

## CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Culture is the repository of human traditions - long and tested solutions for a harmonious communal living in a meaningful way. It is the core of our humanity and holds some of the secrets to life's purpose. By implication therefore, People, groups or society do not exist in the abstract but are recognized and identified by their shared beliefs, values, customs, arts and most often by their religious inclinations. The embodiments of the aforementioned variables distinguish one ethnic group from the other. Nigeria no doubt is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic configuration that has accepted her fate to co-exist as one "indivisible entity" but over time has been taunted by myriads of ethnic and religious crises. One popular view notes that ethnic conflict is inevitable when different groups are forcibly integrated into one state. The Nigerian 1914 "unholy wedlock" between the northern and the southern protectorates justifies the above view. The paper shall critically examine among other issues the relationship between culture, ethnicity and religious crisis. The researchers shall be relying heavily on secondary sources for generating its data but will also strive to elicit information through oral interview of persons who are direct victims of religious crisis if need be. The paper recommends that it has become imperative to stop playing the ethnic card on sensitive matters that needs to be properly managed in order to preserve this fragile nation.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Identity, Ethnicity, Religion, Crisis

### Introduction

Culture is the repository of human traditions - long and tested solutions for a harmonious communal living in a meaningful way. It is the core of our humanity and holds some of the secrets to life's purpose. History will vindicate the fact that in 1914, an unholy union took place between the northern and southern protectorates under the selfish and watchful eyes of British appointed governor general Sir Lord Lugard and his mistress Flora Shaw. That colossal mistake of 1914 no doubt has continued to hunt and taunt the peaceful coexistence of this entity

called Nigeria since no treaty of harmonious coexistence was discussed nor signed among the contracting parties. This is the issue for which the researchers have decided to examine this issue with a view to determining the degree to which it is the *primus* reason for religious cum incessant terrorist activities targeted at a group that coincidentally constitutes the bulk of the old southern protectorate is on the increase.

The crisis that the issue of ethnicity generates in inter-ethnic relations is not peculiar to Nigeria or Africa alone but also experienced in the Americas. Prior to the ethnic struggles between the black and Indian people in Colombia, they lived a relatively peaceful life. The origin of Columbia's ethnic problems arose when she underwent transformation from "mono-ethnicity" to "multi-ethnicity." This transformation was not as a result of demographic change but of the legislative change. The new constitution of 1991 "allowed Colombians to exercise their citizenship by displaying cultural diversity rather than by concealing it as required by the previous political charter". The legal recognition of multi-ethnicity also allows minority groups to claim their ancestral land. This legal change, complicated by the governments economic development in the region concentrated by Afro-Colombians and Indians, aggravated ethnic asymmetries that in turn eroded nonviolent coexistence" among these people.<sup>46</sup>

Without culture the very meaning or essence of human existence or identity folds and crumbles. Nigeria is not just a geographical set of marks on a map; it is a configuration of culture and traditions. It has become imperative to stop playing the ethnic card on sensitive matters that needs to be properly managed in order to preserve this fragile nation. It is rather unfortunate that since independence the ethnic card has always been played to the detriment of the peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian nation by interest groups whose intentions are to destabilize this nation. The nation at the moment needs a visionary and pragmatic leader who can take the bull by the horn to preserve the unity of this nation not a weakling or a sentimental leader.

The above submission do not seem to imply that our political, religious and traditional leaders have done nothing in this aspect, but the writer is of the view that not much seem to have been done and a lot action is required at the moment

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<sup>46</sup>Arocha, Jaime. *Inclusion of Afro-Colombians: Unreachable national goal?* Latin American Perspectives, 1998, 25 (3), 70.

if the fragile peace we have now can be consolidated. Posterity will definitely steer at our face and hold these crops of leaders that we have at the moment for their actions and inactions.

It has almost become a recurrent decimal in every visual and print media in recent times of incessant massacre of unsuspecting and innocent Nigerians in public places, farmlands and most disheartening at the comfort of their homes by the herdsmen. It does seem that the tide has turned towards religious leaders and worship centres, security establishments and government installations not sparing innocent farmers and their farmlands. All we get in response by the authorities is the usual sympathetic statements that government deeply regrets the incidents and is working round the clock to bring the perpetrators to book. Permit me to state that there are no books to bring them to, this may account for the reason why none has ever been brought to book. The researcher of the view that the usual changes and recycling of leadership of our security outfits and by extension the National Security Advisers have not and will not solve this problem of insecurity hunting and taunting after the continued co-existence of the so called one indivisible Nigeria.

The solution then lies in our leaders mustering the courage as well as the political will to give this country effective leadership devoid of sentiment, rancour, nepotism, prejudice or sacred cows, then the problem of insecurity tempting our unity in diversity will be nipped in the board.

The issue that was critically examined by the researcher includes among others the relationship between culture, ethnicity and religious crisis. It is also in the interest of this writer to inquire into the *raison d'être* Nigeria after more than 50 years of independence is still being taunted by incessant ethno-religious crisis. The researchers shall be relying heavily on secondary sources for generating its data but will also strive to elicit information through oral interview of persons who are direct victims of religious crisis.

The Africa encountered by European colonizers in the 19th century was multi-ethnic with different forms of self-governing institutions. The colonial powers destroyed those ancient African societies with slave trade and colonialism. After claiming landownership, the colonial power defined, classified, numbered and mapped African ethnic groups to create administrative units to facilitate convenient political and institutional control. Colonization also created

inequalities between ethnic communities based on the manner and degree of involvement in the colonial political economy. This “decentralized despotism” meant the use of traditional and local chiefs through patronizing relationships where their loyalty was rewarded through access to resources controlled by the colonial power. These sources of wealth and power were distributed unevenly and permitted colonial powers to establish their legitimacy through the strategy of divide and rule.<sup>47</sup>

## Conceptual Clarifications

### Culture

Culture is defined as the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. It is institutionalized in art, clothing, taboos, rituals, architecture, linguistics, proverbs, films and stories. Culture in its broadest definition is the entire social heritage of humanity.<sup>48</sup> It is the summation of peoples’ way of life that is handed down from one generation to the other. The mode of transmission in most cases is through oral communication.

### Religion

**Religion** has been defined as a system of beliefs based on humanity's attempt to explain the universe and natural phenomena, often involving one or more deities or other supernatural forces and also requiring or binding adherents to follow prescribed religious obligations. Two identifying features of religions are they to some extent (a) require faith and (b) seek to organize and influence the thoughts and actions of their adherents.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bruce J. Berman, “*Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*”, JICA Research Institute, No. 22, November 2010, p 6-10. Paper available here: [jica-ri.go.jp/publication/assets/JICA-RI\\_WP\\_No22\\_2010](http://jica-ri.go.jp/publication/assets/JICA-RI_WP_No22_2010)

<sup>48</sup> Herbert Kelman. “*Social-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict*” in *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, ed. I. William Zartman, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 2007, p 64-65

<sup>49</sup> Webster Dictionary

Religion, like culture itself, consists of systematic patterns of beliefs, values, and behaviour, acquired by people as a member of their society. These patterns are systematic because their manifestations are regular in occurrence and expression: they are shared by member of a group. Both religion and culture (if treated as discrete phenomenon) have traditions which service the group, whose meanings or relevance might be unknown to the user. Perhaps one difference is in religion the source and rationale is a divine instruction for a particular action, while in "pure" culture it is informed by societal norms. So "do not eat pork" is an instruction from a divine origin in religion. In culture "do not eat pork" maybe a tradition established by ancestors and a social habit whose origin is long gone but still a factor shaping dietary habits. Religions will always create cultures, and culture becomes religion by attaching divinity to the behaviour, habits, and attitudes.

## **Ethnicity**

First of all, what is ethnicity and what does it mean within the frame of a Nation State? An ethnic group is a group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, culture, religion, ideology or geographical area. Ethnicity is an identity. As a result, it inevitably occupies a great space within the political arena and also it is the easiest and most natural way for people to mobilize around basic human needs such as security, food, shelter, economic well-being, inequality, land distribution, autonomy, and recognition.<sup>50</sup> This is why ethnicity is a powerful catalyst of violence.

Ethnicity is a culturally-derived term. Deng defined ethnicity as an "embodiment of values, institutions, and patterns of behaviour, a composite whole representing a people's historical experience, aspirations, and worldview". Ethnic classification, either externally imposed or intrinsically engendered, often defines people's membership to a group. Aside from social constructs, ethnicity is innately more central to human experience and identity than race. In turn, ethnic distinctiveness is more likely to invoke an innate sense of peoplehood, ethnic uniqueness thus provides an immediate identity marker both within a group and between groups.

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<sup>50</sup> Deng, Francis M. *Ethnicity: An African predicament*. Brookings Review, 15 (3), 1997, 28-31.

As is the case with racial categorization, ethnic categories are often perceived or discussed as though they are fixed and unchanging entities. However, because ethnicity incorporates language, religion, demarcations of territory, and other cultural traits, changes in people's affinity with any of them can occur over time.

This research provides an insight and a framework for understanding the socio-political functioning of ethnicity in modern African nation-states and by extension in Nigeria. It draws its explanation based on current realities in their proper historical context and colonial experience. The colonial development of social and political stratification in an attempt to gain control of economic resources in Nigeria can provide us an excellent framework, leading to the mirroring of this paradigm and the creation of ethnicity in Africa and especially in Nigeria.

Thus ethnic categorization should be viewed as somewhat subjective and dependent upon human perception and identity. In the milieu of fluidity ethnic consciousness and "way of life" may be created and reinforced to maintain the status quo at certain times and be transformed to embrace other social constructs at other times. Provided that choice, process, and change are all central to ethnic identity, consciousness, and categorization, ethnicity must not be viewed as entirely objective, permanent, or static.<sup>51</sup>

### **Crisis**

According to Encarta Dictionary crisis means a dangerous or worrying time - a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful, especially a time when action must be taken to avoid complete disaster or breakdown.<sup>52</sup>

### **A Nexus between Culture and Religion**

Culture and religion share space and are deeply intertwined. The purpose of a comparison is only to better facilitate how they interact with each other, but not to suggest a pure dichotomy between the two. Where there is religion there will always be culture. For instance, when we consider the Islamic religion what readily comes to mind is the Islamic culture, while the Christian religion brought

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<sup>51</sup> Haug, Sarah W. *Ethnicity and ethnically "mixed" identity in Belize: A study of primary school-age children*. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 1998, 29 (1), 44-67.

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed, H. Plateau. Crises: The Press as the No.1. Culprit, *Daily Trust*, June 30. 2004.

with it the westernization or western culture. There is no gainsaying that both of the concepts are inseparable.

Being Muslim in Nigerians was and still regarded as the template for becoming more Arab and being Christian was the template for being more European. One need not wonder why book haram fights against western education which they perceive as evil. Drawing from the foregoing argument, each began to see one another as different people who cannot live together but can share resources. How these resources will be shared has often been controversial hence resulting in one form of crisis or the other.

The two main religions we have in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity. Adherents of both regions have lived side by side for decades in relative peace until the 1980s when religion became a tool in the hands of seekers of bloody recognition as a cover-up to commit heinous crime against humanity. Specifically, their primary targets are groups believed to be sympathetic with western education. Surprisingly both of these religions believes in the sanctity of human life, yet fundamentalist who are no doubt adherents of Islamic religions are on a crusade aimed at finishing the unfinished war of 1966 – a war of pogrom targeted at the complete extermination of the bulk of Christians who by stroke of chance were the Igbo.

Historical documents are scattered all over for us to read up the fact that followed after the coup of 15<sup>th</sup> January and the counter coup of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1966, the massacre of the easterners continued under the pretext that those killed in the first coup were majorly northerners and that those who perpetrated the act were not prosecuted. Many years after, it is obvious that champions of this crusade are on the march and it is far from abating. In the course of this research, a stunning and heartrending statistics will be presented in order to prove the fact that ethnicity and religion hanging on cultural leaning have become a major cause of most crises in Nigeria.

### **Isolated Cases of Ethnic/Religious Violence in Nigeria**

Relations between ethnic groups remained a major problem for such a large and pluralistic society since independence and have become more problematic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In pre-colonial times, interethnic relations were often mistrustful, or

discriminatory, and sometimes violent. The first crisis in Kano has to do with colonial manipulation of ethnic and regional sentiments to suppress the anti-colonial forces. In 1953, Igbo people were attacked in *Sabon-Gari*. This crisis was fuelled by political disagreement between the Nigerian based political parties and the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC). This disagreement arose from the motion moved on the floor of the Federal House of Representatives by a member of Action Group, a predominantly Yoruba political party, for Nigeria's independence in 1956 to which the NPC objected, preferring to have it 'as soon as practicable'.

The aftermath of the disagreement was the 15th May 1953 mass demonstration in Kano, against the tour of Action Group (AD) leaders to Northern Nigeria, Kano in particular. A total of twenty-one (21) Southerners were officially declared killed while and seventy-one others wounded. The southerners also killed fifteen Northerners and wounded 163. Most of those killed were Igbo.<sup>53</sup>

The second crisis was the fallout of the January 15th, 1966 military coup d'état led by Major Chukwuemeka Nzeogwu Kaduna, as a result of which many prominent Northern politicians were killed. There was a demonstration in Kano on March 29th, 1966 against Ironsi's (the new head of State) unification decree. Between 100 and 200 Igbo were killed at Sabon Gari.

The case of ethno-religious conflicts which was rare in Nigeria became evident following the October 1982 crisis in Kano. The crisis was ignited by the decision of the Anglican Hausa Church at Fagge quarters to build a bigger church auditorium within its walled premises.<sup>54</sup> The majority Muslim population around then felt otherwise. They felt that the premises of the Church were too close to the Fagge Central Mosque. They did everything possible to ensure that the state government did not approve the building. Despite this effort, the Christian started to reconstruct the church. The failure of the state government to take a categorical decision on the issue provoked a violent reaction, As a result three churches were burnt down in Sabon-Gari and several other churches were vandalised.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibrahim, Jibrin *The Politics of Religion In Nigeria: The Parameters of 1987 Crisis In Kaduna State*. 1987

<sup>54</sup> FGN *Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry on Kano Disturbances Maitatsine 1981*



At first, on the 5th March 1987, there was a quarrel between the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) and the Muslim Students Society (MSS) over evangelical campaign organised by the former tagged "Mission 87". The MSS group protested over the banner hoisted on the college gate with an inscription "Mission 87 in Jesus Campus", it took the intervention of the school authority for that to be settled.<sup>55</sup> The crisis later spread to Zaria, Funtua, Kankia, Daura, etc. in which Muslims communities made reprisal attack on Christian 'settlers'. At the end of the crisis over 19 people were killed and 61 injured. 152 Churches and 5 Mosques destroyed, 169 hotels and Beer parlours burnt, 95 vehicles and 152 private buildings damaged.<sup>56</sup>

In 1991, there was a violent reaction by Muslim youths against the government decision to give permission to the Charismatic Movement in Kano to organise a crusade to be addressed by a German Evangelist, Reinhard Bunke and some American preachers. This came against the backdrop of the government earlier refusal to allow a South African Muslim preacher in to the country.

Muslim youths went on rampage destroying churches, looting shops, burning cars, hotels, beer parlours, night clubs etc. The Igbo as usual seems to be the main targets, their shops were looted and houses destroyed. The Christians/Igbo groups in retaliation attacked some Muslim/Hausa houses, destroyed Mosques and killed any Muslim found in *Sabon-gari*. This resulted in mass exodus from Kano.

The persons who fled were members of Igbo, Yoruba and other southern communities, many of who had spent years in the city. For a whole week, each day, Lorries, trailers and buses were loaded with non-indigenes fleeing the city mainly pale looking children and women. It was unofficially reported that more than 500 people were killed in places like Sabongari, Kofarmata, KofarNassarawa, Ibrahim Taiwo Road, KonarJaba, Gama Brigade, RiminKebe, TudunMurtala etc.

In February and May 1992 another crisis erupted in ZangonKataf between the indigenous Atyab and the 17thcentury Hausa settlers of Zango over the control of

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<sup>55</sup> Suberu Rotimi *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Spectrum Books (1996)p.53

<sup>56</sup> Ibid p.54

market. These conflicting positions and disagreement resulted into violent ethno-religious clashes. The clashes left 95 persons (mostly Hausa) dead, 252 others injured and 133 houses and 26 farmlands destroyed.<sup>57</sup>

Violence broke out on the 15th May 1992 and spilled over to Zaria, Kaduna, Ikara, Makarfi, Igabi, Chikun local government areas. Two factors were observed to be responsible for the escalation and the spilled over to other cities in the state. At the end of the crisis, 471 people were officially confirmed killed with 250 and 188 of the deaths occurring in Kaduna and Zangon Kataf respectively. 518 persons sustained injuries of varying degree, 299 houses and 218 vehicles were destroyed.

In December 1994, Shiites Muslim fundamentalist group brutally beheaded one Gideon Akaluka, an Igbo trader who was accused of defaming the Holy *Qur'an*. Akaluka was accused of using a paper torn from the Qur'an to clean up after using the rest room. This provoked the angry reaction of the Shiite group who declared his "blood lawful" (by implication he should be killed).<sup>58</sup>

The police interfered by arresting Mr. Akaluka and kept him in protective custody. Apparently not satisfied with the court progress, they defied all security arrangements, went in to Goran Dutse prison, pulled Akaluka out and brutally severed his head. They took the head and paraded it round the city chanting "*Allah Akbar!*" (Allah is great).<sup>59</sup>

In June 1995, another violent crisis erupted in Sabongari. The crisis was as a result of a fight between an Igbo trader Arhor Nwankwo and a Hausa man, Abubakar Abdu (Dan fulani) along *Russed Avenue* around *Sabongari Market*. As the fight ensued Abubakar Abdu was pushed into a hot pot of vegetable oil. A free-for-all fight ensued with support for the two fighters spread across ethnic and religious line. Official report put the death toll at 5 but it is believed that 15 to 20 people

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<sup>57</sup> Yau, Y.Z. "Participation of *Shi'at* and *Almajirai* in Religious Conflicts In Northern Nigeria". In Okoye F. (ed) Okoye Festus (ed), *Ethnic and Religious Rights in Nigeria*. Kaduna, HRM. 1998

<sup>58</sup> Ibrahim, Jibrin *The Politics of Religion In Nigeria: The Parameters of 1987 Crisis In Kaduna State*. 1987

<sup>59</sup> Kano State Government *Views and comments of the Kano State Government on the Report of Kano Disturbances Tribunal of Inquiry*. Kano, Government Press 1981, p11

might have been killed. Ninety-three persons were seriously injured.<sup>60</sup> A total of thirty-two vehicles, eighty-one motorcycles and forty-nine shops were vandalised. Many churches and mosques were burnt. The police arrested fifty-four (54) involved in the riot.

On the 22 of July 1999, Hausa youths consisting *almajirai*, *Yan'daba* and other unemployed and social miscreants launched a reprisal attack on Yoruba community in response to the above three days mayhem that led to several deaths and displacements involving some Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu, Ogun state. The Police reported 20 killed, while the media reported between 30 and 50 killed. Eyewitness and Hospital sources believe that about 200 people might have been killed in the crisis. Hundreds of people were injured while properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed.

On 20th Dec. 1999 at Kwara, Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 churches in Ilorin. Properties worth several millions of naira were destroyed and an unspecified casualty reported.

Kaduna Riots broke out on 21–22 Feb. 2000 over the introduction of Sharia law. An estimated 3,000 people were killed

On 28th Feb. 2000 at Abia a Religious riot in Aba, and some other minor disturbances in Umuahia. In the process, over 450 persons were killed in Aba, Abia state, as reprisal for the Kaduna crisis.

On the 8 Sept. 2000 at Gombe a violence otherwise called “The Kaltungo religious crisis”. The crisis was ignited over the implementation of Sharia in Gombe State. *Shariah* question has since the inauguration of the new civilian government in 1999 sharply divided Nigerians across religious lines. Thus the subsequent crisis the followed in February and May 2000 cannot be unconnected with the policy. Police reported 609 deaths and over 1944 houses including business premises and hotels destroyed. A total of 746 vehicles and about 123 Churches and 55 Mosques were burnt. However, the Commission of Inquiry at the end of its assignment reported that 1295 persons died, unspecified number was missing. “From the report of team of Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, and Architects, the Commission found that

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<sup>60</sup> Kaduna State Government *White Paper on the Report of Judicial Commission of Inquiry in to Kaduna State Religious* 2001

individuals collectively suffers a loss of N4, 927,306,603.00 while organisations suffered loss of N1, 445,881,115.00".<sup>61</sup>

On 7–17 Sept. 2001 at Jos a religious riot between Muslims and Christians. Mosques, churches and several properties were damaged or torched in the event. The clashes started on September 7 and lasted nearly two weeks, ending on September 17. The riot broke out when the Islamic Brigade attacked a Christian woman who attempted to cross a public high-way barricaded by Muslim worshippers on Friday. Over 300 people were killed

On 12 Oct. 2001 at Kano a religious riot erupted in protest to US invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden. Over 150 persons were killed. At the end of the crisis, the police reported 32 people killed including one policeman, 51 injured. About 35 houses and 30 shops burnt. It also reported one mosque and four churches burnt. About 286 people were arrested, 16 vehicles burnt, some of them completely damaged. On the contrary the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Kano branch declared 600 Christians still missing and later it was confirmed that 350 them were killed.

On 16 Nov. 2002 in Kaduna the beauty tangent (Miss World) contest billed to hold in Kaduna turned violent as Muslims went on rampage attacking Christians and churches. The crisis was triggered by an article authored by Isioma Daniel in This Day newspaper, alleging that Prophet Mohammed would have loved to have the girls. Over 250 people were killed and several churches destroyed.

On 8 Jun. 2004 Adamawa witnessed a religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Numan town which was caused by the location of the town's Central Mosque close to Bachama paramount ruler's palace. In the process, over 17 persons killed.

18th Feb. 2006 marked another Borno religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Maiduguri. The riot was caused by the Danish cartoon of Prophet Mohammed, in Jyllands-Posten newspaper. Over 50 persons were killed and 30 churches destroyed; over 200 shops, 50 houses and 100 vehicles vandalised.

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<sup>61</sup> Salawu, Biodun. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 13 (3), 2010, pp. 345–353.

22nd Mar. 2007 Gombe Muslim pupils killed their Christian teacher, Mrs Oluwatoyin Olusesan. The pupils claimed that their teacher desecrated the Qur'an while attempting to stop a student from cheating in an examination hall.

28th Nov. 2008 Plateau religious violence between Muslims and Christians in the city of Jos. The crisis which was triggered by the controversial results of a local election which later turned religious. The incident claimed over 700 lives and thousands internally displaced.

In 21st Feb. 2009 Bauchi witnessed an ethno-religious conflict at the Makama New Extension. The incident claimed over 11 lives, more than 400 houses burnt, and over 1,600 families displaced.

The period from 26-30 Jul. 2009 Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe had a share of religious violence unleashed by the radical Boko Haram sect on Christians. Over 700 persons were killed, 3,500 persons were displaced, 1,264 children orphaned, over 392 women widowed, and several properties worth million destroyed.

On 29 Dec. 2009 another religious violence broke-out in Bauchi which was unleashed by the Kala-Kato sect on Christians. Over 38 persons were killed; about 20 suspected members of the sect arrested; and over 1000 people were internally displaced. From 17-20 Jan. 2009 Plateau witnessed a resurgence of religious crisis in Jos. Police announced that at least 320 were killed, but aid workers and local leaders place the death toll at over 550. Over 40 000 persons were displaced.

Islamic militants in Maiduguri killed over a thousand people between 26 and 29 July 2009; during the violence, Christians were killed for refusing to convert to Islam.

On 7th Mar. 2010 Fulani Moslems attacked Christian dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa, Shen and Fan in Jos. The incident took over 500 persons mainly women and children were massacred.

On 11th Apr. 2010 in Plateau another there was another attack on a Christian village of Berom stock, some 30 kilometres south of Jos, by suspected Fulani herdsmen. The attackers targeted the homes of some officials in Kura Jenta, in

reprisal to the killing of about 150 Fulani Muslims, who were allegedly killed and dumped in wells on 19th January 2010. It is said that no life was lost but 3 houses and 6 vehicles were torched.

22nd May 2010 in Plateau, there was an attack on some Christians, who were returning from their place of worship along Bauchi road in Jos. Reprisal attack by Muslims over the killing of 3 Fulani Muslims. At least 1 person died while many were injured.

17th Jul. 2010 in Plateau, Muslim Fulani herdsmen launched an overnight attack on a Christian village, Mazah, north of the city of Jos. In that incident 8 people were reportedly killed, including the wife, two children and a grandson of a Pastor. Seven houses and a church were also burned during the attack.

25 Dec. 2011 Madala, Niger state, near the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) bombs planted at the Church's parking lot exploded during Christmas mass. At least, 45 persons were killed and over 80 others were injured.

From 5–6 Jan. 2012 in Gombe state, gunmen stormed a Deeper Life Church in the city, shooting indiscriminately at worshippers. Shortly afterward, members of the Boko Haram Islamist sect claimed responsibility for the shooting. The incident claimed over 6 persons live while many others were injured. In the same date above 2012 in Mubi, Adamawa state suspected Boko Haram militants stormed a gathering of Igbo Christians and shot sporadically, killing over a dozen and injuring others in apparent execution of an ultimatum given by the Boko Haram Islamist sect to Southern Christians living in the North to leave. 22 persons were reportedly killed; a dozen others were injured.

In Kaduna state on 19 October, 2018 Christian Adara and Hausa Muslim youths clashed. It was a market dispute which led to the deaths of two people. In return a communal conflict erupted, Adaras attacked Hausa, killing dozens. The riots left a total of 55 people dead

On 26 March 2019 in Jos North Plateau state, Christian and Muslim youth inter-communal violence occurred. According to a resident, after the discovery of two dead boys from Angwan Miango over the past week at the border between it and Rikkos, a Hausa community, the people went on reprisal killings against Hausas.

Five people were killed as a result in the ensuing clashes. Arewa Christians and Indigenous Pastors Association, however, claimed deaths of 30 Christians.

Rev Lawan Andimi was abducted on 2 January 2020 by the Boko Haram terrorist group, when terrorists wearing military fatigues ransacked Michika town and forced him into a vehicle. Rev Lawan Andimi was until his beheading but gruesome murder on 20 January 2020 the chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Adamawa state.

On April 12 2020 at Tegin Kabata, Shiroro County Fulani herdsman killed 12 people during a Christian wedding ceremony with five people captured including the bride and groom.

Messiah College High School Plateau State was closed due to COVID-19 pandemic, but that could not prevent the attackers who stormed the on-campus home of the school's leader, Rev. Bayo James Famonure on May 12/2020. He was shot in the head, while his wife was shot in the back and his two children were shot in the feet. Although they survived the wounds, four Christians were ambushed and killed in Adu village.

### **Possible Causes of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria**

Several causes of religious violence in Nigeria abound in various literatures. Whereas most of these causes may be controversial, emphasis in most of the literature is on the underlying socio-political, economic and governance factors that gestate not only religious conflicts, but violent conflicts in Nigeria generally. The focus however is on the immediate and visible factors that generate religious crisis rather than the remote precipitating and other social factors that animate it.

A close perusal of extant literature on the socio-political, economic and governance factors that drive religious crisis in Nigeria show, that government neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry are some of the predisposing factors.

Theoretically speaking, frustration-aggression theory can best explain why religious violence is on the increase in Nigeria. The theory of societal condition and human nature can as well proffer explanations. But since this is not a theoretical issue as such, it will not be proper taking a theoretical perspective

In the views of Kwaja<sup>62</sup> he identifies follows the possible causes of religious conflicts in Nigeria:

1. Fragility of the institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity and corruption,
2. Rising inequality between the rich and poor,
3. Gross violation of human rights,
4. Environmental degradation,
5. Contestations over land.

Among other possible causes of ethno-religious crisis include:

1. The question of settlers and indigenes
2. Marginalization
3. Oppression
4. Religious intolerance
5. Boundary issues
6. Religious fanaticism/indoctrinations
7. Low literacy level of religious adherents
8. Pervasive poverty

## **Conclusion**

Ethnic cleavages, cultural identity and religious sectarianism have the most potentially explosive social division of our time. In Nigeria for instance, ethnic inclination and religious affiliation consistently come into play whenever issues of national importance are at stake and most often if not managed properly leads to conflict. It is obvious that most political and religious leaders rather than commit themselves on consolidating on the issue of national unity (Nigerian Project) create frictions that have adversely affected inter ethnic relations in Nigeria.

No doubt Nigeria is a conglomeration of multi-ethnic and religious groups that have existed for nearly fifty three years (53). In this project called Nigeria, there have been many ugly experiences traceable to ethno-religious mistrust, misgivings and crises of divergent natures – manifesting itself in forms of political

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<sup>62</sup> Kwaja, Chris M.A. Strategies for Rebuilding state capacity to manage ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3 (3), 2009, pp. 105–115



quagmire and economic deprivation/marginalization. This piece of work focused on the validity and vitality of ethnicity, culture and religion as well as the crisis generated by these variables when mismanaged in inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. In the course of this work, we discovered that the problem is rooted on the unfortunate mistake of 1914 amalgamation. We believe that most scholars may disagree with our view on this matter but the fact is obvious that until a round table sovereign national dialogue is convoked and concrete decisions reached on how this project Nigeria could continue without much frictions tempting it survival, we see no end in sight of ethno-religious crisis in this country. It is high time we saw ourselves as one indivisible entity that we proclaim or began to work towards a peaceful separation. If it worked for Montenegro and Serbia, Northern Sudan and Southern Sudan, it can work here that is if this becomes the only viable option that can save our society from extinction.