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**Title** : **Ethno-Religious Dynamics and Political Transition in Nigeria, 1960-2012**

### **ABSTRACT**

The research theme “**Ethno-Religious Dynamics and Political Transition in Nigeria, 1960-2012**” focuses on the study of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria and how they have played their roles in political transition of the country from the time of independence in October 1960 to 2012. The research is based on two research hypotheses. First, ethno-religious identity plays a major role in the Nigerian political system. Second, relative deprivation and unequal access to resources lead to heightened ethno-religious consciousness in Nigeria. The nature of the study is historical and analytical. The study is largely based on secondary sources of data, viz. books, journals, newspapers and some primary sources like annual reports, government official data etc. for the necessary and relevant information about the subject.

The work is mainly divided into three core chapters, excluding introduction and conclusion. **The introductory chapter** of the study is divided into two parts. In the first part, a conceptual framework is sketched out in context with ethno-religious formations and political transition in Nigeria. The second part is a detailed account of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria and their religious composition. **The second chapter** discusses the causal factors of ethno-religious formations in Nigeria from 1960 to 2012. It basically deals the needs and demands of the Nigeria society as well as the circumstances that have led to such formations. **The third chapter** is devoted to a discussion of political transition in Nigeria from 1960 to 2012. The chapter mainly

discusses formation of political parties, membership composition and the general elections in Nigeria. It also discusses the role of ethnicity and religion in general elections to transfer power to the democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria. **The fourth chapter** assesses the impacts comprehensively after each general election in Nigeria and transfer of power to the democratically elected governments. **The concluding part** analyzes the discussions and points of the previous chapters and attempts to bring out findings from the issues discussed on ethno-religious dynamics and their linkages with political transition in Nigeria.

In the political history of Nigeria, transition to democratic processes is an important part of political culture. Since first political transition in 1960 to 2012, seven general elections have been held, viz. in 1959, 1979, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, and there have been four stretches of democratic governance and republics, viz. 1960-1966, 1979-1983, Aug. 1993-Nov. 1993, and 1999- 2012. In each election, people's ethnic and religious identities have played crucial roles in the voting patterns of Nigeria's electoral politics and proper transition to the civilian government. To this end, Rational Choice Economic Theory truly explains the voting behaviour in Nigeria with the fact that people have tended to cast their votes for a party candidate of the same ethnic and religious group in the face of relative deprivation and unequal access to political power and resources, and at the same time hope that the party leader would more likely to give benefits to them in competitive settings.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Religion, Election, Political Transition, Nigeria