

## **REMINISCING THE PROXIMATE TRIGGERS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: A REMEDY**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on recalling the history and immediate causes of ethno-religious and political violence in Nigeria. It observes that even though religion plays a pivotal role in triggering violence in Nigeria, other factors play a vital role. It outlines some dangers of ethno-religious and political violence to the Nigerian socio economic and political development and existence. The study submits that if Nigeria must survive from the dangers of ethno-religious and political violence, Nigerian leaders must adopt superior humanistic ideologies that will ensure mutual respect, beneficial relationships, justice, equity and fairness to everybody.*

### **Introduction**

Majority of the news emanating from the country recently tilts more towards the outbreaks of intra and inter-ethnic and religious violence. It has resulted in death of millions of people and destruction of property worth billions of naira. From the opinion of Kukah (2010), there are the historical hangovers of mutual suspicion stemming from decades of mutual hostility, political victimization and marginalization, unguarded statements and infringements on people's rights and freedom. The quests to either enforce or deny these rights among the adherents of two dominant religions in Nigeria have overwhelmingly underpinned the outbreaks of violence in the garb of religion across the country. For example, Nwanaju (2008) cites incidents where some discontented sects in Islam reoriented themselves and engaged in wars especially the Tijaniya and Qadiriya sects who fought over mosques across the northern Nigeria (p.239). Oloyede (2000) argues that the decision to expand the sharia into the Nigerian legal system was though a legitimate move reopened a sustained hostility and violence in Nigeria (p.156). After many churches have been burnt in Taraba and Benue states, two Catholic priests and over seventeen other worshippers were gruesomely murdered in Gwer local government of Benue state during a mass celebration, Nigerian Christians under the aegis of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) took to the street on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 to protest against the killings. Being conscious of the ethno-religious and political configuration of Nigeria, it is almost like a timed bomb. The humanitarian tragedy in terms of the

loss of lives and property in this chain of violent encounters is summarily unimaginable. In view of this precarious situation, Soyinka according to Emejo (2017) warns that, "If we do not tame religion in Nigeria, religion will kill us. Many Nigerians have paid the ultimate price because of religion and religion is now embedded in our society."

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts the Functionalist and Conflict theories in explaining the cohesive and progressive functions expected of ethnicity and religion to the society and the dangers when it works to the contrary. Iruonagbe (2013) avers that Durkheim one of the proponents of Functionalist theory believes that social life is impossible without the shared values and moral beliefs that form the collective conscience. The absence of the aforementioned threatens social order, social control, social solidarity or cooperation and the unity of the people (p.5). Coser (1956), one of the disciples of the foremost originator of the conflict theory, Karl Marx, said that conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals (p.3). Ani (2012) affirms that conflict manifests as products of interactions amongst human beings and groups who plot to outwit others (p.158). This theory is used because it implies that conflict is generated by the quests to protect one's identity and maximize one's interest. Functionalist theory is employed because religion is one of the factors that a society needs to properly function. Therefore, the society will be in danger if religion refuses to perform or functions negatively. It is used to highlight the dangers of how a dysfunctional religion can retard the growth and progress of the Nigerian state.

### **Some Proximate Triggers Of Ethno-Religious And Political Violence In Nigeria**

There are several proximate triggers of ethno-religious and political violence in Nigeria and they include: failed leadership, execrable colonial policy, the fall-outs from foreign politics, the formation of ethno-religious and socio-politically inclined associations, unguarded, flippant and selfish political and religious utterances, the culture of mixing religion with politics, drippy poverty, structured injustice and the culture of impunity, systemized corruption discrimination and desire for equality, State mismanaged responses, the quest for a Nigerian Islamic or Christian state, the subjective idea of hereafter, mutual suspicion and fear: lack of prosecution and trivialization of early warning,

inciting media hype, intra/interdenominational misunderstanding. These factors will be briefly discussed.

**Failed Leadership:** The effects or otherwise of leadership have been topical in human history. For instance, many people share the view that Luther appeared at the right time during the Reformation but Hillerbrand (1968) notes that the body of clergy at that time had lived in luxury and splendor. It was a paradox of a church whose purpose should have been to nourish the spiritual needs of its flock. Luther offered an alternative that was appealing and the German peasants in the land flocked to Luther's camp. He opines that even when Luther was not disposed to the revolution and wished to avoid social rebellion as seen in his *An Admonition to Peace*, the masses forced the revolution on him (pp.62-90). In the Nigerian case, Achebe (1983) categorically said that the problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely failure of leadership (p.1). For example, to buttress Achebe's position, the study tries to analyze the origin of Boko Haram regarded as one of the greatest problems confronting Nigeria. Fabiyi and Akasike (2016) state that the Borno State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Kaka Lawan, asserts that Boko Haram was a creation of Ali Modu Sheriff, the former governor of the state (p.5). Like some other long held notions, he explained that Sheriff established and funded the groups initially as ECOMOG which he used for elections in Borno and one of them, Alhaji Buji Fai, who Gusau (2009), avers was made a Commissioner of Water Resources and later Religious Affairs under Amodu Sheriff led government (p.6). When he fell out with them, they metamorphosed into the deadly Boko Haram. Many reports have it that at a point people trooped en mass to join the militants because the leadership of the groups provided leadership respites for the people. Many Nigerians are yet to come to term to why the indigenes of Dapchi would be singing the praises of Boko Haram as the terrorists drove into the community to return some of the girls they abducted from school. According to Audu (2016), Boko Haram gave loans and huge aids to many youths and people in the northeastern Nigeria (p.5). By this act, Boko Haram has taken the place of government in the lives and existence of these people. If the governments have carried out their welfare responsibilities as enshrined in the 1999 constitution these militias would have not enticed these youths. The failure of government in this regard amounts to leadership failure.

The leadership problem in Nigeria cuts across every type and strata of leaders. There has been a disconnect between the leaders and the people thereby giving

the masses the only alternative of resorting to religions. Naturally, people tend to defend wherever their interests are provided and because religion provides some of these basic needs ostensibly overlooked by the government, many Nigerians are ready to defend their religions instead of the country. The insatiable quests of these rulers to siphon the national patrimony have beclouded their sense of responsibilities thus creating the avenue for uneven distribution of the nation's wealth. Many of these politico-economic bourgeois build mansions and allowed cockroaches and weeds to inhabit them while a large percentage of the people live under the bridges and public motor parks. While most of the people are living without meals, many of these economic and political rulers eat and throw their leftovers into the dustbin to show off their status. While many Nigerians are queuing for the problem-prone public transports to catch up with official appointments, these few rulers have all classes of vehicles in their garages and sometimes including jets which they will not finish using all in their life time. Generally, leadership is responsible for whatever happens in any society.

**Execrable Colonial Policy:** Prior to the arrival of the colonialists, Islam had penetrated several parts of the northern Nigerian. While the Southern part of Nigeria received Christianity, the Northern part maintained its Islamic dominance. Salmone (1991) posits that the colonial officers feared that missionary activities and their attitudes would rupture their dubious alliance with the Fulani rulers. Therefore, for political expediency, the British prevented European missionaries from operating in the North (pp.54-55). Kelly (1968) stressed that this religious tension and dichotomy existed in Nigeria throughout the colonial period and it laid the foundation of religious crises (pp-26-28). In the same vein, Achebe (2012) points out that the colonialists inserted corruption into Nigerian system especially the electoral fraud and greed. In his view, he said that at the Nigerian independence these colonialists rigged the elections that produced Tafawa Balewa who they believed would protect their interests. They lived in reserved areas known as European Quarters which is typical of today's Government Reserved Areas (GRA) where amenities were provided while the masses were regarded as unfit and unworthy to enjoy social amenities. As soon as they handed reign over to Nigerians, these Nigerians continued from where the Europeans stopped and even became worse (pp.50-ff). Little wonder why monies budgeted for construction of roads, schools, health care and other social amenities are stolen by the privileged Nigerians to the detriment of the people. Hence, their children can study abroad or the best learning centers around, their medics are done abroad even their meals are imported and in a bid to maintain

the tastes of their status, they indulge in all manners of malpractices and frauds. Therefore, the political inequality between the North and the South as created by the Colonial Masters is seriously responsible for some of the violence in Nigeria.

**The Fall-outs of Foreign Politics:** This has to do with foreign powers who for whatever reason have developed vested interest in Nigerian socio-economic politics. They can collaborate with some disgruntled elements in Nigeria to destabilize the country to achieve their interest. For instance, Uwechue (2003) states that during the Nigerian civil war, many countries of the world such as France and Portugal supported the Biafra side (p.93). Clarke and Linden (1982) affirm that the Maitatsine riot of 1980 was heavily linked to late Col. Mummar Gaddafi. Agencies like MOSSAID, the Israeli's intelligent agency, Iran, Pakistan and other foreign nationals have had hands in the riot in Nigeria (p.108). Haynes (2003) is of the view that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya's ability to influence her neighbour's domestic politics with the fall of oil revenue in 1980s was another reason for the rise of religious violence in Nigeria (p.132). Wakili (2013) confirms that Boko Haram has foreign links with other terrorists' organizations such as Al-Qaida and ISIS (p.11). These foreign sponsors and supporters make them better equipped and enhanced to unleash terror against the Nigerians and the state.

**The Formation of Ethno-Religious and Socio-Politically Inclined Associations:** Prior to and at the Nigerian independence, most of the Nigerians were high expectants of a favourable society. Ethnicism could be seen as relationship, concern, favour or regard shown to a person or people because of common language, culture and origin. Both scholarship and experience may not have come to a general agreement regarding the exact number of Nigeria's multi-ethnic groups but often there is the idea of the ethnic tripod consisting of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The rest are generally referred to as the minority groups. The issues of minority questions have permeated the country's landscape since the colonial period and some measures were initiated such as the setting up of the Willink Commission and Federal Character Commission. Kukah (2003) stresses that the concept of Quota System as a policy was adopted in the recruitment of persons into the officers' corps of the armed forces, the police as well as admissions into educational institutions (pp.35-64). However, Bako (1997) avers that tribalism was the monster that killed the Nigerian first Republic (p.284). Some of the religious organizations formed in Nigeria include: the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), national Christian Elders Forum (NCEF) and Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (SCIA), Jam'tu Nasril Islam (JNI) among

others. Afenifere, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are some of the organizations formed based on ethnic lines.

Arguably, the sense of security which is the most sought need of man is one of the triggers of ethnicism. The general security of an individual dictates the person's actions and inactions. Owing to the failures of the Nigerian state to live up to its responsibility to the general welfare of the citizen, many citizens have secured relative security in their ethnic climes. Thus they are ready to use whatever they have at their disposal to defend their religious and ethnic groups. The formations of ethnic, religious and sectional associations have through their statements, positions on critical national issues and general attitudes brought the unity of Nigeria to question. This is because their armies of followers swallow their utterances without any doubt.

**Unguarded, Flippant and Selfish Political and Religious Utterances:** This is a short but profound conversation between Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, leader of NCNC and Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the leader of NPC which took place in the mid-1960s portrays the attitudes of Nigerian leaders. According to Paden (1986), Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe said to Sir Ahmadu Bello, "Let us forget our differences"... But Bello responded, "No, let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. You are a Christian, an Easterner" (pp.66-98). Historically, the inflammatory and unguarded utterance fuelled the Nigerian Civil War and Omenka (2009) captured the inciting utterances of some leaders thus:" Let no one deceive you this is a war between Muslims and Christians and anyone who says the war is not a religious war is either ignorant or extremely malicious" (p.51). This is not only provoking but also inciting and damaging.

In the heat of the 1976-1979, constitutional debate, Clarke and Linden (1982) posit that the leaders' unguarded utterance almost set the country on fire (p.80). Iwuchukwu (2010), Usigbe (2012) Binniyat (2012) and Amanambu (2013) gave the litanies of unguarded utterances of religious and political leaders especially in 2011 and the danger they posed to the survival of Nigeria. Ajuluchukwu (1989) sums it up that an ordinary Nigerian knows nothing about inter-religious cleavages except when incited by their respective doctrinal and political leaders (p.112). Imagine the fate of a country where its leaders who are seen as priests and politicians by their followers make these inciting utterances. They are licenses for religious and ethnic violence.

**The Culture of Mixing Religion with Politics:** There have been constant debates among scholars on the mixture of religion and politics in a society like Nigeria. Falola (1998) notes that religion and politics have been bedfellows before and throughout Nigeria's history (p.1). In other words, right from the amalgamation of Nigeria, the mixtures of religion and politics has existed. The mixture was more pronounced during the coups, counter coups and Nigerian civil war. Omenka (2009) argues that the 1966 coup d'état in Nigeria was given a religious colouration via the press and radio with the handy term "Moslem North and Christian East". The terms were coined so as to achieve ethno political agenda. He wondered how the Nigerian civil war could be said to be between Christian Igbo and Hausa Fulani Muslims when the composition of the army then showed that the Head of state was a Christian and son of a Methodist minister from overwhelming middle belt Christians (p.79).

The Nigerian state according to Clarke and Linden (1982), later realized the deadly impact of religious issues on politics following the virulent and provocative debates it generated in the 1977-78 Constitutional Conference (p.91). Onaiyekan (2000) affirms that some top-level politicians who want to pursue a particular cause often hire people to do the fighting for them under the guise of religious crises (p.76). The danger of politicized religion and *religionised* politics is indeed unimaginable in a heterogeneous society. For instance, the incursion of military into the Nigerian polity as noted by Bako (1997) led to the high commercialization of religion because during that time, religion became a lucrative source of primitive accumulation and class formation due to primarily the political alliance between religiosity and militarism. During that time, there were increased rise of mosques, prophets, churches, fundamentalists, born-again movements and this elevated the religious movement from its passive status to the toga of the legitimization of power and wealth of the principal contenders and actors in the political economy of the country (p.287). Knowing the attractive nature of religion and deprecating nature of Nigerian religiosity, some political elites with vested interests hide under religion to recruit the jobless and illiterate youths who they give peanuts in order to carry out mayhem. They do all these just for political and vested purposes.

**Drippy Poverty:** Poverty is not only when one lacks of money. It is beyond money or resources and Ogugua (2012) affirms it when he argues that poverty can be in intellectual, spiritual, social, mental and psychological forms (p.415). According to Clarke and Linden (1982), "one of the reasons given by the

Commission of Inquiry into the Maitatsine riots was that the economic situation of the country left millions of people, especially the youths, without jobs or any means to live a decent life” (p.107). Kelly (1999) asserts that there is a direct correlation between poverty and crime (p.197). Adeogun (2006) maintains that poverty is the dominant factor in the rising trend of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria (p.95). Lesie (2009) argues that a society where the middle and poor classes are in larger numbers with a small or smaller upper class is prone to dangerous conflict (p.181). Ahiuma (2016) said that statistics available from Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that over (one hundred and twelve) million Nigerians are “extremely poor” (p.16). The term “extremely poor” implies that the leadership and Nigerian system have all failed in the midst of heavily endowed and enormous human and natural resources of the country. As long as the syndrome of the rich gets richer and the poor getting poorer is being pursued, people will have no other option than to be drunk in the wine of religion which will manifest in the form of violence.

**Structured Injustice and the Culture of Impunity:** Milestone (1979) recalls that the socio-economic injustices prevalent in Hausa land prior to the 1804 Usman dan Fodio’s jihad together with the illegal and excessive taxation imposed on the poor masses by the rulers of the Habe states gave rise to the jihad (p.8). It has not however changed as virtually every activity in Nigeria carries overt and covert injustice. Olopade (2004) notes that injustice is so highly structured that justice is bought by the wealthy and big weights in Nigeria. He cites the ill organized and corrupt judiciary, brutal and corrupt security with other paramilitary agencies together with the paralyzed social system as the architect social injustice in Nigeria (p.6). It can be argued that Nigeria is structured after the Colonial rapacious structure of Indirect Rule and economic squirearchy. For example, the willing and capable men hardly make it to the leadership of the country because just like the colonialists foisted Indirect Rule with subterfuge amalgamation of Nigeria purposely to protect their trades, that has been how few cabals with some external collaborators usually bastardized the electoral system so as foist inept leaders will always carry out their bidding to the detriment of Nigerians. In cohortory connivances, they centralized national resources because the centralization gives them the conduit pipe of monopolizing and stealing dry the common wealth. How many of the trillion dollars stashed abroad by Nigerians have been returned? Injustice and impunity are meted out to the people through harassment, infringement and denial of Human Rights, impunity and embarrassment from top government officials and the affluent in the society.



Another clear example is that Nigerian Road Safety officials cannot stop rich men or top government officials even if they break the traffic rules but they serially humiliate the poor and defenseless drivers for trivial issues. The defenseless are dehumanized because they could not resist. All these and more deep worrying situations give the fertile ground for the rise of ethno-religious and political violence.

**Systemized Corruption:** Awajiusuk (2014) defines corruption as generally anything that is debased, putrefied, degenerated from original value or state. It is the misuse and abuse of office and trust, using position or office to influence people for personal or group advantage. It is giving and taking of kickbacks, payoffs, palm greasing, bribery, forgery and embezzlement. He identifies the categories of corruption to include political, electoral and bureaucratic corruption. Corruption in Nigeria is caused by extreme love for materialism, naked greed, over emphasis on paper qualification and other practices that have taken the place of honesty, norms and decorum (p.131). The systemized corruption means that malpractice and shortchange are instituted and freely allowed as cultural. Paradoxically, many agencies are created to checkmate corruption in Nigeria but they have been repeatedly accused of re-looting the seized and forfeited assets. Soniyi (2012) notes that the Global Financial Integrity has revealed that between 2004 and 2015, the Nigerian rulers have looted over \$1 trillion that accrued to the country from the crude oil making over 80 percent of the population to lack access to drinking water, roads and basic health care services and functional education (p.9). Corruption cripples system, encourages impunity and makes people see violence as virtue thus making the country prone to religious crises.

**Discrimination and Desire for Equality:** Collier (1986) defines discrimination as the systematic exclusion of a person or group from participating in positions or activities of higher economic value (p.199). A clear example of this is the discrimination of the Fulani group in the pre-jihadist Hausa land that was organized to demoralize them but according to Crowder (1978), it ended up creating cohesion among them just as they scattered in different localities in Hausa land and Bornu areas, they nursed deep feelings of resentment against existing Hausa rulers (p.79). The idea of social class awareness and consciousness is natural especially in a multi religious and cultural setting. Discrimination comes from various ways and forms and one example is economic discrimination. The ethnic minorities who are often the victims of socio-economic

and political discrimination are the vanguard of movements of terrorism and insurgency.

**State Mismanaged Responses:** The security agencies have been repeatedly pointed to be responsible for the escalation of violence in Nigeria. According to Amanambu (2013), Wilmot, former lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria argues that “the ruling class that currently dominates the political scene has no tradition of managing social change their only answer to dissent or rebellion is the massacre” (p. 64). Ismail (2012) quotes the former governor of Yobe state, Bukar Abba Ibrahim as saying that the metamorphosis of Boko Haram from a *dawah* to an arms-bearing sect was partly caused by security agencies. They approached the situation as one of ‘law and order’ and responded as such, with disastrous consequences. The extra judicial killing of Yusuf Mohammed raised the movement to its broader multifaceted prism as political, social, and economic. The security agencies serially mismanaged the crisis from the outset, and in the process pushed the movement to the extreme end of the spectrum (p.9). Kukah (2012) affirms that the extra judicial killing of the sect leader emboldened the sect who has gone on to be the greatest problem of Nigeria (p.10). Until the seeming relatively doused tension in the Southeast, many international agencies like Amnesty International have roundly chided the manner and measures through which the security agencies reacted to the protests of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Apart from their poor responses to religious violence, Nigerian security agencies have repeatedly escalated religious violence sometimes by supporting one religion against another.

**The Quest for a Nigerian Islamic or Christian State:** The quest for the total Christianization or Islamization of Nigeria have fertilized Nigeria for religious violence. This assertion can be understood from the accounts of scholars such as Hodgkin, Clarke and Linden, Kukah, Suleiman, Nwanaju and Amanambu. For example, Hodgkin (1975), states that the jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804 was “to make upon the heathen king who...make no profession of Islam, is obligatory by assent” (p.247). In the same way Clarke and Linden (1982) said that Islamic leaders, like Gumi believed that to adopt Islam as a state religion was the answers to the problems of the contemporary Nigerian society (p.95). Kukah (1993) emphatically notes that in order to make Islam a Nigerian state religion, Gumi would employ the state structures to achieve his aim (p.132). Suleiman (2011) avers that Boko Haram terrorist group in Maiduguri initially said that

their objectives were to abolish democracy and institute sharia law (p.50). The desire to dip the Koran into the lagoon, to make Islam the central, commanding and unchallenged religion in Nigeria has always made the religionists take to violence.

Nwanju (2008) argues that the dispositions of some Christian Pentecostal group contribute to the rise of religious violence in Nigeria (p.262) Amanambu (2013) corroborates with this when he states that the new religious movements characterized by the Nigerian version of Pentecostalism because of the kind of belief system they propagate and their aggressive type of evangelism which often aims at “winning Nigeria for Christ”, “Operation for Total Recovery of the Land” and so on have turned from conservatives into militants and they are willing to take a stand and to fight in defence of the Christian faith (p.35). In as much as many Christians are not favourably disposed to carry out maiming and killing like some of its Islamic counterparts, most of their dispositions often suggest the evangelization by violence. The quests for either the state or political triumphant of each of these religious organizations have made Nigeria ripe for religious violence.

**The Subjective Idea of Hereafter:** Aside from the mixture of religion and politics in Nigeria another serious trigger of religious violence is the subjective belief that there is a place fairer than day. The idea of *hereafter* as taught by various religious traditions have made these traditions to teach that paradise, *Aljana* and Nirvana could be attained if an adherent dies in the course of defending God. According to Ergun (2002), paradise in Islam is a place where there are many virgins with abundance of feasting waiting for all the martyrs. Mohammed himself said that he had looked at the paradise and saw rivers flowing underneath rivers of honey, milk and wine containing varieties of fruits in which believers were swimming as well as drinking. The palaces were made of crystal, sapphire and diamond with seventy couches made of gold and emerald prepared for those fight for the faith (pp.192-195).

Kukah (1993) remarks that Major Halilu Akilu, officer, who worked to tame the Maitatsine insurgent group submitted that the tactics of these jihadists were so appalling that they were not trained to hit and run, but they were bolder than guerrillas fighting in Malaysia or jungles of East Asia. The spirit that drove them to fight is better summed up in the idea of “reincarnation and better life at death” (p. 154). Similarly, Inuwa (2017) notes that some intercepted suicide bombers confessed that apart from being paid to carry out suicide bombing in Maiduguri

and its environs by the Boko Haram commanders, these people were firmly promised that if they carry out any bomb to successfully explodes, they would automatically go to paradise (pp.5-7).

A lot of religious adherents in Nigeria have been brainwashed to believe that dying in the course of defending their religion would make them earn the status of martyr and enjoy paradise. Therefore, they are inclined to sacrifice their lives even through violent means. Many adherents have erroneously believed that life is better and richer when spent beyond the physical affairs. This type of belief is the breeding ground for religious violence.

**Mutual Suspicion and Fear:** This is a factor often found among different ethnic and religious groups who feel or are afraid of being dominated. They would want to use violence so as to settle some scores. Abiola (1984) argues that one of the reasons Usman dan Fodio took up arms in the name of jihad against the Hausa states was because his tribal men were afraid and felt insecure in the hands of the Hausa rulers (p.35). In the same way today, the fear of seeming domination between nationalities that make up the Nigerian entity has caused many people to appreciate the languages and activities of religion because they believe that their share of the national cake could be grabbed by violence. Beside the sense of security, the alarming height of organized suspicions, intolerance, hatred for one another and with other factors have become the reasons why a little misunderstanding from any section of the country can lead to reprisals even when there is no need for it.

**Inciting Mass Media:** Arguably, the media determines what the society prioritizes or ignores. The influence of mass media to the society cannot be overemphasized. Experience has shown that some media reports, news analyses and features are capable of playing a positive or negative role in the relationship between Muslims and Christians depending on the intention and orientation of the journalists and presenters. Bashir (2002) argues that most of the actions or reactions of some Muslims and Christians direct against each other were determined by media reports. The press on many occasions in Nigeria has fanned the ambers of disunity through junk journalism and inciting headlines. Such negative reports and news analyses often breed religious violence (pp.23-30). Bidmos (1993) articulates the negative role played by the press in the 1987 Kafanchan riot. Members of the public were grossly misinformed by the press with partial reports which created another crisis between Muslims and Christians (pp.34-38). The press discourse on some sensitive issues like Sharia

and other sensitive religious issues are capable of causing violence. Reports and opinions usually elicit actions and reactions. Having identified and analyzed the immediate cause of ethno-religious and political violence in Nigeria, it is pertinent that remedies be suggested.

**Intra/Interdenominational Misunderstanding:** Clarke and Linden (1982) affirm that once in a while, there are skirmishes between some of these sects especially in the northern part of Nigeria. For instance, in Zuru town of Kebbi State, in North-western Nigeria, there was a serious violence between the *Derika* and *Izala* sects over the control of the market and central mosque which occurred in 1987, and it led to the closure of the mosque for several years, the two sects have separate mosques where they worship (p.124). Many churches have had cases of violence among them and between others. Some have been settled at the courts while others are still lying in the court rooms. Binniyat (2016) and Njoku (2017) gave accounts of violence in the Assemblies of God church where members fought against themselves and were injured because of misunderstanding. Specifically, one of the churches and school in Kaduna were closed down by Kaduna state government (p.12). Alozie (2017) notes that there was violence between Mountain of Conquest Assembly and God's Pillar Power Ministry in Owerri, Imo State over the proximity of both churches (p.11). This intra/interdenominational misunderstanding though not highly publicized, has the capacity of snowballing into a full blown inter religious cum ethnic violence if not checked.

In view of the above, Nigerian leaders should rise to the occasion and establish good and purposeful governance, forge national integration and promote indiscriminate economic policy that will ameliorate mass poverty and unemployment because an idle mind is a devil's workshop. Early warning signals monitoring and detecting agency should be apolitically established and empowered to function. The interfaith and Daily Life forms of dialogue should be vigorously pursued by all since Christians and Muslims live next to each other and mingle freely in almost all aspects of life. They meet in the market places, on the streets, in schools and other institutions. Christian and Muslim friends exchange gifts and greetings during their festivities. They worship together during weddings or burials of relatives, friends, colleagues and business associates.

There is also an urgent need to improve the quality of education in Nigeria because human and social developments depend on information and learning

and any society that wants to develop must prioritize education. Religious leaders and preachers should be purposefully retrained and reoriented so that they will actually understand and contextualize the letters and spirits of religious terms. This is because these sacred texts originated from different environments and considering these different backgrounds, there seems to be some levels of contradictions and inconsistencies owing to the fact that when its verses were compiled, many of them were taken out of context and listed one after the other. Politicians should refrain from playing on people's religious sentiments and using it in canvassing for support because it can easily erupt into violence. Nigerians must first and foremost learn to be tolerant of each other irrespective of their divide because peace is the pre-requisite for social development. Nigerian should imbibe peace as the most relevant for the continued existence of humanity for without peace in the society, human life will be precarious. The Nigerian constitution should be strengthened and our elite should always respect it.

## **Conclusion**

One of the stated aims of holding forth the much criticized amalgamation of 1914 is to build a virile country where even though tongues and tribes differ, brotherhood, love for one another and mutual benefits shall reign but religious violence has since made mockery of these lofty dreams. Unarguably, most of the religious violence in Nigeria are reactions against the ever-increasing failed leadership, unemployment, poverty, hardship, political and other social disequilibrium occasioned by poor economic management, accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. Violence also occurs when groups or an individual attempts to modify or alter other people's domination. Nigeria has no respectable agreement and formula on how wealth, power and opportunity are shared among individuals, groups and tribes and that is why while others get abundantly, others are serially denied virtually everything. Thus, in Nigeria there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, ethnicism and religions which inadvertently lead to violence. Every form of violence is often deadly but religious war is deadlier just it has stagnated Nigerian development.

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