

# Religious Violence and National Security in Nigeria, 1999 – 2011

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## Abstract

Nigeria which is multi-ethnic and multi-religious in nature is faced with religious violence. Religion that supposed to be a unifying factor among several ethnic groups in Nigeria has turned out to be one of the catalysts that are causing destruction of lives and properties due to narrow-mindedness, misunderstanding, fundamentalism and fanaticism of religious adherents. Several political problems take on religious dimensions; manipulated by politics, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance in Nigeria. Violence based on religious affiliation and religious policies have indeed caused physical and psychological damage to several people thereby legitimising religious schism among Nigerians who simply have different religious affiliations. This upheaval threatens the national security of the country. Thus, study will make use of survey methodology in examining the effect of religious violence in Nigeria from 1999 to 2011 and intends to find out how religion which has been the bone of contention can bring peaceful co-existence.

**Keywords:** Religion; Violence; National Security; Christianity; Muslim.

## 1. Introduction

Religious violence in Nigeria has a clear connection with the proliferation of uncompromising Muslim and Christian activism, a relationship that has led to a growing culture of religious violence particularly in northern Nigeria. Before the advent of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, African Traditional Religion, which encompasses several modes of worship to the Supreme Being had been the religion of Africans. It was rare occurrence of religious violence back in the time when Africans worshipped God the indigenous way. Thus, with the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, there ensued violence and agitation for supremacy.

The concept of national security was developed mostly in the United States of America after World War II. Currently, the concept encompasses non-military security such as economic security, energy security, food security etc. Security threats can come in any form. The present security threat in Nigeria is the Boko Haram terrorist attacks on the government and the country at large. Equally, religious violence is a threat to the well-being of the adherents of the religions in Nigeria.

Several political problems take on religious dimensions; manipulated by politics, poverty, illiteracy and ignorance in Nigeria. Violence based on religious affiliation and religious policies has indeed caused physical and psychological damage to several people, thereby legitimizing religious schism among Nigerians who simply have different religious affiliations. Thus, there is a need to look at the factors that are responsible for religious violence in Nigeria since the inception of democracy in 1999 and to find out how religion can bring about peaceful co-existence.

## 2. Perspective on the Implication of Religion and Politics in Nigeria

Religion which has no concise definition is a dominant element in both international and domestic politics. There are three prominent religions in Nigeria: African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity. The last two religions are more dominant and play important role in the daily life of their adherents. Fox (2001) identifies three important characteristics of what role religion plays in international and local politics. First, foreign policies are based on religious views. Secondly, religion acts as a basis for criticizing government decisions both internationally and locally. Thirdly, religious conflicts usually attract both local and international attention. Ellis and Haar (1998:188) add that the relation between religion and politics or between religion and perceptions of the State is rooted in history. In non-western societies like Nigeria, religion tends to have the capacity to be used as a political instrument.

Religion has become an indispensable phenomenon and important factor in political discourse. Scholars like Awolalu (1976:1) argues that religion is a fundamental, perhaps the most important, influence in the life of most Africans; yet, its essential principles are too often unknown to foreigners who thus make themselves constantly liable to misunderstand the African worldview and beliefs. Religion parades into every aspect of the life of the Africans and it cannot be studied in isolation. Its study has to go hand in hand with the study of the people who practice the religion.

Writing from an Islamic perspective, Juergensmeyer (2005:26) argues that Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world, is unique as it incorporates religion and politics and structures the political economy of a nation. Thus, neither can exist without the other. The political economy of religion is that religion everywhere is socially constructed, dynamic and embedded in socio-economic and political power relations, always in the

particular context of specific religious communities. Olomojobi (2013:77) affirms this by stating that Islam as a political religion is concerned with the struggle for political recognition in society. The dynamics of Islam is not uniform to all societies. It could be a struggle against oppression, a struggle for scarce resources, a struggle for recognition for Islamic symbolism or a struggle against westernization and modernity.

Moreover, Awolalu (1976:5) posits that religion is often seen as the cause of violence and instability in Nigeria as the country's northern and southern regions are equally divided along religious fault lines. However, the southwestern religious demographic makes this simple geographical division more complex. There are two schools of thought about the issue of religion and conflict in Nigeria. The first school asserts that religious conflict is a political, economic, and social phenomenon. According to this view, the root of Nigeria's problems lie in its power struggles, not in religion itself. The second school of thought sees religious conflict as a problem of religion qua religion. The notion of religion to Nigerians and Africans tends towards a puritanist ideal that sees religion as an objectification of the sacred.

It is therefore undeniable that life existence is premised on religion. It wields so much power that it offers total explanation for existence and provides guideline for life's pursuits and endeavors. Its effect on some is total and most people think often of religion than they think about sex, and more daily than any other thing. There is no gainsaying the fact that religion controls man, his value and environment. It is no longer news that some people would die for it while acceptance of suffering for it is legendary. Religion, so sensitive and powerful, co-exists with life and its controlling influence on human existence has been used to mar rather than make Nigeria. Thus, religious faithful commit heinous violent crimes and acts such as slaughtering innocent souls and destroying property in the name of their 'god'.

In line with these submissions, Abeysekara (2002:68) cites Prakash's observation that the intermingling of religion and politics characterizes not only the 'backward' Third World but also the 'advanced' First World. This may not be surprising due to the mishandling of religion and politics to the disadvantage of the growth of the third world, in particular, Nigeria where religion and politics are selfishly personalized without proper understanding and used to wreak havoc on individual adherents of different religions. Thus, with over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups, belonging to several religious affiliations, most especially Islam and Christianity, Nigeria has remained a multi-ethnic and pluralistic nation-state since independence. It has been grappling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity on one hand and the problem of ethno-religious/religio-political conflicts on the other hand. This is true because ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to series of conflicts, most especially in the north which have many grave of implications on sustainable development of Nigeria.

### 3. Perspective on Violence

Among scholars, there is no acceptable definition of violence. Violence is viewed from various perspectives. Riches (1986:8) defines violence from an anthropological perspective as "an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses". Riches' definition is compatible with "basic properties" of violence, which have cross-cultural validity, i.e. that the performance of violence requires relatively little by way of specialized equipment or knowledge, that the practice of violence is highly visible to the senses and that, therefore, violence as such is unlikely to be mistaken. Discrepancies in basic understanding amongst those implicated in the performance of a violent act are likely to be minimal. Nevertheless, violence is inherently liable to be contested on the question of legitimacy. Hann (2008) asserts that Riches' incorporation of the concepts of legitimacy and illegitimacy in the definition of violence raises problems because it is unclear how the discrepancy in basic understanding amongst those implicated in the performance of a violent act can be 'likely to be minimal' when an act of violence by definition is deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses.

In an attempt to introduce a more systematic, comprehensive analysis of violence, several propositions have been made for a more extended notion of violence which are defined in a more inclusive way. Two examples of inclusive definitions of violence presented by Barak (2003) and Henry (2000) will be reviewed. Barak (2003) has made an attempt to be conceptually inclusive, i.e. to take into account the full range of harms associated with a variety of interpersonal, institutional, and structural relationships and behaviors and to not exclude any form and expression of violence, whether they refer to individual acts, institutional arrangements or structural conditions as well as whether or not they are prohibited by law. To this end, he adopts a definition of violence as "any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or non-physical harm to one or more persons" (Iadicola & Shupe, 1998: 26; quoted in Barak, 2003: 26).

In a similar vein, Henry (2000:3-5,116) suggests that a more inclusive, integrated definition of violence is necessary, which replaces the term 'force' with 'power' and takes a more comprehensive view of harm. Violence is thus defined as "the use of power to harm another, whatever form it takes". In this case, harm is not only physical pain and suffering. It can also occur along many dimensions beyond the physical to include psychological or emotional, material or economic, social or identity, moral or ethical, and so on. Within each

dimension, the harm can be of two kinds: ‘harms of reduction’ and ‘harms of repression’ (Henry and Milovanovic, 1996:103). Harms of reduction remove something from a person’s existing status as a human being. For instance, physical harms or reduction produce bodily pain or loss (of blood, organs, limbs, physical functioning). Material harms of reduction threaten or downgrade some of the person’s economic status (property, wealth, money). Psychological harms of reduction have destructive effects on the human mind and weaken a person’s emotional or mental functioning (such as in posttraumatic stress syndrome). Social and symbolic harms of reduction lower a person’s social status (by violating their human rights, sexuality or social identity). Moral or ethical harms of reduction corrupt standards of concern for the well-being of others (as in hate, pressure to cheat, and the like). In contrast, harms of repression reveal how the exercise of power acts to systematically limit another person’s capability of achieving higher levels of accomplishment along any of these dimensions. Violence, then, is the exercise of power over others by some individual, agency, or social process that denies those subjects of their humanity either by reducing them from what they are or by limiting them from becoming what they might be.

After looking at the concept of violence from the perspective of inclusive and restrictive definitions, Hann (2008:29-33) came to the conclusion that depending on the contexts of discovery and justification, valid arguments are feasible for either inclusive or restrictive definitions of violence. Any definition of violence, however, should be considered as a temporary outcome of theoretical debate – an outcome which may or may not prove to be useful in future research.

Exploring diversity of definitions is useful in understanding violence from a religious perspective. Religious violence in Nigeria has caused not only physical pain but also psychological, emotional, material, economic and social loss. In addition, according to Henry and Milovanovic, it has caused harms of reduction and repression. Many people have been dehumanized, lost their wealth and source of livelihood to intermittent religious conflicts in several parts of the northern states. Religious violence has weakened their emotional or mental proper functioning. The exercise of power and domination by Hausa-Fulani indigenes in the north on the settlers limit the latter from achieving their utmost potential.

#### **4. Overview of National Security**

The concept of national security could be widely interpreted to mean many similar things or situations by different scholars and analysts. The issue of national security is a very important one to any nation. This is because a nation’s state in terms of her peoples’ well-being economically, socially, politically, internationally and so on is greatly influenced by her standing in the matter of national security. The citizens, groups, institutions, corporate organizations and the country in its entirety are security conscious. It is in the nature of man to always try to safeguard his physical body, property and even his interests because he needs to do so in order to remain alive, be significant and also protect his acquisitions. A nation, on the other hand, also needs to protect itself from both internal and external forces that try to undermine or harm its collective interests, sovereignty, independence, integrity, as well as its citizens wherever they may be in the world. This is why Nigeria cannot afford to be indifferent or uninterested in issues bothering on their national interest, particularly, national security. To understand the meaning of the phrase national security, it is expedient to examine the meaning of the two words that constitute it. First, the word national is defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995), as related to as a whole nation, relation as opposed to other nations, someone who is a citizen of a particular country but living in another country. Again, Funk and Wagnall’s Standard Desk Dictionary (1993) more explicitly defines national as, of, belonging to, or representative of a nation as a whole; characteristic of or peculiar to a nation. Between the above definitions, the latter is relevant and apt to the definition of national security in the paper. On the other hand, the latter dictionary defines security as the state of being secure; freedom from danger, poverty, etc. Hornby (1995) defines security as protection—the activities involved in protecting a country, building, or person against attack, danger etc. It also in a simple and apt way, defines national security as the defense of a country. Putting the words national and security side by side for a more comprehensive description is attainable. National security can then be described as the sum of the efforts, energy, intelligence, commitment and the use of institutions (and their products) to enforce and ensure adequate protection of interests, people and properties of a nation. It also involves the overall protection of a nation’s integrity and sovereignty. On a wider scope, national security may be too complex to be captured in one definition because of its meaning in content and implications.

National security encompasses the sum of what a nation does in order to safeguard itself as a sovereign entity and this includes every aspect of a nation’s life and existence. It then means that national security of a nation can extend to the well-being of its citizens, institutions, interests, development plans, economy etc. Considering the meaning of, and implications associated with national security, it is important to state that it is a matter that bothers on the posture, well-being, stability and development of a nation. It defines the whole essence of a nation’s efforts in its socio-political, cultural, economic and international affairs. Therefore, the issue of national security is one that expresses the status of a nation in terms of its standing in the globe, in areas like

citizen protection, freedom and well-being, property and intelligence safety, national integrity, sovereignty protection and protection of international interests. All these gear towards the overall stability and peaceful coexistence of the citizens of the nation as well as that of the nation at the global level. National security is one element that can adequately help to promote democracy and in time foster good governance (which brings socio-economic development) in a nation. A nation that fails to place priority on its national security will eventually become a failed state.

In line with the aforementioned, the foremost national security issue in Nigeria is the Boko Haram activities. Since 1960, most threats to national security in Nigeria have been internal rather than external. Within this period (1999 – 2011), the country faced several internal security threats, most especially in the northeastern part of the country. Afeno (2012:40) argues that the Boko Haram uprising is not only a security issue. It has also exposed the weakness of governance in the country. Ultimately, responsibility for security rests with the government. The political leadership has failed to transparently use public resources to reduce poverty and prevent all forms of socio-economic and political exclusions as a way of averting human insecurity. The Boko Haram uprising is primarily the result of the failure of successive governments in Nigeria to fight corruption, provide public services, create economic opportunities and establish accountable and effective security institutions. Thus, United States of America Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton avers that “The most immediate source of disconnect between Nigeria’s wealth and its poverty is the failure of governance at the federal, state and local levels”. Boko Haram therefore provides a platform for unemployed youth and disgruntled persons to attack a system they believe is largely responsible for their plight.

### **5. Religious Violence from 1999 – 2011**

According to Olomjobi (2013:150-151), Nigeria witnessed its first religious conflict in 1945 in Jos, Plateau State when Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group (AG), in March, 1953, on the floor of the Federal House of Representative, Lagos, moved a motion for Self Government to take effect by 1956. The motion failed due to the opposition members of the House, representing the northern part of the country. The north was ill-disposed to independence at that time because of fear of domination by the south due to the socio-economic backwardness of the north. The people of Lagos, who were mainly AG supporters, ridiculed the north as colonial stooges. The northern payback time came in the form of Kano riots of 1953. The conflict which was instigated by a perceived grievance towards the Yoruba (a divided blend of Muslims and non-Muslims) turned towards the Igbo (mainly non-Muslims). Though, ethnocentric in nature, the religious divide between the two parts of the country involved in this political altercation leans itself to the demarcation of place and space between religious identities. The riot was a religious inspired political conflict due to the religious divide between the Muslims in the north and the Christians in the south. From this moment onward, Nigeria has been witnessing much political, ethnic and religious violence from time to time. Of course, much political and ethnic violence do end up as religious violence because we place strong identity on religious affiliation than any other form of identity.

Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented number of conflicts arising from mostly religious-based disputes since 1999. It is estimated that since the transition to civilian rule in May 1999, not less than ten thousand lives have been lost to religious-based violence. Many of these conflicts were basically between Christians and Muslims, although there have been cases where members of the same sect engaged in violent conflicts because of different interpretations of the holy books. The emergence of a democratic Nigeria in May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Mair (2000:154) emphasizes that before Obasanjo came to power in 1999, Islam was the religion of power in Nigeria. Obasanjo won the election due to the large support he received from the north. On his assumption of office as president, the debate on Sharia law came to the limelight.

Sharia law has been in use in Nigeria before its reintroduction in the fourth republic. Olomjobi (2013:130) argues that Sharia law was administered in the twelfth and fifteenth centuries in the Kanem Bornu Empire and Hausa regions before Nigeria was colonized by the British. Moreover, Sharia law was administered in northern Nigeria through the Native Authority in the 1950s until 1960, just before the independence. Kukah (2003) adds that it was in 1979 that non-Muslims outside the north appeared to have heard of the Sharia for the first time. During the debate on the draft constitution for the new republic, members of the National Assembly stumbled on a clause in the draft, which states as follows:

1. There shall be a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal, which shall be an intermediate Court of Appeal between the States’ Sharia Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Nigeria.
2. The Court shall be composed of a Grand Mufti and whatever number of Muftis (not less than three) the National Assembly shall prescribe.
3. In each State of the Federation that so desires there shall be a Sharia Court of Appeal to be established by the Constitution of the State.

With this understanding, Christians in the National Assembly were united in purpose to stand against the endorsement of Sharia law. Likewise, the Muslim members stood their ground to see it become law. After negotiations, a sub-committee was set up, which finally tabled a draft proposal for the members to consider. This

draft was accepted and duly inserted in the proposed constitution. It stated that, instead of having a separate Federal Sharia Court of appeal, which might appear to be at par with the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court should comprise some members that are learned in Islamic law to hear appeals from State Sharia Courts of Appeal. Though, this proposal was accepted, later events revealed that religion has penetrated into Nigerian politics in a powerful way than ever before. The Muslims on the one hand seem to have braced up to pursue the Sharia issue and to implement it in the entire Federation while the Christians, on the other hand, were on the alert and resolute about devising ways to foster solidarity among themselves in resistance to feared attempts at the Islamization of Nigeria. Finally, religion became a strong factor that could not be waved aside in policy making. The adoption of Sharia law led to brutal killings in the northern region.

With the return of Nigeria to democracy on May 29, 1999, the stage was set for the amplification of Islamization of politics, not only in the north, but in the entire country. That was why Dickson (2008) states that:

Islamic fundamentalism acquired a more pronounced political edge as the national fortunes of the governing Muslim national elite declined dramatically with the election of President Obasanjo, a born-again Christian from the South. After playing a major, often dominant role in the government and military for almost forty years, northern Muslims felt sidelined. Among the reasons for these sentiments was Obasanjo's removal of politicized military officers, who were disproportionately Muslim.

This led to the implementation of Sharia law in twelve states, beginning with Zamfara State which took effect from January 27, 2000. There was strong opposition by the non-Muslims against this law which led to the destruction of lives and properties. Ukiwo (2003:124) quoting the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) avers that "the attempted introduction of the Sharia legal system by states in the federation might therefore be an attempt to checkmate what they consider to be a Christian threat". Dickson (2008) aligns with IDEA by noting that to the political elite, the spread of Sharia was as a result of Nigerian Muslims' desire to re-emphasize their political prerogative into what they perceived as a newfound southern non-Muslim political hegemony.

However, Olomjobi (2013:127) observes that the paradox of the Sharia protagonist was exposed when the former Governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Sani Yerima suspended the implementation of Sharia for a day in his state for the marriage of one of his children. Also, he offered over \$800 million as a gift to any state adopting Sharia legal code as practised by Arab countries. Although, it was stated that when Yerima was reviewing his eight-year tenure as governor, he expressed regrets for implementing Sharia in the state due to the violence that ensued across northern Nigeria. This shows how religion was politicized by the elite to the detriment of the poor and the non-Muslims which led to several cases of political, communal, ethno-religious and religious crises across the country from 1999 to 2008.

In 2009, Nigeria started to witness the activities of a group called Boko Haram. Boko Haram is a controversial fundamental Islamist group that seeks the imposition of Sharia law not only in the northern states but the entire country. The official name of the group is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which in Arabic means "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad". The literal translation is "Association of Sunnis for the propagation of Islam and for Holy War". It became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009. Boko Haram opposes not only Western education, but Western culture and modern science as well. The group came into existence in the 1960's, but only started to draw attention in 2002. Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf became the leader in the same year with over 540,000 followers, majorly unemployed youths otherwise known as the *talakawa* (grassroots people/peasants) and *almajirai* (students Qur'anic schools). In 2004, the sect moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, where they set up a base called "Afghanistan". Boko Haram regards the Nigerian state as being run by non-believers. Since the Sokoto Caliphate ruled parts of what is now northern Nigeria, its political goal was to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state and its base to a recruiting ground for jihadist to fight the state. Several attacks have been launched by this sect, most especially in the northern region of Nigeria. Several denotations of bombs were recorded in many Churches and Mosques in the north.

Olomjobi (2013:223-224) notes that the immense paradox confronting Boko Haram was that each member had to contribute a levy of one naira daily. This amounted to a whopping #16 million a month. Thus, Muhammad Yusuf took advantage of the prevailing socio-economic conditions which are prevalent in northern Nigeria. The northeast Nigeria is one of the country's poorest regions. Most of the country's wealth is concentrated in the central and southwestern states. Also, some of their members are from neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Niger and Chad. This was made possible due to the porous state of Nigeria borders with about 480 irregular border crossings in its 4,500 kilometer borders with Niger and Chad. Since 2009, Boko Haram has unleashed unprecedented violence on persons in numerous places across Nigeria.

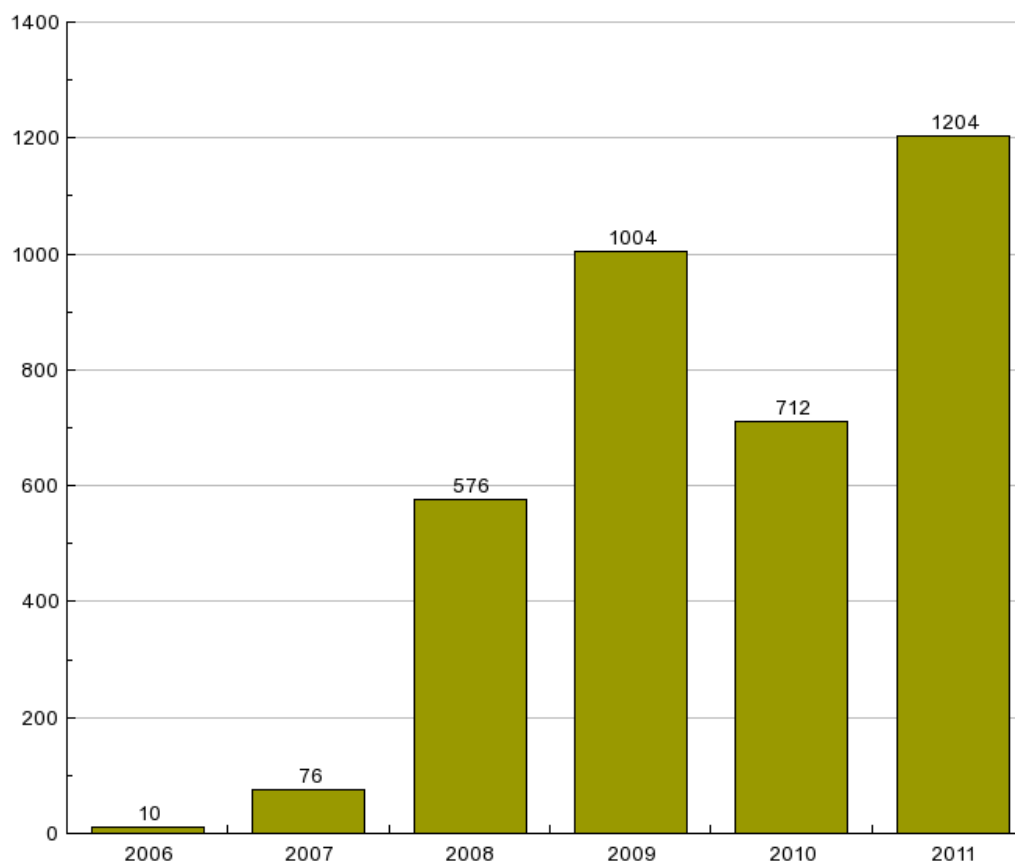


Figure 1: The number of people killed in Boko Haram-related fighting from 2006 to 2011

Source: Nigeria Watch

While about 1,204 Nigerians have been killed in Boko Haram violence from 2006 to 2011, countless more have been wounded. More importantly, women and children are major casualties in violence situation. It is important to conclude by affirming what Olomjobi (2013:154&255) said in suggesting that the basis of the ongoing religious crises in contemporary Nigeria is deeply rooted in the country's ontological and historical inheritance as a state. Also, it is due to perceived grievance in respect of economic stagnation, youth unemployment and disempowerment in the northern part of Nigeria.

## 6. Factors responsible for Religious Violence

Religious violence has become a defining personality of Nigeria and her politics since independence. Kukah (1993:9) argues that both Islam and Christianity are straddled across the Nigerian polity, each no longer knocking and pleading to be admitted, but seeking to take over the architectural design and construction of the Nigerian polity. Thus, religion has been politicized and politics has been religionized in which it is difficult to find a line of demarcation between the two entities. Religion that has bound us together in two strands has caused much damage than good in northern Nigeria.

Several factors responsible for religious violence in Nigeria have been identified in the literature (Omotosho 2003; Gofwen 2004; Iwara 2006; Salawu 2010; Sampson 2012). Whereas most of these causes conflate, emphasis in the literature is on the underlying socio-political, economic and governance factors that gestate not only religious conflicts, but violent conflicts in Nigeria generally. In this paper however, the focus is on the immediate and visible factors that generate religious violence.

**Personalization of religion:** In non-western countries, people find it convenient to identify themselves through religion in terms of dressing, name or conversation. With the introduction of modernity, there was an increased amount of religious consciousness and personalization. In Nigeria, most especially in the north, identity is based on primordial factors such as ethnicity, nation, race, language and religion. These primordial factors separate an individual from another. Religion, which is one of the most important primordial factors have led to personalization among the same citizens of different ethnicity, nation and language in Nigeria.

In the northern part of Nigeria, there are two distinct religions that are personalized, Islam and Christianity. The majority of the citizens are Muslims while the minorities are mostly Christians. This has generated discrimination by the majority against the minority. That is why Gurr (1993) argues that discrimination against an ethnic minority provides the basis for the minority to form an opposition to protest and

terminate the perceived discrimination. Fox (2000) aligns with Gurr by stating that religious factors are capable of giving rise to discrimination and grievances, which can give rise to ethnic and religious conflicts. In a nutshell, religion personalization can lead to religious discrimination and ultimately degenerate to extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism. Why? When religion is personalized, adherents tend to see their religion as superior to another which forms a strong mark in their mind to fight and die for their religious beliefs and use religion to justify the use of violence. This is the true picture of religious violence in Nigeria.

**Religious conversion:** Religious adherents of both Islam and Christianity in Nigeria believe that their religion is not only superior but possess salvation for one's soul and the enjoyment of life after death. This is done by preaching religious conversion. Jenkins (2002) argues that the mechanism of religious conversion has the capacity to promote rivalry and shift the demographic balance between adherents of different religions within a state. Thus, religious conversion can bring about demographic shift and cause religious violence. Although, Boko Haram may not be able to account for religious conversion as a factor for religious violence because their activities have shifted from persecuting Christians to Muslims that they believe are not true believers of Islam. However, religious conversion is a significant threat to Muslims in the north who are dominant citizens in the area.

**Isolated settlement and heterogeneous state:** Olomjobi (2013:6&76) asserts that Islamic faith is largely practiced in the northern region of Nigeria in sixteen States: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Jigawa, Nassarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. Three states, Benue, Plateau and Taraba have a Muslim minority while Kano, Kastina and Sokoto are historically centers of Islamic education and missionary activities. He notes that commercial activities and the existence of profitable opportunities in agriculture and trade, including the railway system and the establishment of federal institutions across the north led to the increased influx of other ethnic groups from other parts of Nigeria to the north. Instead of the indigenes of the north to allow other ethnic groups to settle wherever they found space, they are stationed to a particular territory called Sabon Gari quarters (strangers' quarters) across the north. This is so because the practice of Islam which is based on Sharia law divides men into two groups: those belonging to the *Umma* and those outside the Community. This brings us to the issue of heterogeneous states. Wimmer, 2003; Fox, 2000 and Gurr, 1993 argue that the initial stages of establishing a democratic order in a heterogeneous state are likely to produce ethnic and religious conflicts. Nigeria, which is a heterogeneous state have witness more religious and ethnic crises since 1999. Thus, separate settlement and heterogeneous states give room for contention between the indigenous Muslim and the immigrants especially those that belong to non-Islamic faith.

**Religious hegemony:** Both Islam and Christianity adherents fight for dominance of their religious faith. However, Islamic religion does not only unite ethnic groups but also dominate the northern part of Nigeria. Along this line, Lincoln (2003) argues that religious conflict arises when the 'religion of the status quo' is used as a source of domination over 'religions of resistance'. This, in the long run, can result in religious conflict between the dominant majority and the dominated religious minorities. Hence, while Islam is the 'religion of the status quo', Christianity is the 'religion of resistance'.

**Unemployment/Illiteracy:** Youth unemployment and illiteracy are no doubt major problems in Nigeria, threatening its national security, considering the inability of the government to adequately engage the teeming youth population to be productive. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), statistics show that unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.9 % during the first half of the year 2011. In addition to the already daunting statistics of over 43 million unemployed youth, an additional 1.8 million people joined the long queue. This was attributed to fresh entrants to the job market and worker layoffs across all sectors of the economy in the year (Afolabi, 2013:2). Also, of the 100 million Nigerians living in abject poverty, those who can afford essentials of food, shelter and clothing — the majority reside in the northern states. The north-west has the highest poverty rate with 70% of its people living below \$1 per day. The north-east follows with 69% and the north-central with 59.5%. The three southern zones have no cause to rejoice either as poverty level there ranges between 49.8% and 58.7%. This shows the level of frustration of unemployed youth who have constituted a threat to the national security of the State because invariably, an idle hand is the devil's workshop. Hence, the alarming rate of youth unemployment impact on the level of insecurity in the country whereby youths are involved in terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, theft and also as an instrument for religious violence.

## 7. Mechanism for Peace in Religious Violence

Paden (2005:29) argues that the first step in conflict resolution and mediation is to analyze the nature and dynamics of the grassroots conflicts, then to assess the human resources available for the conflict mitigation, including the capacity of traditional civic cultures to adapt to new conflict challenges. This is an important mechanism of bringing peace in religious violence due to the fact that conflict is fuelled with resources which can be used to bring sustainable peace and development in the society. However, it is important to note that strategies used in curtailing conflict differ from one culture to the other.

Moreover, resources should be distributed evenly across the country. Nigeria is too rich to be among the

poorest country in the world. The wealth of the country is more concentrated to few individuals and this lead to abject poverty of large percentage of Nigerian citizen in which the gap between the rich and poor is wide. One of the root causes of religious violence is the poverty level in the country, most especially in the north. The poor in the north are the unemployed youth, miscreants, the *talakawa* and the *almajirai*. Olomjobi (2013:274) argues that in northern Nigeria, the root of religious clashes could be traced to class struggles and resources control. In social terms, the lack of economic independence for the young generation leads to denial of economic welfare such as housing and the lack of access to justice. This leads to the lack of education, producing disadvantaged adults, which leads to the tendency to commit crimes.

In addition, the government should reduce the level of illiteracy by providing education to the teeming youth, most especially in the north where there is high rate of illiteracy. Also, they should imbibe the culture of accountability, good governance and bring the dividends of democracy to the grassroots by improving their quality of lives through economic empowerment. More importantly, they should be alert to early warning signals of conflict so as to prevent it early enough before it escalates.

Moreover, religion can bring about peace where religious violence thrives by stressing the importance of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Though this might not go down well with some Muslims who view such tolerance as sacrilegious, but this can be done by various religious leaders in teaching their followers that both Islam and Christianity accommodates plurality of religious faiths. The government should take the responsibility to orientate the populace while the press should use their resources to curtail conflict by promoting inter-faith programmes and revealing areas of inter-faith harmony.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a need to understand the etymology of peace which is derived from the Latin word *pax*; meaning *agreement or contract*. For peace to reign therefore, there is a need for agreement or contract between and among diverse religions, ethnic groups, languages, race, color, political parties etc. It is the people that would determine when and how they want peace in a given society. In a nutshell, if the spirit of true patriotism is instilled in the heart of every citizen of Nigeria, the rate of religious violent would be reduced to a minimal level.

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