

Leadership and Religious Violence in Africa: Insight from Nigeria and Implications for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The paper interrogates leadership and religious violence in Africa with insights from Nigeria and implications for sustainable development. Religious violence has done untold violence to Nigeria's human, physical, political, fiscal, social and natural capital needed for sustainable development. It has also caused vulnerabilities, climate of fear and insecurity, capital flight, disinvestment and underdevelopment. Adopting a library research, critical review method, the paper establishes a nexus between leadership and religious violence in Nigeria and locates the genesis of religious violence in Nigeria to the rulership of the British colonial masters exacerbated by post independence poor leadership and bad governance. The paper, in the main, recommends evolutionary strategies such as effective leadership and good governance, religious education, western education, ethical reorientation, poverty eradication and Sovereign National Conference (SNC), interface of Christianity, Islam and Africa Traditional Religion (ATR) peace building and creation of Ministry of Northern Affairs.

Keywords: Ethno-religious, violence, Christianity, Islam, Religion, Boko-Haram

Introduction

The current problems facing Nigeria today are as result of its history and the inability of its leaders of grapple with the situation. Neither the politicians nor the military leaders were sufficiently groomed to take up the challenges facing the nation. There was also the problem of selfish and corrupt leadership, and an unenlightened an unwilling followership. Both leadership and followership fuelled the problem of divisiveness rather than emphasizes or foster unity (Enebe, 2012:48)

I don't believe there is a single incident of religious crises in Nigeria. If you investigated every single so-called religious crisis, you will see behind it, there are politics in each of these crises. The people behind it are known, the Imams, the emirs. Chiefs, the priests, bishops and the obas, they are known and the politicians who instigate them are known. But you find commissions of inquiry being set up and instead of blaming those people, they blame somebody else (Rimi, 2012:1).

The above quotes articulate and encapsulate Nigeria's leadership and religious violence challenges. Nigeria's present problems and challenges are rooted in her past, manifested in the present, and ominously projected for the future. The past is behind us, the present is with us, and the way and manner we grapple with it, defines the future trajectory. Nigeria is awash in religious favour. Even the blind can see it and the deaf can hear it. A research conducted in 2004 found out that Nigeria is the most religious country in the world with more than 91 percent of the population affirming strong religiosity (Huntington, 2004). Even the United States of America (U.S.A.), God's own country, holds candle to Nigeria.

Agbese (2008), notes that, evidence of the country's religiosity is the attitude of Nigerians to prayers. Nigerians take prayers seriously, praying everywhere and for everything. Former Head of State General Yakubu Gowon founded a prayer group called "Nigeria Prays" with the purpose of persuading God not to be angry with out leaders for wasting the enormous resources He gave to Nigeria for sustainable development. Nigeria probably has the highest places-of-worship density in the world. But there are some contradictory disconnect. The religious fervor of Nigerians is not replicated in their religious favour. Thus, the more religious Nigerians are, the more evil, social vices and violence they commit. Religious ethos and mores of love, peaceful coexistence and universal brotherhood of man, are observed more in the breach. The Nigerian nation also values the external bliss of its citizens after death more than their physical well being here on earth. Life expectancy is low, a function of low human development and failure of leadership and good governance (UNDP, 2011; Achebe, 1983).

Nigeria's landscape is dotted with ethnic, religious, political and economic faultlines. Faultlines are political and social fissures in a given polity, with every country having their own share. Faultlines may be natural, artificial or both. Races and tribes are the most common in natural faultlines, while religion is an artificial faultliness. The invention of religion has had unintended consequences of disuniting rather than uniting people (Agbese, 2008). Nigeria's religious faultlines which has assumed a dangerous dimension of religious violence with adverse

consequence has ethnic coloration of North-South divided of Moslems and Christians. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, religious violence or ethnic-religious violence will be synonymous.

The Boko Haram Muslim sect suicide bombing perhaps with the twin goals of Islamizing the North and Nigeria and ethnic cleansing, coupled with reprisal attacks by Christians in the North have added dangerous dimension to an already ugly scenario, has to be addressed with maximum statecraft. The paper attempts to demystify the dynamics of religious violence in Nigeria and its implications for Nigeria's sustainable development.

Conceptual Underpinnings and Clarifications

Leadership

There are many conceptions of leadership as there are cherries in Damascus or religious people in Nigeria. Leadership is a distinct concept from rulership. Leadership connotes showing the way, it constitutes a guide, an indication, a direction, just as it provides the led with the desirables in, and of, charting a course and direction (Olanipekun, 2004). Thus, leadership is the quality of being good at leading a team, organization, country, etc (Longman, 2007). A leader is a true representative of the people, consciously and conscientiously chosen by the led, without undue influence or coercion, and given the necessary political power and authority. Therefore, a leader like magnet radiates aura which attracts the people. The relationship between the duo, that is, the leader and the led, can therefore be likened to the first law of magnetism which says "opposite poles attract" (Olanipekan, 2004)

Alternatively, a ruler has official power over a country or area and he or she is a person or agent exercising government or dominion (Longman, 2007, Oxford, 2001). A ruler therefore, radiates heat or fire which consumes his subjects over whom he dominates, a relationship or scenario which favourably and justifiably compares with the second law of magnetism, which state that "like poles repel". This was the experience of Nigerians in the relationship between them and the British during colonialism. Rulership connotes force, coercion, power, while leadership is about influencing people towards a desired goal. Thus, leadership is more disposition than position, influencing others from any position.

Indeed, leadership essentially is the exercise of political, social, economic, religious and administrative influence and authority at all level and strata of society or country. Leadership is about efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery and development outcomes. To achieve this, the benchmark and best practice is 360° leadership. A 360° leader, according to Maxwell (2005) takes the time and effort to earn influence with their followers just as they do with their superiors. 360° leaders develop their influence wherever they are in any organization or society or group and learn to lead up, lead cross, and lead down, through influence peddling and value-addition.

Leadership, in its purest form, exerts altruistic, positive and profound impact on a people, both in tangible and intangible ways. It galvanizes challenges and propels a state and society along clearly established path of development, achievement and progress. Responsible leadership and good governance is imbued with vision and imagination, commitment, selflessness, integrity and courage and clearly defined national goals aspirations (Mbanefo, 2005). Leadership is a people's business. It is people-driven, development-driven and value-driven. Leadership is responsible and responsive and has a dialectical nexus with good governance, human rights and development in improving the standard of living and quality of life of people and in achieving national goals and aspirations.

360° leadership, efficient and effective leadership, responsible and responsive leadership are critical for a nation's greatness, human and national development, sustainable development and global competitiveness. Thus, there is poverty of leadership which adversely affects and impacts on every other aspect of life, governance and business. The lends credence to the Igbo wise crack that when a tuber of yam start rotting from head, then the state of the trunk does not need any inquiry. This ugly state of affairs inspired Chinua Achebe's lamentation decades ago that the trouble with Nigeria is the overarching failure of leadership, which finds expression in the inability and unwillingness of Nigerian so called leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge nuances and dynamics of personal example which define and underscore true leadership (Achebe, 1983).

Violence

Conflict is natural, normal and inevitable corollary of human existence with both positive and negative consequences if well managed. But violence which is an extreme pathological form of conflict is abnormal, avoidable and should be avoided because it is a serious ill-wind with negative and destructive consequences. Longman (2007) views violence behaviour or actions that are intended to hurt, injure or kill people, by hitting them, shooting them and so on. Thus, acts of violence could be physical violence, domestic violence, political violence, religious violence, racial or ethnic violence, sexual violence, economic violence, social violence, gender violence, environmental violence structural violence and so on. For the purposes of this paper, religious violence in Nigeria has held sway.

Religion

Religion, to the extreme extremists of atheists, is a non-existent phenomenon simple because they don't believe in God or any other gods. To another group of extremists, religion is about the world next to the present world and has nothing to do with this world. In this direction, such twin concepts as sacred and profane, religious and secular, heaven and earth, body and spirit, mortal and immortal, etc have been unduly used to not only exaggerate the nearly non-existence divide between 'moral and immoral' life but also to propagandize the enormous view that religion is not about this seen world (earth) but only about the unseen world (heaven) (Okwueze, 2012). For them, religion cannot help anyone in this life, except to 'drug' you into a fatalistic resignation of fate in the hereafter with juicy promises of paradise. For them, blessed are the poor in body, spirit, soul, money and wealth, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. The legendary Karl Marx, in his century-old celebrated assertion that religion is the opium of the masses is the foremost and leading proponent of this extremists group. For Marx, religion is the blindfolding opium used to message the ego and pain of poverty and oppression of the poor by the exploitative capitalists and ruling class into belief in a better life hereafter.

Opium is a powerful illegal drug made from opium poppy seed containing about 20 alkaloids including morphine, which kills or reduces pain, anxiety, worry and generally causes an addiction (Webster, 2004; Longman, 2001). But for Okwueze (2012), religion is life, the "opium" of life, permeating and influencing all aspects of our lives here on earth. From the above three categories of religious conception, this paper distils the view that religion is a doctrinaires of here and hereafter, religion is for life and death, it impacts on this world and beyond, giving meaning to both the terrestrial and celestial.

From the above polemics, religion has lent itself to various definitions. James (1902:31) views it as the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude; so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider the divine". Emile Durkheim, the foremost sociologist, views religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say to things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community all these who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1915:37).

Every religion involves certain ideas or beliefs on the one hand, and certain observances on the other hand (Brown, cited in Okwueze, 2012). The implication is that beliefs and practices are like Siamese twins and two sides of a coin which are central in the understanding of religion. Religion beliefs and practices are usually positive. But events in Nigeria and some parts of the world have also shown that they could also be negative, which explains outbreak of religious violence.

Spiro (cited in Lambek, 2012:10) defines it as "an institution consisting of culturally pattered interaction with culturally postulated super human beings". This means that religion, as part of culture, is relative. Cultural relativity dictates that since culture is relative and unique, no culture is superior or inferior. Ezeh (2012:85) agrees with Spiro in defining religion as "any set of actions or inactions periodically re-enacted by members of human group in the belief that they are relating with the spiritual or defied buying or agents".

However, ethnocentric definition of religion in the nuances of Christianity and Islam "has resulted in situations where it is made a handmaiden of political hegemony" (Ezeh, 2012:85). Thus, to subject a people politically and/or economically, such a people are first of all intimidated culturally to hate or abandon their religion and culture for the invading supposedly superior religion and culture, once an extraneous power can control another human group religiously they can control such a people in every other sphere of their social life. The Europeans, who colonized Africa not least Nigeria, recognized this fact and employed it effectively for their purpose and to the detriment of the Africans (Ezeh, 2012). This is not always easy to achieve, giving rise to conflicts and crises, thus power of the barrel of the gun is employed in the subjugation. This underscores the epic culture clash and crisis in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958, 2008). Nigeria's present sectarian – driven violence have their remote roots in those early designs (Ezeh, 2012).

Development

As a post world war phenomenon, development was described as economic growth (Meier, 1976). That is, as the ability of society to achieve a rapid and sustained rise in the output of all gainful economic ventures. Emphasis was placed on only how society could increase out put in its tangible forms. No similar attention was given on how justice is to be achieved in the distribution of what has been produced. The source of technology and skills engaged in production was not also considered (Onunwa, 1997).

Is the goal merely to achieve national wealth, or is it something more subtle? Improving the well-being of the majority of the population? Ensuring peoples freedom? Increasing their economic security? The inadequacies in the logic of economic growth led to a paradigm shift. Recent United Nations documents emphasize "human development" measured by life expectancy, adult literacy, access to all levels of education, as well as people's average income, which is necessary condition of their freedom of choice (Soubotina, 2004). In a broader sense, the notion of human development incorporates all aspects of individuals' well-being from their health status to their economic and political freedom. According to the Human Development Report 1996, published by the Untied Nations development Programme, "Human Development is the end, economic growth a means"

(Soubbotina, 2004:8). Hence, the development of a country is measured with statistical indices, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or per capital income, literacy rate and life expectancy. These constitute the Human Development Index (HDI) as enunciated in the UNDP Human Development Reports.

It is true that *economic growth*, by increasing a nation's total wealth, also enhances its potential for reducing poverty and solving other social problems. But history offers a number of examples where economic growth was not followed by similar progress in human development. Instead growth was achieved at the cost of greater inequality, higher unemployment, weakened democracy, loss of cultural identity, or over consumption of *natural resources* needed by future generations (Soubbotina, 2004). As the links between economic growth and social and environmental issues are better understood, experts including economists tend to agree that this kind of growth is inevitably unsustainable – that it cannot continue along the same lines for long (Soubbotina, 2004).

Consequently, there was again a paradigm shift from economic growth to human development and now sustainable development which integrates and balances economic, social and environmental issues and concerns in the development question. The issues at stake in sustainable development are economic growth, human development, and environmental protection and conservation. In other words, sustainable development is about economic, social and economic sustainability (ESES). The objective of sustainability requires the protection of the natural resources upon which future development depends. For many advocates of the sustainable development model, valuing nature and non-human life forms in an intrinsic way has also become an integral part of development (Baker, 2006:5). It seeks to reconcile the ecological, social and economic dimensions of development, now and into the future, and adopt a global perspective in this task. It aims at promoting a form of development that is contained within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet, which is socially just economically inclusive and environmentally-friendly.

According to classical definition given by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, development is sustainable if it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987; Subbotina, 2004; Baker, 2006; Nwosu and Uffoh; 2005; Jhingan, 2007:22; Todaro and Smith, 2009). Sustainable development could probably be otherwise called “equitable and balanced” meaning that in order for development to continue indefinitely, it should balance the interest of different groups of people, within the same generation and among generations and do so simultaneously in three major interrelated areas-economic, social and environmental (Soubbotina, 2004:9-10). These are the tripod pillars of sustainable development. Thus, sustainable development is a holistic, inclusive, balanced, equitable and participatory process of social change aimed at improving the living conditions of both present and future generations.

The Anatomy of Religious Violence in Nigeria

Given the great ethnic divide between the North and South and their corresponding Islam and Christian religion in Nigeria, religious violence assumes ethnic-religious coloration and grandstanding. When Northern Islamic fundamentalists are on rampage, their targets and victims are always the Southern Christians especially the Igbo who are domiciled everywhere in Nigeria, their properties, churches, warts and all. Thus, the distinction between ethnic conflict and religious conflict is blurred. It means that ethnic and religious conflicts or violence in Nigeria are symmetrical with a dialectical relationship. Ethnic conflict invariably assumes a religious underpinning and vice versa. This explains why ethno-religious violence in Nigeria is always devastating in their effect (Salawu, 2010). Thus, for the purposes of this paper, religious violence and ethno-religious violence with either be used interchangeably or taken to mean the same.

Ethno-religious violence depicts a situation of lack of cordiality and trust, mutual suspicion and fear and violent confrontation between ethno-religious groups leading to deaths, disabilities and destruction and dislocations. Gofwen (cited in Ugwu, 2009) conceptualizes it as a specific form of conflict between groups which differed ideologically along religious line within a pluralistic setting with each striving for political relevance. Religious interest is therefore like political interest that must operate along the principle of divide and rule (Ugwu, 2009). In Nigeria, ethnic-religious bigotry has become the fulcrum of micro nationalism such as language and culture assertiveness, religious superiority, demands for political autonomy and self determination. This has produced an ill-wind of intolerance, conflicts and cries giving birth to ethno-religious militias and irredentists such as the O'dua People Congress (OPC); the Bakassi Boys; the Egbesu Boys, The Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC); and the Igbo Peoples Congress (IPC). Other include the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC); the Ohaneze Ndigbo and the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) (Daily Trust in Salawu, 2010), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and lately Boko Haram. With the emergence of these ethnic militias and the deep divide between the ethnic groups and their religion, religious intolerance has become more violent. In this vein, the two major religious in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, have been in constant crises as their beliefs and practice are antithetical. This viewpoint was captured succinctly by Anugwom and Igbo (2002:125);

Muslims, for instance, believe that they have the right to “Islamize” the world. This is

not necessarily, through persuasive arguments or evangelism but through 'holy wars' or 'Jihad'. Christianity on their own part believed in evangelism or spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. They argue that one cannot attain salvation or go to heaven except through strict adherence to the teachings of Christ. Each of the two groups want to maintain separate identity and at the same time try to win converts from the other.

The first and foremost recorded event of a political crisis which later also became an ethno-religious crisis was in 1966. The aftermath of the Kaduna Nzeogwu aborted coup d'état led to the pogrom where the Easterners in the North were massacred in retaliation of Northern leaders who died in the coup. The failure of that coup metamorphosed into the Nigerian bloody civil war (Ibenwa and Ugwu, 2006; Ekwunife, 1992). Other notable crises are the maitasine religious disturbances in Kano and Maiduguri in the 1980s; Kaduna Polytechnic Muslim-Christian skirmishes (1982); Bulumkutu Christian-Muslim riots (1982); Usman Danfodio University Sokoto (1982); the cross vs the crescent conflict at the University of Ibadan (1981-1985); Jimeta-Yola religious disturbance (1984); Muslim-Christian clash during a Christian procession at Easter in Ilorin, Kwara State (1986); Kafanchan College of Education Muslim-Christian riots (1987); Others are the Rev. Reinhard Bonnke crusade riot in Kano (1991) and Zango-Kataf crises in Kaduna State (1992).

The ethno-religious riots in Nigeria have increased with the advent of democracy in 1999. The first was in July 1999 when some Oro cultists in Sagamu, Ogun State accused a Hausa woman of coming out when the cultists were outside with their gnome. This led to some altercations, which resulted in full-blown crisis and reprisal attacks in Kano and Lagos with many people, notably Hausa and Yoruba losing their lives and property (Salawu, 2010). There was also the religious violence arising from the introduction of the Sharia Law and governance in the north by Governor Ahmed Yerima of Zamfara and Governor Mohammed Makarfi of Kaduna State in 1999 and 2000 respectively. Tales of Igbo tribe Christian ethnic group slaughtered in the north resulted in reprisal attacks against Hausa-Fulani Moslems in Enugu and other eastern Igbo cities in what has come to be known as the Kaduna/Enugu ethno-religious riot. Salawu (201) notes that the Kaduna/Enugu ethno-religious riots present some features that look like the prelude to the 1967-1970 civil war in Nigeria.

In October 2000, another ethno-religious conflict occurred. This was the Lagos (Idi-Araba/Oko-Oba) Kano mayhems. The cause of this was the misunderstanding between the Hausa residents and the Yoruba in Idi-Araba in Lagos over the use of a convenience by a Hausa resident, as a result of this misunderstanding many Yoruba residents of the area were killed with bows, arrows and machetes. Responding; the O'dus People Congress (a Yoruba militia) came into the picture and things worsened. Later, Oko-Oba, another Lagos suburb with a high population of Hausa/Fulani stock joined the fray of madness. The violence later spread to Kano and as expected the southerners were mostly the victims. In September 2001, the ethnic tension between the Tivs and Iunkuns in Plateau State reached a head after decades of fighting. The September 2001 ethnic tension was caused by what can be called a mistaken identity. What this means is that some Tivs took some nineteen soldiers to be Lunkuns but in fake army uniform. The Tivs youths captures them and slaughtered them one by one. The reprisal attack by the men of the Nigerian army in Zaki Biam was devastating. Also in the same month Jos, the Plateau State capital city, joined the madness. The cause of this was the appointment of a Christian as a Local Council Chairman. It is interesting to note that by the time sanity found its way back to the city, more than hundred and sixty (160) lives had been lost in the mayhem.

In the following month of October, 2001, there was mayhem in Kano. This was, however, caused by an international event when some terrorists attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in the United States of America. Shortly after the United States launched an offensive against Taliban government in Afghanistan, Kano erupted with another round of ethno-religious conflict. In the case, some Islamic fundamentalists who felt that the United States of America had no reason to bombard Afghanistan decided to set the city of Kano on fire. Like the earlier crisis in the city, the Southern tribes in Nigeria were mostly the victims of the Kano ethnic-religious conflict.

Regrettably, ethno-religious violence in Nigeria has taken a worse insecurity turn with the coming to power of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 culminating in the suicide bombings and terrorism of northern Nigeria Boko Haram Islamic sect, arguably protesting 'unfair' loss of power to southern Christian (Aziza, 2012). This group widely acclaimed as an Islamic sect demands among other things, the enthrone of the Sharia Law in its fullness across all the states of the North in spite of the fact that non-Muslims form a large percentage of the people living in the area (Okwueze, 2012). Boko Haram, which means "Western education is sinful" in the Hausa language, is loosely modeled on Afghanistan's Taliban and al Qaeda. It has claimed responsibility for bombing churches, police stations, military facilities, United Nations building in Abuja, newspaper houses, bars, beer parlours, TV sports viewing centre in the mainly Muslim north of Nigeria. The nature of this violence unanticipated, widespread, multi-directional, dastardly, senseless, fatalistic and most worrisome suicidal has made our security agencies helpless. Just between January 2011 and April 2012 Nigeria has recorded over scores of terrorist oriented attacks in various parts of the country especially in the North from the Boko Haram group. On December 25, 2011 the Boko Haram sect carried out the most dastardly attack on Christian worshippers in

Suleja (Okwueze, 2012). The Christmas day havoc in St. Theresa Catholic Church Madalla in Suleja, which left scores of people dead, was wrecked by a Boko Haram suicide bomber (Yusuf et al, 2011). Similarly, another Catholic church in the city of Jos was bombed in February 2012 leaving two people dead and many others wounded. As if to restate that the church was one of its target enemies Boko Haram fighter bombed and attacked nine churches in Damaturu and more than 90 people may have been killed during the battles in Damaturu and Pokiskum (Okwueze, 2012).

The latest attack in July 2012, even though not by Boko Haram, in Barkin Ladi and Riyom councils of Plateau State during which many people lost their lives including a serving senator and state law maker and houses reduced to rubble, is still worthy of mention. Ajaero (2012) reports that it is in continuation of the recurrent ethno-religious friction between the Birom and Anaguta ethnic groups on one hand, and, the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group on the other hand. The first major crisis in Jos was the April, 12 1994 riot. The genesis of the problem was the creation of Jos North Local Government Area in 1991 by former military president Ibrahim Babangida. It tended to have sowed the seed of discord that has continued to haunt Jos which used to be one of the most peaceful and tourism friendly cities in Nigeria (Ajaero, 2012).

Causes of Religious Violence in Nigeria

In discussing the causes of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria, it could be gleaned from our discussion so far that religious and ethnic factors are manifest in Nigeria's social violence or crises. At different levels and times, Nigerian people experience religious and ethnic discrimination and marginalization, they complain of past and present ethnic and religious wrongs, they demand ethnic and religious rights and the state plays the religious and ethnic card in public policy and action. This means that ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria is a multi-causal variable (Salawu, 2010) with remote and immediate causes.

The colonial masters' selfish rulership laid the foundation of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria. To this end, Ikejiani-Clark (2005) notes that there has been an unfortunate insertion of ethno-religious discrimination and incompatibility of the Nigerian State since the colonial period. For instance, in 1931, the colonial administration under the rulership of Governor Donald Cameron did not encourage intermingling of religions. The Governor advised the Christian missions to stay away or at best tread softly in Moslem area to maintain the stability of indirect rule (Salamu, 2010) which favoured the colonial administration. If religious intermingling was allowed then by the colonial overlords; it would have birthed and facilitated religious tolerance and compromise with far reaching positive impact on Nigeria's peaceful coexistence and sustainability. It is the lost opportunity of a foundational peaceful coexistence that made the political events of the January 15 and July 1966 coup and counter-coup respectively assume an ethno-religious colouration and dimension tragically resulting in a 30-month Civil war. Ugwu (2009) observes that this has left a scar in the minds of the common Igbo man who feels what was a political incident was hijacked by irate Muslims who poured their venom on defenseless Igbo Southern Christians.

The post-colonial Nigerian leadership have also entrenched ethno-religious violence by their poor leadership and bad governance which manifests in various forms. The security forces which are part of the government are always reactive instead of proactive in the provision of security. The concept and philosophy of community policing which is value-driven multi-agency and community collaboration through partnership which facilitates a peaceful, secure and investment-friendly environment that promotes development and improves livelihood has not been adequately mainstreamed (DFID, 2010, Njoku, 2011). Apart from physical and group security, the government has failed to provide human security terms of poverty reduction, access to education, health, justice, equity, rule of law and respect for human rights, provision of social amenities such as clean water and basic sanitation and other forms of infrastructure and achievement of the millennium development goals (MDGs) and other national developmental goals.

Essentially, poverty in Nigeria is generally on the increase in Nigeria since 2004 (NBS, 2010). Even though northern leaders have held the reins of Federal power and resources more than the south, they have not impacted positively in the lives of the northerners. Soludo (2008) observes that poverty is unacceptably high in Nigeria but the alarming and persisting level of poverty in Nigeria is a phenomenon in the North. With respect to those considered as suffering from absolute poverty, that is, those who are incapable of providing minimal requirements necessary to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, healthcare, shelter, education, the North was found to have ranked higher than places in the southern part of Nigeria (NBS, 2010; Agbaegbu, 2012). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) forecast for 2011 is also worse off for the North. The NBS estimated that poverty level would increase slightly to about 71.5 percent, 61.9 percent and 62.8 percent in the North Central, North-East and North-West, respectively in 2011.

The 2008-2009 United Nations Human development, UNHP, report earlier stated the high poverty level in Northern Nigeria in particular. Using a number of indicators the UN report said income poverty, child and maternal mortality, disease burden especially polio and measles and illiteracy were extremely high in Northern Nigeria, and partly accounts for why Nigeria is still ranked among the nine countries with the highest level of

illiteracy in the world (UNDP, 2009; Agbaegbu, 2012). With the high level of poverty and illiteracy, coupled with fluid security of lives and property, poor people including the Almajiris become willing tools and canon fodder for ethno-religious violence. Newswatch (2012) rightly describes poverty as the rampaging scourge in the North and rightly blamed the high level of poverty in the north on past northern leaders, despite the fact that leaders from the area were in control of power and resources of the country for 34 out of the country's 51 years independence.

Nigerian government instituted division in the country when it used the constitution to bring in some vexatious, segregation, tribal and religious discriminatory elements as part of the Nigerian Law. Ezeanya (2010) meticulously reviewed and exposed such provisions of the constitution that are clearly divisive. For instance, the constitutional issue of Federal Character, which divided Nigerians along their ethnic lines as a major consideration before any national benefit comes to anyone obviously contradicts and defeats the slogan of one Nigeria. How can they be one and as well as divided along their ethnic lines and be officially discriminated against in the issues of employment, admission to federal government owned schools and other benefits from the government? (Ezeanya, 2012). Perhaps, the most malicious divisive aspects of the constitution is making Islamic Sharia legal system part of Nigerian Law.

If Nigeria is truly a secular state, religious law must not be recognized in the national constitution and government should not be sponsoring and support religious pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia, Jerusalem and Rome. Sections 5, 260-264 and 275-279 of the 1999 Constitution deals with the establishment and functionality of Islamic Sharia law in Nigeria to the exclusion of other religious including Christianity (FRN, 1999). Yet, the same constitution stipulates in Section 23 that part of the national ethnics is religious tolerance and in section 10 that the government of the federation shall not adopt any religion or state religion. In other words, Nigeria is a secular state. By enshrining Sharia in the constitution, the government has contradicted itself and by omission or commission, adopted a state religion. In fact, the Islamic fundamentalists and fanatics are not to be blamed. They are constitutionally empowered to Islamize Nigeria. Thus, there is a strong nexus between Nigeria's leadership and religious violence. This is the crux of the matter.

Another cause of religious violence in Nigeria is lack of patriotism and nationalism to the Nigerian nation-state. What exists is micro nationalism or ethnic loyalty to the various ethnic groups. This is because as Ezeanya (2012) posits none of the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria today subscribed to the umbrella known as Nigeria, which has forced them into strange bedmates as it is today. Ojiako (1981) has gone through the history of Nigerian architectonic climb to nationhood from the cradle of colonialism to the present presidential system of government and found no string of "we" feeling. The British Colonialists discovered and exploited the ethnic, language, religious and political differences among the Nigerian disparate people. Faced with the challenge, they adopted divide-and-rule system, which highlighted the ethnic differences among the people and made them hostile to one another and as the natives expressed their prejudice and hostilities among themselves, they could not form a common front and solidarity to fight the colonialists. The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 to form a single government was part of the plans to maximize colonial interests at the expense of the colonized, (Ezeanya, 2012). In other words, the amalgamation of North and South of Nigeria was borne out of colonial convenience and not of conviction and concreteness of one Nigerian nation.

Ezeanya (2010) points out that the name Nigeria is a coinage by Flora Shaw, girl friend to Frederick Lugard, that the different British protectorates around River Nigeria be called Nigeria. With this, the Nigerian nation was built on a shaky shifting sandy foundation which nobody or group subscribes to. This explains why Chief Obafemi Awolowo described Nigeria as a mere geographical expression. The post-colonial Nigerian leaders failed to do anything to foster Nigerian unity rather they continued with the divisive and retrogressive politics of the colonial masters, thereby entrenching ethnic loyalty and consciousness, at the detriment of country nationalism and patriotism.

The ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria also have some connection, with a number of politico-religious developments at the international scene. According to Albert (cited in Salawu, 2010), religious crises in Nigeria could be traced to the developments in the Middle East. In this regard, he pointed out that religious issues became particularly phenomenal since the late 1980s with the end of the cold war and replacement of communism with Islamism. With this new Islamic ideology, the Muslims worldwide, and particularly in the Middle East, were determined to resent the 'socio-economic impoverishment and psychological alienation that stem from failed modernization and excessive westernization in the post cold war world (Agubi, Dekmejian, Faksh cited in Salawu 2010). The contemporary increase in the incidences of terrorism around the world has also been linked to this new ideology of Islamism (Cordesman, Booth and Dunne, cited in Salawu, 2010).

It should be understood that the problem created by the new Muslim ideology was not limited to the Middle East as the increasing feelings of relative deprivation and alienation around the world makes developing states with large Muslim populations susceptible to militant forms of Islamism in the Middle East. This explains why the increased rate of religious violence in Northern Nigeria (a Muslim dominated region) since 1980s can be understood from this perspective. The influence of foreign factor on ethno religious conflicts in Nigeria becomes

obvious in 1983 when the then Nigerian Minister for International Affairs attempted to link the development crises in Nigeria to the global political economy. It was the opinion of the Federal Government of Nigeria that many of the ethno-religious crises had foreign backing and as such ordered that aliens without valid permit must leave the country within a fortnight. The main reason given for this expulsion order was that the presence of the aliens at the time threatened the economic and political security of Nigeria (Albert, cited Salawu, 2010). Particularly, the justification for the government action was the 1980 Maitatsine riots led by Marwa, a Cameroonian by nationality. In 1985 too, Major General Tunde Idiagbon pointed to the foreign connection in the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. In this regard, he alerted Nigerians about the impending crisis and the foreign supports some religious fundamentalists were receiving (Ilori cited in Salawu, 2010).

The foreign connection in ethno-religious crises in Nigeria is also evident in the involvement of non-Nigerians in a number of urban insurgencies. These foreigners have been found to actively participate in the ethnic conflicts around the country and particularly in the Northern part between the Hausa-Fulani Muslim hosts that their Christian dominated southern Nigeria 'strangers' who reside in their midst. A scuffle that started between an Igbo trader and a Fulani security guard at the Sabongari Kano Market develop into city-wide ethno-religious conflicts in which many non-Nigerians from the neighbouring African states were arrested fighting on the side of the Hausa-Fulani Muslims (Kano State cited in Salawu, 2010).

In addition to the above, it is important to note that foreign preachers often contribute to the insurgence of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria. For instance, in 1991, the religious crisis in Kano was traced to the plan of Evangelist Richard Bonnke, to conduct a crusade tagged 'Kano for Jesus' in Kano'. Simply because the government had earlier denied access to Kano a Muslim cleric from South Africa to preach in the city, serious crises loomed up between the Muslim and Christian populations.

Theoretical Framework

Leadership and religious violence can be explained within the framework of systems theory. The systems theory was first propounded in 1930s by a biologist name Ludqig Yon Bertallently (Nakabari, 2000). It was from the biological sciences that the idea crept into social anthropology as evidenced in the works of scholars like Emile Durkheim, A. R. Radcliffe, Brow and Bronislaw Malinowski, among others (Emiune, 2005). From social anthropology, it was applied by sociologist like Robert K. Merton and Talcott Parsons. Further, it finally got into use in political science, in the wake of behavioural revolution in the 1950s as found in the works of David Easton, Gabriel Almond, Mortan Kaplan, among other (Isaac, 1985).

To Easton (1960), the basic methodological foundation of systems theory is that political system consists of all interacting elements, which contribute to the authoritative allocation of values for a society. Also, the theory posits that political life, therefore, concerns all activities that significantly influence the formulation and implementation of authoritative policies and programmes for a society. The theory further assumes that political phenomena can best be analysed by viewing them as part of a systematic whole. As Okoro (2005) aptly puts it, systems theory reduces every phenomenon to a whole, made up of interdependent parts, which contributes to the proper functioning of the whole.

The above analysis succinctly implies that system theory depicts a conglomeration of different parts that make a single whole. Thus, breakdown of any part of unit ultimately affects the entire system. Hence, for there to be harmonious operation of the system, all parts thereof must function properly towards goal attainment (Nwagboso, 2009). By application of this theory to leadership and religious violence in Nigeria, Nigeria is viewed as a system with a leadership that is grappling with religious violence in the northern part of the country with the potential of destabilizing the whole system, which is the nation if not tackled with maximum statecraft.

Implications for Development

Development is a holistic, multidimensional conceptual value-driven and value-added sustainable process of social change toward improved human and social condition. In this connection, the impact and implications of religious violence on Nigeria's sustainable development would be discussed under physical, economic, political, social, cultural, religious and environmental dimensions.

First and foremost, ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have presented many challenges that burden the security and the corporate existence of the country which is the fundamental reason for the adoption of a federal system (Fawole and Bello, 2011). In other words, Nigeria's physical corporate existence and sustainability as a nation is in jeopardy because of high insecurity and weakened patriotism which has affected commitment to national ideas and true and viable nationhood, giving rise to parochialism, ethnicity and other cleavages which ethno-religious jingoists exploit for their selfish interest. High level of insecurity and violence is a potent threat to a nation's physical existence. In an unpublished seminar paper, Njoku (2012) warns that insecurity in general and Boko Haram violence in particular, if not well handled, would be the cataclysmic factor that will cascade Nigeria to a failed state in 2015 as predicated by the United State Intelligence in 2005. Indeed, if there is no Nigeria, there will not be a nation to develop. The physical and corporate entity called Nigeria is the platform for human and

national development.

However, the incessant ethno-religious violence in Nigeria is a pointer that conflict hotbeds surround the nation is ready to explode, which according to Jega (2002) stretch the bounds of unity to a potentially snapping point. This provides an opportunity for Nigerians to peacefully and constructively renegotiate their Nigeria and Nigerianess and decide to be or not to be. It is an opportunity for Nigerians to have a platform for a meaningful dialogue to understand their grievances and deal with them to forge ahead in peaceful co-existence or otherwise decides to go their separate ways as splinter nations, which will put paid to the gale of ethno-religious violence that blows no one any good. There are precedents in Sudan, Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, United States and India and lesson to learn.

Ethno-religious violence has had enormous negative consequences on the economy and livelihoods. In a research report presented by participations of the senior executive course No. 26 of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS, they note the economic consequences of religious violence in Nigeria as follows (NIPSS, 2004:12):

“In addition to the irreplaceable loss of lives, losses in terms of property (goods, houses, business premises) have not yet been fully ascertained. Some survivors have permanently lost all they labored for in their lives. As a result, one can argue that that aggregate of such instances negatively impact on the overall economy of these communities and by extension, the rest of the country; new armies of the unemployed, the destitute and highly aggrieved are added in the streets with its attendant consequences. Victims are also generally made and belonging to the economically active segments of the society.

In other words, there economic losses in jobs, businesses, income, productivity, wealth, gross domestic product, investment and economic growth. As a result, there is a reversal of gains in economic indicators, poverty is both perpetrated and perpetuated, increase in unemployment, youth, women and children are disempowered. There is also disinvestment and capital flight which affects adversely the local and national economy state and federal resources which would have been better utilized in productive ventures as channeled in “incurring huge expenses in managing the socio-political and economic consequences of the near collapse of state authority and breakdown of law and order...” (Obasanjo, 2004:4)

Socially, there is a socio-psychological disruption and dislocation arising from death and disability of breadwinners, spouses and children, the influx of internally displaced persons to neighbouring states, home states and communities and refugee problems. More importantly, social capital which is built on trust, tolerance, love, friendship, network, relationship and marriage between Muslims and Christians are destroyed. People are forced to live in mutual fear, suspicion, distrust and prejudice, with security being imposed by combat-ready army and police. This is negative pace. Importantly, schooling for children who are the future of the country is disrupted and interrupted with dire human capital development consequences and the trauma of violence could instill a violence psyche and culture that would mortgage the future of the nation.

Politically, apart from doing harm to Nigeria’s federalism and democracy, Nigeria is listed as one of the most dangerous countries in the world and in fact regarded as a failed state on account of insecurity and terrorism and bad governance. Forbes Magazine 2011 ad Tell (2011) listed Nigerian as among 20 failed states in the world and among 15 most dangerous places in the world. If Nigeria’s insecurity and religious terrorism is localized, the world would still have been watching with cautions optimism. But matters have been made worse by the morbid religious martyrdom of Nigeria-born Muslim Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab who attempted to detonate an explosive device in side Detroit-bound Northwest Airline Flight 253 from Amsterdam. God prevented the bomb from exploding even before some brave passengers jumped on Umar to spare the lives of the 278 passengers and 11 crew members aboard (Komolafe, 2010). Abdulmutalleb may not have acquired his Islamic knowledge in Nigeria but he happens to be the first Nigeria to shamefully elevate the saturated local riots to an act of international Islamic terrorism (Kumolafe, 2010). What this portends for Nigeria is a bad image and possible pariah status in international relations and diplomacy which robs off negatively on global partnership for development, achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other national and international development goals

Another critical implication for development regarding religious violence in Nigeria is the high mortality rate resulting from the reported cases of death. For instance, BEGE Ministries, a non-governmental organization (NGO) which specializes in Muslim/Christian community relations in the West African sub-region, estimates that between 1976 and today Nigeria has lost over 100,000 of its citizens to the crises (Abimboye, 2010). During the planned introduction of Sharia in the North in 2000 over 2,000 died, even though the police tried to down play the figure to 609. The planned hosting of “Miss World” beauty pageant in parts of the North also sparked off violence with the death toll put at over 5,000 by Human right Watch (Abimboye, 2009).

The current raging Boko Haram terrorist bath in Northern cities, especially the June 17 bombing of three churches in Kaduna that evoked reprisal attacks by Christians who have hitherto endured losing relatives and

properties to Boko Haram bombings, have raised the stakes. Human capital is the most important and critical factor of production, economic growth and development. The high mortality arising from the loss of human capital affects negatively Nigeria's productivity, economic growth and sustainable development. Furthermore, women and children are usually the worse victims in violence and wars. Thus, the women and children who survive Boko Haram, are made very vulnerable by societal strictures and pressure, defeating the goal of gender empowerment and gender equality as enunciated in the MDGs. Thus, attainment of the MDGs which would positively impact on lives and livelihoods in Nigeria is made difficult and perhaps impossible.

Another aspect of human capital implication is the issue of brain drain, especially in the North. Generally, no professional or skilled manpower will want to remain in an insecure country or environment to work. In this connection, many professionals have been forced to leave Nigeria or discouraged from coming to work. It is, however, worse or more pronounced in the North. The movement of Nigeria Christians and other nationals has adversely affected the educational and health sectors as thousands of qualified professionals in these fields have fled the affected areas. Today, most of the states in the North lack qualified personnel which made Kaduna State to recruit 12 doctors from Egypt to make up for the loss (Komolafe, 2010). It is on record that the last batch of corps members posted to the North vehemently protested their posting and demanded to be reposted, a request that the Nigeria Youth Service Corp (NYSC) granted. This means that with capital flight disinvestment and lack of potential investors, Nigeria especially the North will continue to wallow in economic and educational backwardness and underdevelopment unless northern elders, politician and leaders join hand to put a stop to the incessant religious crises in the area.

Freedom and respect for human rights and rule of law are core values of development. Boko Haram's Jihad to Islamic Nigeria infringes on these inimitable and immutable values, infringes on freedom of religion, rights of Christians and violates the rule of law as enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution. The Boko Haram Islamic sect is perpetrating the rule of man which makes life 'short, brutish and nasty'. Religion and spirituality are subsumed under culture. Thus, the culture of Southern Christians is being trampled upon and faces extinction if the Boko Haram sect succeeds in their unholy crusade. In this wise, Nigeria would have lost major ethno-religious groups and culture of Nigerian Southern and few Northern Nigerian Christians. This is largely because in Islamic conquest, there are four options (Komolafe, 2010): (a) Kill (through violent Jihad); (b) Die (Jihadists as Martyrs); (c) Dhimmitude (protected slavery); (d) Convert (forceful submission of non-Muslims). Boko Haram are currently doing kill and die. On successful Islamization, fanatical Muslims, politicians and clerics in the North would convert Nigeria into an Islamic State, perhaps with the name – Federal Islamic Sultanate of Nigeria – and politically enslave non-Muslims. In the new "born again" dispensation, old things will pass away and all things will become new simply because a slave does not have an identity except that given by the task master.

Environmentally speaking, bombings and other forms of destruction of lives and properties and infrastructure arising from religious violence produce environmental degradation. It destroys the ecosystem, pollute the land, air and water and contribute to green gas emissions, ozone layer depletion, global warming and climate change with adverse health implications. It violates the current global benchmark and best practice in development which is sustainable development that addresses, integrates and expresses economic, social and environmental concerns and sustainability in development planning and practice for the benefit of present and future generations.

Perspectives for a Nigeria

Nigeria has been described as a failed state by Forbes Magazine (2011). But we do not agree. Nigeria is at worst a failing state. The United State Intelligence Agency has predicted since 2005 that Nigeria risks disintegration and collapse in 2015. Three years to go (2012-2015), events are ominous and religious violence predicated on poor leadership and bad governance, fanaticism, fundamentalism, sophistry and demagoguery seem to be the morbid undertakers. This should not be allowed to happen, Nigeria is salvageable. Government's efforts so far in dealing with religious violence has been reactionary, adhoc and unsustainable. According to Omorogbe and Omohan (2005) Nigerian government have always adopted coercive and judicial methods, comprising of deployment of police and military troops to crises areas and setting up of judicial commission of inquiry, with the twin objectives of containing the crises, punishing perpetrators and making recommendations to forestall future occurrences. But these have hardly worked because troops cause more problems of rape and killing of innocent people, while government most times lack the political will to effect the verdict of judicial commissions because of vested interests, thereby creating more bitterness which creates more orgy of violence. Nigeria can be salvaged if we adopt evolutionary strategies for New Nigeria. Evolutionary strategies are gradual but consistent, evolves from the people and with the people towards reformation, transformation and nation building. In other words, evolutionary strategies are centrifugal and add to the value-chain of sustainable development. In this vein, the first and overarching evolutionary strategy is effective leadership and good governance which forms the fulcrum of all other strategies. During President Barack Obama of the United States official visit to sub-Saharan Africa in Ghana in 2009, he noted that Africa needs strong institutions and not

strong men (Obama, 2009). Effective political leadership and good governance is one of such strong institutions which is the critical need of moment. This can be achieved by political, constitutional and electoral reforms that ensure and enthrone good governance and effective political leadership; irrespective of religion, ethnicity, state geography and gender. It can also be achieved through reforms that encourage and sustain a public policy of devolution of power and resources which will make the centre or Presidency less attractive to greedy selfish politicians and ethno-religious jingoist but more attractive to politicians with a vision for statesmanship, improved human development and sustainable development indicators and a new and greater Nigeria, among the developed countries of the world. Indeed, Nigeria is potentially rich but poor. This can and would change with a strong political leadership and good governance with the political will to do the right thing at the right time in consonance with global benchmarks and best practices pivoted on “participation, inclusion and fulfilling obligations” (DFID, 2002:10). Effective leadership and good governance, equally connotes mainstreaming ethnic-religious sensibilities in government policies and actions, but more importantly, emphasizing through percepts and actions the centrifugal forces that unite us and deemphasizing and deleting the centripetal force of division, prejudice, conflict and violence.

Another major evolutionary strategy is the convening of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) for a constructive and dispassionate dialogue on the present and future destiny of Nigeria. The conference, which will be a town hall meeting, has to be empowered by legal fait so that the decisions, agreements, recommendations and communiqué have to be binding on all Nigerians. The SNC will be on that is participatory, inclusive and obligatory. Indeed, Nigerians can “agree to disagree or disagree to agree” not by violence but by dialogue, without bitterness or rancour. Ethical reorientation, religious and western education is very important in combating religious violence in Nigeria. This can be achieved at the formal, semi-formal and informal level of education, through the right mix of information, education and communication (IEC) kits or packages. The right moral and cultural values including sanctity of life, love, good neighbourliness, being your brothers keeper and peaceful coexistence, the right religious education as an instrument of peace and love and nation building, need to be taught and emphasized. “Literacy for all” in form of Western education that promotes enlightenment and critical thinking and prepares somebody for livelihoods and gainful engagement and employment in life need to be encouraged, taught, emphasized and strengthened. Western education, vocational training and skill acquisition address the twin problems of poverty and illiteracy militating against the North from which the army of Islamic fundamentalists including Boko Haram suicide bombers are enlisted and mobilized. Thus, the government and civil society organizations (CSOs) can use western and religious education, vocational training and skill acquisition to provide enlightenment, emancipation and empowerment, the right values and attitude to life and skills for gainful employment and income generation, productivity, humanness and humanism for self fulfillment in life. All this will serve as a bulwark against idleness, poverty of money and mind, subservience, false Islamic teaching and indoctrination toward life.

It is equally necessary and expedient that Nigeria develops strong institutions of civil society and private sector (businesses) which will be in the vanguard for good leadership and governance and against social problems including religious violence that work at cross-purposes with Nigeria’s corporate existence and sustainable development. CSOs can achieve this by policy inputs and dialogue and the right IEC packages through research, seminars, workshops, conference, lobby groups, memoranda, meeting, peace and civic education, setting up of Interfaith Mediation Centre and Dialogue Forum, Peace Council, National Council of Traditional Rulers, Muslim Christian forum, strikes and protests, and strengthening of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) which is already in existence. The private sector can achieve this by providing resources for proactive and swift reactive security responses to religious and other forms of social unrest because peace and security provide enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

Ethno-religious violence affects everybody including the civil society. The Nigerian Labour Congress, Academic Staff Union of Nigeria Universities, Non-Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (NASU) and other professional labour unions do well when it comes to their wages and welfare. But why can’t they and other human rights professional and women groups and the media mobilize and galvanize resources against ethno-religious violence, poverty, illiteracy and other indices of bad governance and underdevelopment in Nigeria and insist on peace and security and other development deliverables? Why can’t there be a synergy between state and non state actors (Civil Society Organizations and private sector) in strategizing against religious violence? Why can’t the CSOs use protests and strikes to demand for end to ethno religious violence in Nigeria? The African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM) which held in Nigerian between 24th and 27th of July, 2012 is a veritable platform for addressing issues of conflict, crises, insecurity and sustainable peace in Africa especially as it affects vulnerable groups of youth, women, children, and the aged. This forum should be strengthened and stepped down to member-states including Nigeria. After all, women and children including the girl-child are among the vulnerable groups in conflict and crisis situations.

The liberating and humanistic influence of Christianity and Islam is not in doubt. But as good as they are, they undermined, if not destroyed African Traditional Religion (ATR). Apart from some aberrations which were

characteristic of the primitive societies practically all over the world, the fact remains that in normal circumstances in which the people lived, life was sacred and the dignity of the human person was highly respected. Ezeanya (1980:330) posits that ATR holds firmly that both the individual and the nation must believe in the Creator and pay due homage to him in order to survive and enjoy peace and prosperity. It believes that the evils that befall individuals and societies are result of castigation from God and His agents because of man's failure to live up to his obligations as a creature of God.

In ATR, every person acting in private or public life, whether by day or night, or acting on his behalf, another person, group or community, acts in full realization that all eyes are on him – eyes of God, the divinities, spirits, ancestors and community members. He is therefore afraid or reluctant to commit acts of sacrilege because they are instantaneously severely sanctioned by the deities, ancestors and communities. Thus, ATR provides a very efficacious incentive for doing well and avoiding evil. "It is this awareness of the unfailing sanction from the divinities that was responsible for the prevalence of law and order in the traditional society where there were on policemen or soldiers to enforce the laws of the state. Today on the other hand, our nation is plagued with armed robbery, bribery and corruption, embezzlement of public funds, wide spread sexual immorality, cases of murder for various materials ends, indiscipline in schools, shameless desecration of holy places by stealing" (Ezeanya, 1980:331). Unfortunately, religious violence and sectarian suicide bombing has joined the burgeoning legion of vices and social problems in Nigeria. Religious violence and other crises of our society today are borne out of sheer hypocrisy, precepts not matched with practice, neglect of God and our traditional religious values and taking of Gods New Covenant of Grace and Mercy for granted.

One of the saddest mistakes of our growing generation of intellectuals and neo-pagans is to despise our traditional religious and cultural heritage as downright evil and primitive. But we know that an objective appraisal as shown that Nigeria is blest with a precious religious legacy of peaceful coexistence, love and brotherhood. We must go back to recover the rural and spiritual foundations on which our traditional society was built and use them for the task of nation building. The three major religious of Nigeria, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam have a common thread that religion abolition is indispensable recipe for building a happy and stable nation. Each religion has its own specific contribution to make for a united and peaceful Nigeria (Ezeanya, 2008, Ezeanya, 2012, Centre for Islamic Legal Studies, 2005).

Christianity and Islam are foreign religion which we have embraced at the expense of traditional religion. Their adherents and faithful do not practice what they preach, religious violence and other social vices and crises are borne out of sheer hypocrisy, alienation from God and taking God's New Covenant of Mercy and Grace for granted. The land is polluted, the gods are angry. We should return to our roots. Thus, we make a case for the revival of our cultural and religious traditional values and their integration with Christianity and Islam.

Peace building by the government, private sector and civil society is expedient. Conflict is inevitable in human society. Thus, peace is a process involving activities that are directly linked to increasing development and reducing conflict, both within specific societies and in the wider international community. A human society achieves peace when it succeeds in developing a society where the potentials of its citizens are fully rounded (Ibeanu, 2007; Ikejiani-Clark and Ani, 2009). Peace is the prime value in Nigeria today, yet the most elusive. Across the Nigeria divide, there is one form of crisis or the other. There is increasing insecurity of lives and properties climate of fear and blanket of uncertainty. Ibeanu (2007) identifies four forms of the peace process, namely: peace enforcement, peace making, peace keeping and peace building.

Peace building is the most superior of the four, peace building is a situation of low conflict and high prospects for development (Ibeanu, 2007). In the Nigeria context, peace building entails dialogue, consensus building, evolution of a truly Federal Republic of Nigeria; spirit of give-and-take, participation, inclusiveness, tolerance, accommodation, freedom, self-esteem, sustenance, equity, justice, rule of law, exemplary and influential leadership, good governance and enlightened followership. Peace is not static or a condition, but a dynamic constructive process, therefore, there is no end to the search for peace and peace building for that matter.

Offordile (2011) describes religious violence bordering on fundamentalism and fanaticism as sick religiosity. He recommends ecumenism as a therapy for it... "Ecumenism is a movement seeking to achieve world-wide unity among religious through greater cooperation and improved understanding. It is the opposite of sick religiosity. While sick religiosity is the sickness of the mind, a lack of or absence of wholeness, ecumenism is wholeness, trying to see God as God (infinite) and trying to see humans as humans (finite) and realization of our "finitude" (Offordile, 2011:43). Ecumenism can be achieved in Nigeria through love, dialogue, understanding, tolerance and interfaith linkages. This is ecumenism in action.

Administrative and judicial panels of inquiry and government committees are not in short supply in Nigeria. The problem or challenge has always been a full and effective implementation of their recommendations. We are of the view that only a paradigm shift toward effective and full implementation will steam or pointedly deal with the security challenge in Nigeria. In this vein, Ambassador Usman Galtimari Presidential Committee on security challenges in the North and Nigeria at large need to be fully and urgently implemented. The highlights of their recommendations include (Ali, 2012): Giving a life insurance cover and other incentives to security agents,

abolition or granting of indigeneship in all 36 states of the country, intelligence sharing, engagement and cooperation with the United States and other nations with similar terrorism experience, in formal one-on-one discussion between the president and governors and other security stake holders on security matters, abolition of discriminatory practices by state government against some religious sects. The panel inaugurated in august 2012 submitted its final report in September 2012.

A great divide exists between the North and South of Nigeria with respect to level of development in favour of the South. In this vein, we propose a Ministry of Northern Affairs similar to Niger Delta Ministry or the appointment of a Coordinator of Northern Affairs to fast track development of the northern region. This is to address issue of poverty and illiteracy and bad governance by state governments that are the feed mill of violence and other criminality emanating from the north and which constitute danger to the south and the nation at large. Ogbu (2012) articulates and defines the Coordinators's office functions to involve generation of new ideas towards resolving the social and economic divide between the South and the North; coordination/redirection of relevant federal agencies and other partners in the implementation of the new ideas; collaborating with the Northern governors to work on the new model; and building consensus and championing attitudinal and cultural change in the context of the agreed social-economic path.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed leadership and religious violence in Nigeria and articulated its implication for Nigeria's sustainable development. Christianity and Islam, the two religious gladiators have long co-existed in Nigeria without violence. The present increasing orgy of violence seems to have strong political undertone. A group of Northern postgraduates student at the University of Nigeria in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) are of the view that dirty politics has been merged with Islamic religion by some politicians in the north who are using the Almajiris and Talakawas (beggars and poor in the North) as agent of geo-political and religious violence, to express real and imagined grievances. That the religious violence increased with the election of President Goodluck Jonathan, as Southern, is instructive.

President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, while sacking security officials who were culpable in the annoying escape of the suspected mastermind of the Boko Haram Christmas day bombing in different Christian Churches in Nigeria, said that some of the members of his cabinet are suspected to be in sympathy with the Boko Haram, and aided their escape when caught for prosecution (BBC, 2012). This means that there are fifth columnists in government whose private agenda is antithetical to the Federal Government's efforts to bring about peace, security and sustainable development. The government has to deal with this and provide a formidable team for good governance and responsible and responsive leadership. Otherwise, we risk fulfillment of the US intelligence prediction of being a failed state in 2015 because no sectarian or secular group has the mandate and monopoly of violence. Nigeria's transformation and sustainable development has to be driven by a responsible and responsive leadership and healthy religiosity for peace and security.

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