

The Impact of Religious Violence on Nigeria Economic System With Reference To Karl Marx Theory of Sociology of Religion

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I. INTRODUCTION

It is mostly believed by many scholars that Nigeria as a nation has a substantial percentage of the World population of Muslims and Christians. With the population of over 180 millions, Nigeria has been described by J. Onaiyekan as the greatest Islamo- Christian nation in the world.¹ Professor M.O. Opeyoye makes correct observation when he says that Nigeria is about the only country in the world where one finds a very large population of Muslims living side by side with large population of Christians.² In the assertion of A.E Akinade, there is no other nation where so many Christians and Muslims live together than Nigeria.³ Although there are many adherent of traditional religion in Nigeria, but in the course of this paper, it is either Muslim against the Traditionalist or the Christian against the Traditionalist, but in most cases, it is Muslim against Christians. This reality makes Nigeria an important test case for development patterns of Christian – Muslims relations in Africa. Nigeria provides a rich context for understanding cultural, social, economic and political issues that involved in the Christian Muslim encounter.⁴

Irrespective of the great monotheistic faith having Abrahamic descent,⁵ shared by the two religions with the widest universal acceptance in Nigeria, there is a consensus of opinion among the scholars of ethno-religious conflicts, that over four hundred ethnic groups distributed among the two major religions and the traditionalist, has resulted in an estimated loss of over three million lives and unquantifiable psychological and material damages,⁶ which no doubt at the detriment of National economy. The relationship between Islam and Christianity over the years, have ranged from conflict to concord, from polemic to dialogue, from commercial co-operation to open confrontation.⁷ These have generated questions like what is the basis, motive, and rationale behind this problems? Why is it that these crises defied lasting solution? What havoc has these religion violence done to the National economy? What is the possible solution to these problems? These are the questions intend to analyze in this paper. It focuses mainly on religious violence and how it affects economic system in Nigeria, using dysfunctional theory of sociology of religion.

Economy and Religion

Economy according to Advanced English Dictionary, is the system of:

- (a) Production
- (b) Distribution and
- (c) Consumption.

It is the efficient use of resources in a state, country or region in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services and supply of money which can bring a country into the lime light, in both local and international system. Religion, according to the same Dictionary is a strong belief in a supernatural power or powers that control human destiny. It is an institution to express believe and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. The question now is what has religion got to do with the economy? Emile Durkheim views religion as a phenomenon that unites people into a moral community, which must adhere to its ethics.⁸ Also, Milton Yinger defines religion as a system of beliefs and practice through which a group of people struggles with problems of human existence.⁹ Emile Durkheim and Milton Yinger in their functionalism theory can make religion an instrument of social harmony which can aid economic development. But paradoxically, it has served as a motivation for violence. No doubt, as we can see later in this paper, religious violence occupies Nigeria's security pyramid that has plagued the country more than any other security challenges.

As a result of this, the dysfunctional theory of sociology of religion is applicable to this paper. Karl Marx argued that religion has no positive values for the society. He viewed religion as a tool of oppression of the innocent masses. According to him, "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures, the heart of a heartless

world and the soul of soulless condition. It is the opium of the people.”¹⁰ In other words, religion is a controlling mechanism often deployed by the political elites to control the mind of the masses so as to achieve their parochial interest. To justify this, Walter Rodney says that religion is an aspect of the superstructure of a society deriving ultimately from the degree of control and understanding of the material World.¹¹ Man thinks in religious terms, from ideal rather than the material world which is beyond his comprehension. This creates a non scientific and metaphysical way of viewing the world, which often conflicts with the scientific materialistic outlook with the development of the society.¹²

In line with this, the Europeans, at the end of feudalism, began to narrow the area of human life in which religion and church played a part. Religion ceased to dominate politics, geography, medicine etc in order to free them from religious restraint. It had been argued that religion had its own sphere and things of this world has its own secular sphere. Thus, this secularization of life was just to speed up the development of capitalism and later socialism¹³ in Europe, which they achieved.

Religions Violence in Nigeria and the Causes

Sincerely speaking, Nigeria as a country had never known peace since independence. Religious violence had occurred throughout Nigerian history, but since 1980, it has taken to some magnitude.¹⁴ The religious conflicts is as a result of situation in which the relationship between members of one religious body and another in a multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, fear and tendency towards confrontations. Among these crises are Maitatsine religious disturbances in part of Kano and Maiduguri in 1980s, Kaduna polytechnic Muslim- Christian skirmishes in 1981-1982. The cross vs crescent conflict at the University of Ibadan in 1981-1983, the Muslim clash during Christian Easter procession in Ilorin, Kwara State in 1986. Roman Catholic Vs Assemblies of God conflict in Ifumkpa, Cross River State in 1985, Abia State Pentecostal Church vs Masquerade in November 1987, Apostolic Church vs Ekpo Masquerade at Ikot Epene, Akwa Ibom State in 1988 and Eziga (Onicha) Abia State Christians vs the rest of the community in 1989.¹⁵

In 1999, violent clashes erupted between Yoruba traditional worshippers and Hausa Muslim groups in Isagamu, Ogun State and the reprisal to the Isagamu crisis in the same year in Kano. The Kwara Muslim fundamentalist attacked and destroyed over 14 churches in Ilorin in December 20th 1999. In February 2000, Kaduna riots over the introduction of Sharia claimed the life of an estimated 300 people. Abia Religious riots in Aba and minor disturbances in Umuahia in 2000 and the reprisal for the Kaduna crisis in the same year. In September, 2000 in Gombe, the Kaltungo religious crisis erupted over the implementation of Sharia in the state. Kano religious riot in protest to U.S. invasion of Afghanistan over Osama Bin Laden which claims the life of over 150 Nigerians in 2001. Borno Religious conflict between Christian and Muslims in Maiduguri in 2006. The Adamawa religious conflict between Christian and Muslims in Numan town in 2014, Plateau attacks by Fulani Muslims on Christian dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa in 2010.¹⁶ In the recent time, the activities of Boko-Haram insurgency is well alarming in Nigeria. The suicide bomb attack at the police headquarters and UN House in Abuja, Potiskum, Damaturu and Maiduguri coordinated attack on churches and police stations, including Suleja and Mandala bomb attack in Niger State, were part of the devilish activities of the Boko-Haram insurgency since 2009. Their activities has affected the security of the Nation as they are well known with suicide bombing, kidnapping and destructions, all in the name of religion.

Religious intolerance and extremism form the basis of religious violence in Nigeria, this is the basis upon which other source rest. This is just the hostility towards other religions as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and practical aspect of religion. It encompasses bigotry, according to Isaac T.S., which is the obstinate and intolerant devotion to one's opinions and prejudices especially the exhibition of intolerance and animosity towards persons of different beliefs.¹⁷ Meanwhile, religious bigots have legitimize violence in the name of God.

In justifying the Karl Marx theory, the religious violence sustained largely in Nigeria because it serve the economic interest of certain religious leaders who conceal the economic matrix behind the support for fanatic religious values. Thus, the politicians took the advantage, they understand that the religion is an effective tool for controlling the masses and they play the religion card whenever it suits them. The politicians, through the religious preaching by the religious leaders manipulate the interest of the masses who are mostly the religious followers in order to achieve their aims and sustain their position. This often resulted into politicization of religion and marginalization that makes religion violence inevitable.

The Effect of Religion Violence on Nigerian Economy

It is obvious that Nigeria, since independence has produced a catalogue of religious conflicts that has claimed the life of over three million people who suppose to be part of economic development. Desertification and dwindling of capital resources, demographic explosion, psychological and material damages, social fragmentation and decay, have become serious havoc on our National economy. These have generated a lot of

fear for both local and foreign investors that suppose to bring Nigeria's economic development to the limelight. As a result of these violence, many investment have been paralyzed in the affected areas, many industries have to go on retrenchment of their workers because they cannot meet up with their salaries due to low consumption which has affected the process of production. It has disturb businesses and increase high rate of unemployment in the country, which contributed to the high rate of criminal activities. The unemployment youths are among those used the politicians to cause chaos,¹⁸ most especially during the time of election in Nigeria.

Many influential people and industries are running out of Nigeria due to this religious violence and this includes moving out with their money. Capital flight hit Nigeria economy. As at 2015, a total amount of \$22.1 billion went out of the country.¹⁹ Though this include other corrupt practices. This capital flight has resulted in the serious crash of naira exchange rate. More importantly, by the end of 2017, about 3.7 million people were concern in the growing needs of Nigerian internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees.²⁰ Thus, the Nigerian government is committing significant budget to confront the security and humanitarian situation arising from the insurgency.²¹ This no doubt, not favourable to the growth and development of economy in anywhere in the world.

The bomb exposure and other weapons has destroyed so many infrastructure facilitate. According to Freedom Onuoha, the attacks had traditionally focused on the security establishment and personnel, community and religious leaders, politicians, centres of worship and other civilian targets. Over the times, it has added markets, public schools, hospitals, tertiary institutions, media houses and more recently, critical infrastructure such as telecommunication facilities,²² which is salient to economic development, join the list of these ruthless attacks. Beside, road damages and the attack on motor packs has seriously disturb the flow of economic system.

In September 2000, the world leaders adopted the UN Millennium Declaration that committed the nations of the world to a new global partnership. It is aimed at reducing extreme poverty and other time-bound targets, with a stated deadline of 2015. The Millennium Development Goals (MGD) is the world's only time-bound and quantifiable targets for addressing extreme poverty in different dimensions; income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and social exclusion, while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. The eight goals was planned to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, while aiming to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development. Based on these goals, the world has galvanized previously unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged.²³

The concluding era of MDGs with the end of the year 2016 ushers in the official launch of the bold transformative 2030 agenda for sustainable development adopted by the world leaders. The new Agenda calls on countries to begin efforts to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next 15 years.²⁴ SDGs is build on the Millennium Development Goals. The implementation of the SDGs is an important opportunity to strengthen conflict prevention as an important part of inclusive and sustainable development. The universal agenda 2030 aims to be a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder process involving all segments of the society and leaving no one behind. The same approach is necessary to achieve peace, while preventing is a continuous effort not only to prevent crises but also to address root causes of conflict.²⁵

Despite the effort of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in reducing extreme poverty and preventing conflicts and crisis in Africa, the issue of Boko-Haram insurgency remains one of the impediment in Nigeria.²⁶ Killings, bombings, and kidnapping have reversed the gains of so many years of investment, that has put Nigeria economic development in jeopardy.

II. CONCLUSION

It has been established that religious violence has turned Nigeria into a theatre of war in history. The basis of these crises is intolerance and lack of mutual respect among the adherence of difference religious group and the manipulations by the politicians to control the interest of the masses, which no doubt at the detriment of growth and development of Nigeria economy. Meanwhile, the dysfunctional theory in this paper can be replaced with functional theory if a neo-religious praxis can be established, which would generate a culture and orientation of multi-religiosity in our youth and develop a programme of re-orientation of the adult. The religious tolerance and reciprocal respect for the right of other faithful should be encouraged to bring about unity and conglomeration that will create harmonious and peaceful environment for economic development rather than chaotic individualism.

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