-Muslims automatically assumed the status of second class citizens in the view of Islamic law; another dimension to this is the discrimination that greeted many non-Muslims in public places, for instance, in states where Sharia was introduced, women were not allowed to board the same vehicle (s) with men, women and ladies were also compelled to put on the hijab, in addition, some states went as far sending Christians to work in offices of Council of Ulama without due regard to his/her religious sensitiveness (104-109). This move implicitly undermines the right other Nigerians to be treated equally before the law on the ground that they (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) are human beings. Secondly, the move infringes on right of the non-Muslims who are discriminated against on the bases of their religious beliefs and gender, and on the other hand, sending a Christian to work in an office of Ulama is a clear violation of Article 42 of the constitution (1999 Nigerian Constitution).

Considering the fact that Nigerian state is said to be secular there is an indication that the introduction and pursuance of enshrining Sharia legal code in some parts of the country amounts to outright violation of the constitution and an infringement on other people's rights that are non-Muslims. This is hinged on the fact that Nigerian constitution which is the highest body of law stipulates in Article 10 that: "The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion" (1999 Constitution). However, heart-warming as this article may appears (in principle), it has often not gone that direction in practice. That is, even though neutrality is envisaged from the above article of the Nigerian Constitution there is no gainsaying that most (if not all) regimes have not been able to steer clear of preferential

treatment to one religion or the other. It is worth noting that this approach has not only constituted to constitutional breach but gross human rights violation, because, considering the plurality of the Nigerian religious terrain one would have thought that each religion will receive equal treatment or attention from the government—a man of more than one wife would be unjust to turn his attention wholly on one of the wives to the detriment of the rest.

Another perspective to some of these violations borders on the preferential treatment some religions in Nigeria have received, it is unarguable that, Nigeria is a religiously pluralistic State with diverse religions present, however, observations have revealed that attention has largely been focused on two major religions (Islam and Christianity), the question is, are members of Sikhism, Grail Message, Eckankar and others citizens who are different religious affiliations from different country? One instance of this differential treatment is the billions of Naira that both federal and state governments spend on sending adherents of Christianity and Islam (alone) on pilgrimage year in year out, the question still remain: is that another interpretation of equal treatment by the state? Is that not a clear discriminatory approach to human rights? It is on that note that one may conclude that human rights have not been equally distributed or enjoyed among all religions Nigeria.

### Recommendations

1. Strengthen secular Governance and Constitutional Enforcement  
The Nigerian government should more firmly uphold the secular principles enshrined in the Constitution. This includes ensuring that political decisions and policies are not unduly influenced by religious interest. Strengthening the independence of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies will help guarantee equal protection of human rights irrespective of religious affiliation.
2. Promote Interfaith Dialogue and peacebuilding Initiatives  
Religious leaders, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders should engage in sustained interfaith dialogue. Such platforms encourage mutual understanding, reduce suspicion, and help prevent escalation of religious-political tensions. Peacebuilding programmes at the grassroots

levels—especially in conflict-prone regions—should be prioritized.

3. Develop Human Rights Education and Public Awareness Campaigns  
Both government and non-governmental organisations should implement widespread human rights education, in schools, religious institutions, and communities. Awareness campaigns will help citizens understand their rights and responsibilities, reducing vulnerabilities to manipulations by political or religious actors.
4. Regulate the Use of Religion in Politics  
Electoral institutions and political parties should adopt clear guidelines discouraging the use of religious rhetoric that incites division or hatred. Sanctions should be applied when political actors exploit religion to gain undue political advantage or threaten national unity.
5. Strengthen Security and Early Warning Mechanisms  
Government security agencies should improve intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and rapid response mechanisms to prevent religious-political conflicts. Protection should be provided for individual or groups threatened due to their religious or political identity.
6. Support Civil Society and Human Rights Organisations  
Civil society organisations play a critical role in monitoring abuses, advocating for reforms, and holding government accountable. Increased funding, institutional support, and collaboration can enhance their ability to address human rights challenges effectively.
7. Promote Inclusive Governance and Equal Opportunities  
Policies that emphasise fairness, equitable resource distribution, and representation of all religious groups will help reduce grievances that fuel conflict. Inclusiveness in government appointments and decisions can strengthen national integration.  
The recommendation if imbibed can foster peaceful coexistence, strengthen human rights protection, and reduce negative impact of religion-politics interactions in Nigeria. The recommendations will also help in reducing mutual suspicion which divides the people along religious and political lines.

### Conclusion

Religion as a concept is subject to nuances among scholars and as such does not hold a



single definition; politics convey the idea of a state or city but largely deals with the view of using constituted authority to manage the scarce resources of the society in a bid to forestall law and order among humans. Human rights on the other hand are natural and universal rights that are to be enjoyed by all humans regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, religion or social status wherever they find themselves.

These three concepts viewed from the Nigerian context interplay on each other, it is an obvious fact that religion in recent times has assumed a critical role in Nigerian politics, for most (if not all) politicians appeal to religion as a means to an end. That is, religion has been used to scout for votes by politicians whose interest in religion is not for the advancement of that particular religion but used as a platform to attain self-gratifying political positions.

Consequently, in a highly competitive religious and political terrain like Nigeria, where the currency of religion and politics has a stronger purchasing power of allegiance than the status, some rights are inhibited, because, some religious laws as well as practices confer second class citizenship on those who are of the other faiths, this act constitute to violation of rights thereby berating the power commanded by the state. However, others at times have made effort in advancing the cause of human rights but obviously such efforts have been insignificant compared to what is required.

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