

THE CHALLENGES OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE TO THE NIGERIAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The study focuses on the challenges of religious intolerance to Nigerian development, which in effect has led to series of conflicts that have claimed hundreds of lives and the destructions of millions of naira worth of properties. The colossal loss to violent religious conflicts caused by the intolerance in Nigeria did not end with this loss of lives and properties. It has gone beyond the mere loss of hundreds of lives and properties but has affected the fabric of the nation's developmental life. However, it has become very much difficult to speak of progress in Nigeria when our social, political, economic, and religious systems fail to maintain at least a minimum level of social decorum. As that religious intolerance lingers on, distrust and suspicion became the order of the day, especially between adherents of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. Though, there are records of occasional intolerance between African Traditional Religion and other religions for several reasons. These may include a superiority complex, a claim of superiority by Islam and Christianity over the African Traditional religion and culture, disregard and contempt for African traditional religion and institutions. However, the religious history of our country shows that Islamic fundamentalists have championed religious conflicts. This paper, therefore, gave an overview of the general concept of intolerance, causes of intolerance in Nigeria, and implications of intolerance on Nigeria's development. The historical method was adopted for the study and also recommended among other things, that conscious efforts be made by adherents of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria to build bridges of religious tolerance and religious respect. And to emulate the followers of African Traditional Religion (ATR) that are more tolerant, and tolerance as a virtue is recommended in conflict management.

Keywords: Development, Intolerance and Religious.

Introduction

Religion could serve, and has indeed served as an instrument of social harmony and development in many civilizations. Paradoxically, however, it has also served as a motivation for violence, hence its indication in some literature as a 'double-edged sword' (Maregere 2011:17–23; Obasi 2009)¹. From time immemorial, Religious intolerance has far reaching implications for the development of any society not just Nigeria. In fact, it has become a useful tool to ferment problems resulting to both political upheavals, and socio-economic instability. In the words of Max Weber as quoted by A.Giddens:

... each major religion of the world has developed its distinctive orientation towards all aspects of social life.... These differences have had profound consequences for the development of human society.

All religious groups are continuously shaping and molding the personalities of their adherents who then as private individuals, staff the economic, political, educational and other institutional systems of society².

Religion is a cultural phenomenon, as such, it has played dominant role in the socio-political organization of man throughout the course of history. As an institution, it has served to meet certain needs within the society. It is within the context of the destructive use of religion in the history of several nations that the paper focuses on Nigeria.

In the past two decades, religious intolerance has been at the centre of most violent conflicts around the world, thereby gaining notoriety as one of the prime security challenges confronting the world in the wake of the Cold War (Juergensmeyer 2000:6; Abu-Nimer 2000)³. Without doubt, the greatest threat to economic development has always been religious intolerance. Nigeria is a country where Christianity and Islam enjoy large fellowship. As such, the country has been divided into two religious camps. It is often claimed that Nigeria has about 180 million people and about half (90 million) are Muslims while the remaining percentage are either Christians or traditionalists.⁴

Thus it is interesting to note that these two religious bodies (Christianity and Islam) are always competing with each other for religious space. A study conducted in Spain has found that societies that are divided along religious lines are more prone to intense and prolonged conflict than those divided by political, territorial and ethnic differences (Reynal-Querol 2002).⁵ Unfortunately, the political class did not hesitate to wrongly use them to gain both political and economic advantages over their opponents. Therefore, religious intolerance becomes inevitable. Suffice it to say that the wrong use of religion has resulted to wanton destruction of lives and property. During violent religious conflicts, many people have been killed, maimed and wounded. There have also been wide spread disruption of economic activities with negative effects on productivity. Hundreds of churches and mosques, hotels and other related business as well as vehicles, private homes etc, have been destroyed. In fact, violent religious intolerance which most times create an atmosphere of national insecurity and uncertainty are inimical to economic growth and development. This is because no investors (both local and foreign) would be averse to investments. It is also observed that with the country's return to Democracy in May 29, 1999, the outbreaks of religious intolerance have been on the increase. Not only that, the struggle for power and position in Nigeria has also led to the manipulation of religion and ethnicity by the political elite for selfish reasons as rightly observed in various political appointments of the present government of Mohammadu Buhari. In other words, it will not be incorrect to say, there is hardly an appointment that is not tinted with religious inference made to it. This breeds mutual distrust, discrimination and a sense of general insecurity with the society as the case is within the Niger Delta region and the northeastern region.

In Northern Nigeria, for instance, religion and ethnicity are so interwoven to the extent that conflicts between groups in the region tend to be simultaneously interpreted as ethnic and religious conflicts.⁷ The intertwined nature of ethnicity and religion in Northern Nigeria is

explained by the different levels of penetration of Islamic Jihadists and Christian missionaries in various parts of the region. Similarly, a thorough examination of Islam and Christianity also makes it clear that the tolerance levels of Muslims and Christians in the Southern and Northern parts of the country is at variance.

In the South, the tolerance level towards Islam is on the high side. This could be attributed to their level of exposure, high level of literacy, and even inter-marriages between Muslims and Christians where possible.⁸ Unfortunately, in the Northern parts of Nigeria, the tolerance level is next to zero toward Christians and Christianity. Judging from the above, the occurrence of violent religious conflicts has done more harm than good to Nigeria and Nigerians. Therefore, urgent steps must be taken to curb its excessiveness, volatility and threat to both human and national security. Moreover, the Nigerian state has the constitutional responsibility of providing security and welfare for its citizens. To this extent, section 14(b) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria states that, “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”.⁹ It is however, unfortunate that the ruling government has not been able to fulfill her constitutional responsibility judging from the prevalent of violent religious intolerance across the country, more especially in the Northern parts.

Definition of Terms

Religion: An acceptable definition of religion is difficult to find, because so many definitions have been framed over the years but with one deficiency or the other. Adeniyi (1993) defines religion as the consciousness of one's dependence on transcendent being and the tendency to worship Him¹⁰. To him religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent Being. Peter (1988) sees it as a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic¹¹.

Yinger sees religion as “a system of beliefs and practices by means of a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life¹². To him it is the refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart one's human associations” (Scarf,1970:32).In other words religion is a relation between the divine and humans in which they strive to implement their religious beliefs and practices.¹³ In the words of T. Omoregbe, religion is essentially a relationship, a link established between two persons namely a human person and a divine person believed to exist. In other words, religion is man's relationship with the supernatural.¹⁴ In the same vein, there is an interaction between religion and the society within which it functions. Religion performs a variety of functions. The first is on the individual as it affects social behavior. The second is that religion interacts and influences the other facets or social institutions in the society, namely, Polity and economy. These institutions also influence the religious institutions, the effect of which affect in a fundamental way, a people's way of life.¹⁵

Intolerance: the word intolerance comes from a combination of the Latin words in-meaning “not” and toleratem meaning “to bear, endure”. Intolerance is not being able to bear or endure beliefs that are different from your own. You may commonly hear it used with respect to religious intolerance, which is an unwillingness to accept different religious beliefs. According to Encarta(2009),it is the act of refusing to accept differences; showing an unwillingness or refusal to accept people who are different from you or views, beliefs, or lifestyles that differ from your own¹⁶. Similarly, Rokeach (1960) in Sage(2020) argued that the intolerant person is characterized by a closed mind or dogmatic personality in contrast to the open-mindedness of the tolerant person¹⁷. The intolerant person has difficulty accepting different views, beliefs, and practices of other people because of a lack of openness to experience and feelings of fear and uncertainty. Furthermore, research has found that beliefs about worldview incompatibility drive intolerance of minority practices independently of minority-group prejudices (e.g., Sleijpen, Verkuyten, & Adelman, 2020)¹⁸. People who hold a strong conviction, be it cultural or religious, are more likely to be intolerant toward those who strongly subscribe to an alternative worldview (e.g., Brandt, Reyna, Chambers, Crawford, & Wetherell, 2014)¹⁹. What makes a cultural, religious, or ideological belief critical and psychologically meaningful is that it is taken to be true, and devout believers, for instance, may intuitively consider other faiths as being misguided.

Oppression, no doubt is at the root of many of the most serious, enduring intolerance not just in Nigeria but the world at large. That is, where there is oppression, there is violent conflict²⁰. In any intolerant situation, threat, fear, anxiety, and general insecurity become the order of the day. Indeed, oppression usually occurs when a stronger force or group tries to override another group’s interest. When this type of situation arises, the more powerful group or force would attempt to frustrate the needs of the weaker group²¹. This is why conflict occurs at community, state, regional and national levels. It is therefore worthy to mention that when there is intolerance in one part, the other part cannot be said to be intolerance -free. As such, a largely sectional conflict can spiral to other parts if it is not well managed.²²

Religious Intolerance: Religious is the active of the word Religion while intolerance is a blind refusal to understand and respect views or positions that are opposed to one’s cherished religious views. Ekwunife (1993) opines that religious intolerance is a blind and fixated mental and psychological negative attitude towards religious beliefs and practices that are contrary to one’s cherished beliefs and practices²³. Such negative attitudes exhibit themselves in situations whereby leaders or groups in any society blindly refuse to understand and respect contrary religious views and practices except the ones they consider to be true.

There is religious intolerance when any group in a society deliberately and violently sets out to stamp out what the members subjectively consider to be error in religious thought and practice. In short, there is religious intolerance when a particular group refuses to accept or accommodate the views, opinions of other opposing religious adherent. This refusal to accept contrary religious views and practices is often accompanied by series of violence and destruction as experienced in Nigeria during the past two decades.

Religious intolerance entails ‘hostility towards other religions, as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspect of religion’

(Balogun, 1988)²⁴. It encompasses bigotry, which is the obstinate and intolerant devotion to one's opinions and prejudices, especially the exhibition of intolerance and animosity toward persons of differing beliefs (Baird and Sturt, 1999)²⁵. The religious intolerance in Nigeria has led to various crises such as the Boko Haram insurgency. In the last two decades, Nigeria had experienced events of tensions violence and killing between Christians and Muslims. These violent conflicts are not unconnected with the complex nature of interreligious and intercultural relationship that exists in the country, which have been that of religious riot (Ekanem, 2013)²⁶. The major reason for the violent conflict is largely due for either lack of tolerance among the followers of different religions.

Development: According to Cambridge Dictionary, Development is the process in which someone or something grows or changes and become more advanced. It further defined development as a process of developing something new. According to Online Business Dictionary, development is the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements. It further defined development as the process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions. Barder defines development as bringing social changes that allows people to achieve their human potentials²⁷. It conveys something about the capacity of economic, potential and social systems in providing the circumstances for well-being on a sustainable long-term basis. Rodney opines that Development is the increased capacity to control the material environment and thereby to create more goods and services for the community. The process of doing this brings about a gradual progression, improvement of different parts of the society. Todaro and Smith opine that development is "both a physical reality and a state of mind in which society have secured the means for obtaining a better life."²⁸. Through this process the society ensures growth in wealth acquisition and mental enrichment and the better of the quality living conditions of all the people. The society uses a combination of social, economic and institutional process as the means to acquire better living conditions.

Nigerian Development: There is no single universally accepted definition of Nigerian Development. The varieties of definitions provide an overview of the many usage of the concept. The concept still remains ambiguous, having originated from simpler definitions which initially emphasized National development Therefore national development is a comprehensive term which includes improvement in living standard of the people, increase in per capital income, providing social amenities like education, medical care, social services, etc. to the citizens of the country.

A Brief of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria

More than before, contemporary Nigerian society has been beset with religious conflicts that have threatened to tear the fabric of the country's unity¹⁰. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation, blessed with a triple religious heritage namely; African Indigenous Religion, Christianity and Islam. In Nigeria there are different levels and forms of religious conflicts. This is as a result of intolerance existing among the two major religious groups in Nigeria-Christians and

Muslims. These include intra and inter-religious conflicts. Intra-religious conflict often exists within a particular sect like Maitatsine riot of 1980 in Kano and Izala versus Tijjaniyya brotherhood in Gombe in 1987.²⁹

Religious intolerance involves denying the right of people of another religious faith to practice and express their beliefs freely. Religious intolerance is expressed in discrimination, repression and religious rivalry, and results in or results from persecution. It leads to war and persistent hatred between nations and between peoples within nations.

Religious intolerance usually originates from the perceived superiority of one religion over the others. In simple terms, religious intolerance or fanaticism is the inability of an adherent of a particular religion to acknowledge, accommodate and accept the right of others to live by another faith different from his own. Invariably, such attitude is connected to the conviction that one's religion is the only divinely ordained path to spiritual enlightenment and morality in heaven. Consequently, a religious fanatic believes strongly that his religion is unquestionably superior to other religions. It is good to point out that being zealous for one's religion is commendable and is to be expected, but where such zeal is wrongly channeled, it becomes dangerous for the life of the community and it is an abuse of human rights.

This paper wishes to outline a successive trend of various religious intolerance that resulted into severe conflicts in Nigeria with approximate dates and time. Although, lack of adequate statistical data has made it extremely difficult to estimate the exact number of religious conflicts in Nigeria and their resultant fatalities,³⁰ the collective assumption is that the incidence of the religious conflicts has grown exponentially since the return of democratic rule in 1999. However, statistics on religious crises across the country show that at least (95) ninety-five per cent of them occurred in the Northern parts of Nigeria and a microscopic few in other parts of the country.³¹ A summary of violent religious conflicts in Nigeria reveals the following.³²

Dates	Locations	Principal Actors
May 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbancies in Zaria during which property belonging to mainly Christians were destroyed
December 18-28, 1980	Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano (kano State)	Riots by Maitatsine sect, 4,177 people died, extensive destruction of property
October 29-30, 1982	Bullumkutu, Maiduguri (Borno State)	Kala-kato and Maitatsine sects 118people died, extensive damage to property
February 27-March 5, 1984	Dobeli Ward, Jimeta-Yola (Gongola State)	Maitatsine sect, 586 died, wanton destruction of property
April 26-28, 1985	Pantami Ward. Gombe (Bauchi State)	Maitatsine sect, 105 died extension destruction of property
March , 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslim and Christians clashed during a Christian procession at Easter.

May, 1986	Ibadan, University of Ibadan (Oyo State)	Demonstration by Muslims in which they burnt the figure of the Risen Christ in the chapel of Resurrection, University of Ibadan
March, 1987	• Kafanchan (Kaduna State)	Clashes between Muslims and Christians at the college of Education, Kafanchan; loss of some lives and the burning of some mosques by Christians and natives of Kaje.
	• Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gusau and Kaduna (Kaduna State)	Waves of religious riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous church buildings and damaged property belonging to Christians. Many lives were lost.
February, 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious riots, ostensibly among students destroyed the foundation walls of the Christians chapel.
April, 1991	• Katsina (Katsina State)	Religious violence spearheaded by Mallam Yahaya Yakubu, leader of the Fundamentalist Shi'ite sect in Katsina. It was a protest over a blasphemous publication in Fun Times. Several lives were lost and property destroyed.
	• Tafawa Balewa (Bauchi State)	Started as a quarrel between a Fulani man and a Sayawa meat seller in Tafawa Balewa. Escalated into a full blown violence and later took the colouring of a religious war in Bauchi. Several lives were lost and property valued over hundreds of millions of Naira was destroyed.
October, 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful procession initiated by the Izala sect to holt Rev. Reinherd Bonke from having a crusade in Kano, later degenerated into very bloody religious violence. Thousands of lives were lost and property valued at millions of Naira was destroyed.
May, 1992	Zangon Kataf, Zaria, Kaduna, Ikara (Kaduna State)	A communal feud between the Kataf and the Hausas later took the dimension

		of inter-religious was btw Muslims and Christians inn other major cities of Kaduna. Several lives and property were destroyed.
January, 1993	Funtua (kaduna State)	The Kalakato religious sect assaulted the village head and burnt down a police vehicle. Lives and property were also lost.
February 2000	Kaduna	Conflict engulfed the city between Christians and Muslims over the implementation of sharia law. Thousands of lives and property worth millions were destroyed.
Sept. 28th, 2013	Zangang	Muslim militia attacked a Christian village, hacking to death fifteen residents and burning down their homes.
Sept. 17th 2013	Borno	Boko Haram dressed in Military Uniforms attacked and burnt people majorly Christians, living 143 people dead
July 27th, 2014	Jos	Communal attack by youth groups in Muslim and Christian neighbourhood on Mosque and church in the University of Jos. Muslim extremists thrown a bomb into a Catholic Church, eight people were injured while five worshippers were killed.
July, 2014	Borno,	Maiduguri Twenty-seven Christians were massacred by Islamists in an attack on three churches.
June 29th, 2014	Chibok, Maiduguri	At least, fifty-four people were massacred by Boko Baram in attacks targeting churches with grenades and guns.
Jan. 12th, 2014	Maikatako	Muslim terrorists attacked Christians on a Sunday morning, killing at least eight and maiming others.
Sept. 23rd, 2015	Yola	241 Women and Children Were Murdered By Boko Haram in two villages.

Some Causes of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria

Many religious wars were fought in the past. Even today a lot of conflicts and disturbances arise in society because of the religious aspect. The main causes of religious intolerance are as under-

Political: Political perspective is one of the major causes of intolerance where people get attracted towards politics and they started believing that their particular religion is the best and supreme which creates a lot of ambiguity and because of that conflicts arose in the society and sometimes it became worst to handle these situations as people are also very least interested in this. According to Okereke in Uchendu (2012);

For these Muslim fundamentalists, the whole system of nation states and secular administration are simply unIslamic and should be pulled down, to be replaced with an Islamic State. These groups of Muslims frequently exploit different scenarios to unleash mayhem on Nigerians and Nigeria, with Muslim - dominated Northern Nigerian as the recurrent site for conflict. The effects of these religious conflicts are, however, felt all over the country especially in the Eastern region where it gives way to different misconceptions about Muslims and Islam³³

Plurality of Religions: The plurality of ways by which human beings express their spiritual cravings is a reality. This fact points in a way to the view that human beings are by nature religious and that they differed and would continue to differ in religions. As regards the first assertion of man being by nature religious, this is in line with the anthropological fact that no human society has been found without one form of religion or the other (Maishanu, 2007)³⁵. Since the existence of a plurality of religions is a reality, then there is bound to be religious intolerance. In fact, many religiously pluralistic societies all over the world have had to grapple with the problem of religious intolerance. Like most plural state, Nigeria is a country with religious diversity. African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam constitute the dominant religions in Nigeria, with each enjoying large followership. Aside from these major religions, there are other faiths like the Olumba Olumba, Eckankar, Bahai faith, Sat Guru and of course, the beliefs that claim secular humanism. Intolerance among different religious adherents has become veracious and alarming during the past two decades. This is more pronounced between the Christians and Muslims, with obvious effects on peaceful co-existence

Superiority Syndrome: Religious intolerance usually originates from the perceived superiority of one religion over the others. In simple terms, religious intolerance or fanaticism is the inability of an adherent of a particular religion to acknowledge, accommodate and accept the right of others to live by another faith different from his own. Invariably, such attitude is connected to the conviction that one's religion is the only divinely ordained path to spiritual enlightenment and immortality in heaven. Consequently, a religious fanatic believes strongly that his religion is unquestionably superior to other religions. It is good to point out that being zealous for one's religion is commendable and is to be expected, but where such

zeal is wrongly channeled, it becomes dangerous for the life of the community and it is an abuse of human rights.

Aggravating modes of worship: One other trigger of religious intolerance that causes violence in Nigeria is the obstructive, disruptive and annoying modes of worship employed by the two dominant religions. There is a notorious Christian tradition of organising mass crusades and revivals on public high ways or properties adjoining the high ways. Most of these crusades and revivals have the disrepute of obstructing vehicular and human movement for long periods of time (Daily Champion 2006; Ehigiator and Akinbaani 2002) in absolute disregard to tortious and criminal liabilities.³⁶ Many road users of other faiths – and even those of the same faith – see this practice as an affront to their legal rights to the use of public roads as well as a demonstration of religious arrogance and insensitivity. In the same vein, it has become an unwritten law for all public roads in Muslim-dominated areas to be blocked during Juma'at (Friday) prayers. Accordingly, all intending road users needing access through these roads on Fridays have often had the misfortune of abating their movements and waiting for the completion of Juma'at prayers. This tradition has triggered religious disturbances, particularly in places with evenly distributed numbers of Christians and Muslims. The 2001 Jos religious violence was caused by a mêlée that erupted after a Christian woman insisted on having her right of way through a public highway which was barricaded by Muslim worshippers on a Friday.

Challenges of Religious Intolerance to the Nigerian Development:

The aftermath results of religious conflicts is not limited to religious matters alone, rather the consequences can be felt in all spheres of human endeavour be it political, social, economic as well as cultural landscapes of the nation. The following are the visible implications of religious conflicts on Nigeria and her citizens.

(a) Wanton Destruction of Lives and Properties:

One of the greatest harm of religious Intolerance in Nigeria is the fact that it has left our country with extraordinary loss of lives. Today, in Nigeria, religious crises sponsored by intolerance, more especially between the Christians and Muslims has degenerated to an alarming stage. According to Jegede (2019), it has claimed thousands of lives and properties worth hundreds of millions have been destroyed³⁷. For example, between 1980 -1992, a total of (26) twenty-six religious riots was recorded and death toll put at 6,775, official figures.³⁸ According to Christian Social Movement, twenty-four riots occurred between 1993-2006 with casualty put at well over 5000.³⁹ Likewise, between May 29 June 2, 1999, a violent religious clash in Warri, Delta State led to the loss of more than 200 lives. In Lagos State, and same year, Yomba and Hausa traders clashed in Ketu market, resulting in the death of over 100 people.⁴⁰

In the same vein, violent conflicts precipitated by religious intolerance have often resulted to set back on infrastructure. Social infrastructures like schools, hospitals, health facilities/centres, etc. are often time the target of destruction. In most cases, the task of

rebuilding destroyed properties becomes the daunting task of both the Federal and State governments.

(b) Challenge on Economic Stability: The economic stability of this country has greatly suffered an untold set back due the reoccurrence of religious conflicts that have taken place over a period of time now. It is not only lives that are being lost, but sources of livelihood, goods etc, are being destroyed or carted away, leaving victims economically handicapped. Violent religious intolerance and the conflicts thereof with their attendant effects also make investors to relocate their businesses to other peaceful areas that are safe haven for their growth. Owing to religious conflicts, many businesses have been closed up in Nigeria. In other to revamp the economic, former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, on assumption of office in 1999, made it the priority of his government to woo foreign investors into the nation's economy. His passionate appeal yielded little or no result. This is because the security of the investors and their investment could not be guaranteed. The apprehension of the international community was confirmed in 2000. Kaduna riot where foreigners in the state had to flee in their numbers.⁴¹ The Kaduna Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the same year cancelled its trade fare as a result of religious tension. According to Tell Magazine, it is claimed that the trade Association lost about 600 million naira.⁴² Jos religious upheavals also witnessed exodus of businesses to neighboring states that are safe for their investments.

(c) Political Challenge: Nigeria is a multi-ethnics and multi-religious nation. As such, peaceful co-existence is sine qua none to the development and national security of the country. Yet, this is not the case as the nation has continued to experience violent religious conflicts tainted with political undertone, more especially between the Christians and Muslims in the country. Despite the fact that Nigeria is a secular state, the interference of religion in political affairs is second to none. Religion has continued to destabilize the peace of the nation. The Muslims, in the northern parts, with a claim to numerical advantage have severally attempted to nationalize the Islamic faith to the highest level of the nation's governance through various means like the Shariah Debate, OIC saga, and the introduction of Shariah in some northern States by the Northern governors. The Christians, especially those living in the North, move against these attempts, emphasizing the constitutional secularity of the country, and that any attempt to introduce Shariah at the Federal level of governance amounts to the breach of the constitution. The problem of the religious factor in politics of a heterogeneous cultural society such as the modern Nigeria has become more complex with the entrenchment of two virile missionary-oriented world religions, namely; Christian and Islam. In the word of A. Ekwenife: The common good which is the hall-mark of political activities, is not of the time imperiled by myopic, self-seeking, callous, and avaricious politicians and leaders of all shades, who often mask their real intention under zeal for their different religious and cultural traditions....⁴³ Judging from the foregoing, the problem of religious disturbances in Nigeria has had unfold negative effect on the social, economic as well as the political development of the nation.

(d) Social Challenge: Social Challenge of Religious Intolerance have successfully bred suspicion and lack of mutual understanding owing to the fact that proper understanding between Christians and Muslims have not been effectively addressed, hence, it has often led

to violent confrontations. As a result, some cities in Nigeria today, especially in the northern parts have been split down at the middle with Christians living in one part while Muslims live in the other. For example, Kaduna city is divided into two, with Christians living in the South of the river Kaduna and Muslims, living in the Northern part. Similarly, in Jos city, there are some areas where Muslims fear to settle. Whenever conflicts ensue between the Southern and Northern sections, the polity and social landscape of Nigeria became heated up, leading to chaos and religious tension. Judging from the above, the gross display of intolerance between Christians and Muslims, and lack of religious respect and understanding will always be a cog in the wheel of progress, national development and a conflict-free society until the adherents of Christianity and Islam imbibe the spirit of tolerance in conflict resolution. As such, a purposeful development which our country needs will be undermined.

Recommendations : Consequent upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made; directed at individual adherents of the Christian and Islamic religions in particular, religious leaders and the government who are perceived as the principal facilitators of violent religious crises in Nigeria:

1. It is advisable that every individual knows the tenets of his or her religion, and be watchful of the teachings of their religious leaders, because, it was observed that self-seeking and ambitious leaders often capitalize on the ignorance and gullibility of their fellowship to manipulate them to foment trouble with people of other religions.
2. Religious leaders should endeavour to make their preaching persuasive rather than inciting or insulting. They should mind and weigh their utterances and actions.
3. Dialogue should be used as an effective weapon in conflict resolution, not only between Christians and Muslims, but among all religionists, internally and externally (inter and intra). When dialogue is adopted with full determination for peaceful coexistence, violence can be excluded to a great extent.
4. It is imperative for Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to unite and identify what they need, that is, peaceful co-existence, and to join forces to get it, for the good of the nation. The common people in the North in particular should wake up to this reality if they want to rid themselves of violence and develop the region.
5. Today, most of the world's major conflicts are as a result of religious intolerance that has been left to fester into uncontrollable spiral of violence. We must restate that religious belief is fundamental to many human identities. It is part of the ways in which human beings experience the world around them. Hence all have the right to enjoy freedom to choose which religion that one is convenient with.

Conclusion: This work focuses on the challenges of religious intolerance on the development of Nigeria. In Nigeria today, no issue is as important as how to find lasting solutions to ever increasing rates of violent religious crises that have been a clog in the wheel of progress in all spheres of human endeavours. The persistent religious crises between the major religions (Christianity and Islam) in the nation have resulted into dwindled economic fortune. In fact,

these incessant conflicts have to a large extent ridicule Nigeria in the comity of nations, as no individuals or corporate body would want to invest in where security and safety of their investment is not guaranteed.

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