

## Religion and Political Conflict in Nigeria and its Impacts on Nigerian Economic Development 2014-2020

<sup>1</sup>Anene, Chidi Pensive & <sup>2</sup>Iyala, Theodore Obinna

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of History & International Studies,  
Imo State University P.M.B 2000, Owerri

---

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/rjhlsid.v6.i1.06

---

### Abstract

The interplay between Politics and religion in Nigerian plays a key role in the socio-economic development of any nation. Nigeria as a multi-ethnic society and the most populous country in Africa is replete with diverse cultures and religion. Christianity and Islam are two major religions that determine and define the character, nature of politics and conflicts in Nigeria. This study examines the interplay of religion and politics in Nigeria between 2014 and 2020 and its impact on the development of Nigeria. The 2015 general election was marred with religious crisis owing to the defeat of the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan by President Muhammad Buhari. Records reveal that, the incidence of sectarian conflicts have been on the increase since Buhari's victory at the polls, as many lives and properties were lost in the crisis that ensued. The government under Muhammad Buhari has since tried unsuccessfully to quell the lingering religious crisis, ethnic/separatist agitations, and political jingoism that have engulfed the country. Boko Haram, Banditry and Herdsmen are inflicting great harm in the North, while, down South, Niger-Delta Avengers, IPOB and Oduduwa movements held sway, thereby, questioning the continuous existence of Nigeria with its faceted developmental implications. The study x-rays the socio-economic implications of the crisis to national development. The study adopts a qualitative and historical approach of data collection and analysis to arrive at its findings. The paper concludes that, from the evolution of Nigeria's political history, sectarian crises have been inimical to national development but not to be compared with the recorded incessant manifestations of violence under Buhari's present regime.

**Keywords:** *Religion, Politics, Conflicts, Development*

---

Corresponding Author: Anene, Chidi Pensive

### **Background to the Study**

Playing politics with religion in Nigeria's political prism are overarching and cannot be underemphasized. The multi-faceted economic and social impact of the interplay of religion and politics in Nigeria since independent is mind-boggling, its effects are enormous and not obscure, for all to see. Nigeria under the 1999 constitution was defined as a secular state due to its processes of evolution and its political trends since independence in 1960, blessed with abundance of human and material resources, the most populous and diverse country in Africa with over 200 million people in 2018 (Abdui, R. Y. et al, 2014) with a total landmass of 923,770km<sup>2</sup> as well as having a buoyant budget and the largest single economy in Africa.

Nigeria is the cynosure of foreign investors and considering its huge population which translates to a large market, and according to the CIA World Factbook (2017), a breakdown of the population shows that, the Muslim in Nigeria is about 53.5 per cent, the Christian 45.9 per cent whereas, the other indigenous religion is estimated to be about 0.6 per cent. This portrays Nigeria as a home of many diverse cultures and religion struggling through evangelism to outwit the other. Succinctly put, Mustapha (as cited by William, 2018), Nigeria is a religiously heterogeneous nation with principal religions as Islam, Christianity and African Traditional religion that operate a federal system of government. With over 374 ethnic groups, the identities of Nigeria's three majority groups (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) were consolidated in the context of the creation of the three (3) regions in 1946 resulting in each majority ethnic group consolidating and constituting a 'core' ethno-political group in their respective regions with strong political holds: the Hausa-Fulani in the Northern Region, the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo in the East (Ndoh, 1996).

Considering the complex features, natures and characteristics of Nigerian cultural diversity since its evolution, it baffles the curious minds that, surprisingly, Nigerians have had an unbridled and unabridged democratic experience since 1999, of which many scholars of diverse persuasions are optimistic of Nigeria's development while, others see its democratization process as a positive move towards the right direction for Nigeria economic development and emancipation due to its unwavering cohesion, and stability despites been imbued with plethora of diversities yet, is open to infrastructural development because of the many policy reforms programme being initiated by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Alhaji Musa Yar'dua and Goodluck Jonathan's administration Unfortunately, these development direction and agendas set by these leaders for Nigeria which brought visible infrastructural development and political stability in the general areas of the Banking and Finance, Telecommunication, Oil and Gas and the fight against corruption has since eclipsed since 2015, as President Muhammad Buhari, assumed office as President of Nigeria, this is after threatening Nigerians and the government of President Goodluck Jonathan, before the 2019 election that, "Baboons and Monkeys will be soaked with blood" should he loose the 2015, general election(Omede,2011; BBC News,2019 and Cyril,2014). His outburst and religious coloration in politics surprised many as it initiated, heightened the spate of religious conflict to another horrifying dimension that, worsened the political stability once enjoyed by Nigerians and further dividing Nigerians along religious and ethnic lines, creating fears and suspicion among Nigerians which culminated to loss of properties and lives in some part of

Nigeria, especially, in the North where many died gruesomely in the hands of religious fanatics including, members of the Nigeria Youth Corps(NYSC), one of the objects of Nigerian cohesion and integration serving their father land as electoral officers; indeed, its aftermath and consequence were humongous and unimaginable as Nigerians are till date faced with rising inter religious killings that has posed a great security challenge threatening Nigeria's statehood (Cyrill, 2018; Omede, 2011).

### **Conflicts in the Face of Nigeria's Fragile Democracy**

In the words of Maiangwa and Ahmadu (2007), the re-emergence of democratic rule in 1999 heralded a renewal of conflicts and convulsions, ranging from ethnic crises, religious intolerance, political instability and proliferation of resource conflicts, absence of good governance as well as lack of development. The process of Nation building continued to suffer from strong divisive forces of ethnicity, religion and natural resources conflict, which presupposes the weakening of national cohesion and integration. Although, looking at the Nigeria political situation critically, since 2015, frankly speaking, one would realize that, ethnic and religious sentiment has been brought into the fore and even in the political space by disgruntled Nigerian politicians in order to achieve their inordinate political ambitions by initiating and inciting the highly impoverished and gullible masses. Nnoli (1995), as a tool to curry their vote in favour of religion and ethnicity.

To Mubarak (2009), both religion and politics have one common goal: that is to acquire political power and use it to fulfill their aims. However, to achieve this objective, their methods are different. Religion mobilizes religious sensibilities of people in order to get their support to capture power; while politics uses intrigue, diplomacy, and makes attempt to win public opinion either democratically, if the system allows it, or usurps power with the help of army, if the society is under-developed and backward. Generally speaking, as Cox, Orsborn and Sisk (2014) argues that, religious cleavage in Nigeria has evolved toward a bipolar, Muslim-Christian political identity that overlays a dynamic two-party system. This cleavage places social cohesion in Nigeria under tremendous strain, and in risk of further fragmentation, even collapse.

By 2015 many political parties were registered and deregistered by INEC before the general election. Events show that most of the political parties lacked strong political and moral ideologies, even though they were registered as political parties, they were religiously inclined covertly. Adegoke (2020), had argued in view of the above that, Nigerian politics lacks morality and ideology. He further stated that:

*"There is bastardization of politics to the extent that strange bed fellows flock together. The illegality and immorality in our politics should be holistically addressed otherwise our brand of politics cannot guarantee development".*

The agents of the interplay of politics and religion in Nigeria, are the Nigerian Federal Government, State Governments, the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Army who are the secondary actors of the conflict. Within this context, Singh et al. (2007). Observed that,

religion and religious organizations are usually viewed as one of the contributing factors of societal conflicts before the coming of the present regime according to Cyrill (2014), for fear of losing to the incumbent, the northern Muslim were taught by their leaders never to vote for PDP, that it will not support their Islamization agenda. Unfortunately, the various religious groups or beliefs are evenly mixed between Muslims and Christians, and have all helped to increase political tensions exacerbated by the greedy politicians who have the increasingly growing tendency to resort to religious mobilization.

On the long-run, it had led to the risk of creating an increasingly bipolar, zero-sum character within politics in which every major national event is viewed through the Muslim-Christian lens, which could quickly degenerate into harmful “us or them” logic according to Cox, Orsborn (2014). In this context therefore, Nnoli (1995) observed that, as the situation of the poor masses continuous to degenerate, they have subconsciously come increasingly under untoward religious influences and are totally excluded from the political processes in Nigeria. This is made possible as the Nigerian masses have no strong political party of their own that could fight for their interest.

In some states which experienced many attacks, people do not trust the state structure anymore and create their own defense mechanisms such as vigilante groups (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Meanwhile, more than two decades ago Achebe (1983), observed that, the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely, a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land and climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problems are the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise up to the responsibility, or the challenge of personal example, which are hallmarks of true leadership. Salau (2020) having observed the ugly trends of religion and politics in Africa, questions thou: How do Islam and other religious orientations shape public support for democracy? What is the primary cause of conflict or religious violence? What strategies should be employed to resolve such conflicts and violence? This situation by many is unimaginable, and unacceptable as it has since the past decade in Nigeria heightened the spate of violence in Nigeria during and after the election, and of course, its impact on national development since the coming of President Mohammed Buhari to power is unquantifiable.

Sadly, in Nigeria, the government has not taken any decisive action or made any convincing statement to show that it is not complaisant and in support of the ongoing killings in different parts of Nigeria. This corroborates the views of Ogugua and Ogugua (2015) as they rightly opined that, 'your (once) cosmological exclusivism, refusal to look through another lens, accept or understand contrary views is usually accompanied by series of violence and destruction, more so, as some people want to go to heaven ill prepared, carelessly by simply causing mayhem and killing “infidels”. In politics too, Nigeria has been torn apart as we have experienced high level of ethnicism and regionalism skillfully and craftily orchestrated by the colonial and post-colonial administrations. Hence, Ohajiriogu and Chiefe (2000-21), claimed that, the root cause of any strife is the desire to dominate the other. This is as a result of man's egoistic nature, inordinate quest for power, glory, pride and envy. The desire to subjugate and acquire wealth and honour has always germinated wars/crisis.

The increasing polarization of national politics along the religious divide, which also coincides with the geographical North-South divide and separates the Hausa ethnic group from the Igbo and half of the Yoruba, poses a major challenge to national unity. For instance, before the 2015 general election, the Presidency of Goodluck Jonathan has seen the ruling PDP move closely to the Christian Association of Nigeria and major evangelical and Pentecostal churches for political gain, while the main opposition party has moved toward Muslims and the Northern elite (Cox, et al (2014). This paper argues strenuously, that, the state of insecurity in Nigeria has worsened since the assumption of office of the present administration, and this is partly, because of its share insensitivity to the plights of the victims and weak but highly politicized and compromised armed forces, and unless drastic actions are taken to dissuade the undue politicization of religion, in order, to stem its impact on the economy, Nigeria might collapse due to the inability of security forces to prevent the clashes most of the times. Evidence shows that some of the security officers are corrupt, and they cooperate with some of the insurgents and bandits. Instead of being a trustworthy organ of the state and protect their citizens, the security forces in Nigeria disrupt the current situation (Amnesty International, 2018). Thanks to most religious groups that have in many ways provided succor to victims, with prompt unifying programmes to affected communities in order to stem the tides of ethnic division by bridge inter-religious divides. They also provide political, social, and economic alternatives to religious extremist solutions to Nigeria's deep socio-political corruption and poverty according to Cox, et. al. (2014). Furthermore, Appleby (2000) in tandem with the above argue that, religion and religious organizations are usually viewed as one of the contributing factors of societal conflicts and would be a mistake if not involved in peace-building (Fox, 2001).

In view of the increasingly globalized nature of Nigeria's religious divide that, has further complicated and made worse matters of policy, the situation continued to initiate new grounds and platforms to attract foreign assistance and to also, awaken the desire for civil demonstrations and peace activism across Nigeria. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to quell this security menace, indeed, the menace of insecurity and violence in the country have led many people to now adopt community vigilant groups or to create self-defense forces and militias, and unfortunately, some of these security outfits participated in further violence, especially between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers (Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran, 2018). Thus, this work examines the impact of the interplay of religion and politics in fueling insecurity in Nigeria and which has over these periods downplayed the economic development of Nigeria.

### **Clarification of Terms**

The need for clarification of terms cannot be overemphasized. This will among all other thing ensure a better understanding of this paper.

### **Religion**

The idea of the Westphalian state system is an important element that has largely influenced the perception of scholars about the subject of religion in relation to politics of the state according to (Singh et al, 2007). From state's purview, Nyuot (2005) states that religion has

several functions given that it can be a source of legitimizing the status quo, source of change, a source of resistance, social transformation, or a source/agent of political socialization and participation. In contrast however, Candland (2000) insist that, the most crucial variable in determining the role that religion should play in any state - society relations are the degree of religious diversity. Therefore, there are numerous literatures that actually captures the failure of governance and the weakness of institutions of the state in terms of their ability and capacity to manage diversity, as one of the underlying causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999 (Kwaja, 2009:107).

Hence, Ogugua and Ogugua (2015) rightly observed that, religion props up so many challenges even at the level of conceptualization. Religion is as complex as the human society and a reality, though, it comes with some difficulty and yet defies a universally acceptable definition. Within this context, Durrant (1920) argued that, religion is a barrier to human self-actualization. There is no doubt that religion can be seen in this light when it has been turned into an ideological tool or else, which was why Karl Marx described it as the opium of the people, a palliative used by the leaders to hold the masses in check. In the hand of a villain, religion can be a cog in the wheel of progress and massaging of the ego and dehumanization of the people, while in the hand of a “saint” it becomes an instrument for humanization. In this regard, Nnoli (1995) has claimed that in Nigeria, there is total exclusion of the poor(masses) from the political processes. The political system in the country, have never allowed the masses to fully participate directly and substantively in deciding what is produced, when and how, and who gets what of the products. William (2018) has blamed this ugly trend on the manipulation of political elites in government.

Cyrill (2014) equally stated that, the exclusion of the masses from democratic process in Nigeria is deliberate but are easily manipulated to achieve the inordinate and selfish interest of the ruling class. He further, argued that, it is now a common knowledge from recent events in the country that, religion is one of the major elements that relate and interact with political institutions in order to instigate and cause conflicts. Again Cyril (2014); Achunike (2008) and Nnoli (1995) claim that, in Nigeria, the wrong perception of a different religion by others and the level of poverty, ignorance and the literacy level of most adherents as well as government meddling or interfering in religious issues are causes of conflicts in the country. Nigerians no doubt, are a highly religious people, as human they are subject to God with utmost veneration. It is this religious belief that influences their actions, attitudes and relations with other ethnic groups and the society at large.

However, according to Makozi (1988), it is this relationship that is the root of political order for the fact that it gives legitimacy to civil law and forms of sovereignty. He further, enthused that, religion is a double-edged sword which can become a paradoxical instrument in the hand of a few or even the state. Obviously, the lack of political ideology amongst Nigerian political parties makes them an easy tool in the hands of dubious politicians to achieve their inordinate ambitions which has in the recent time, been the causes of political instability in Nigeria. Religion according to William (2018), is the most defining influence in the construction of national identity and simply the most influential. Sadly, since 1999 and mostly in this present

administration, President Buhari has shown the highest level of insensitivity towards the uprising religious extremism/fundamentalist in the county in the likes of El Zazaky and his followers, the Boko Harem (against western education).

Today, Boko Harem has splintered into a deadlier groups-the Bandits and Herdsmen that are racking havoc all over the country pushing their Islamization agenda. Christian farmers saw the Fulani as an Islamization force. They view the Fulani as proxies for northern Nigeria's elites, while some Muslim Fulani complained that they had been mistreated when they encounter Christian communities. The church in Nigeria criticized Fulani herdsmen who have carried out series of fatal attacks on Christians. It is a challenge for the herdsmen to change their ideology and nomadic way of life and to adjust another ethnic group (Ndubuisi, 2018).

Religion is the basis for terrorism, and religious faith has been applied in different ways, depending on the cultural and political environment of each terrorist movement. In some environment (like Nigeria), religion is the primary motive for terrorist behaviour (Gus, 2015). The truth remains that, these sinister Islamic groups have not in any way been controlled, stopped and monitored adequately since Buhari's assumption of office in 2015 despite the huge amount of money voted into security by his regime. Gruesome killings in Nigeria remain unabated. Nigeria debt profile under his watch is mind rendering and boggling. His government has kept borrowing money without any meaningful achievement in terms of quelling the rate of conflicts in Nigeria that has set the economy backward, mainly due to the naivety in the erroneous views that national identity was not constructed on religious basis but on ethnic basis. Recent events in the words of William (2018) have brought the issue of religion and political conflict to the front burner.

### **Conflict**

The history of Nigeria is replete with conflict of various dimensions, since its evolution, ranging from religious to sectional violence, and to the currently escalating clashes between and among traders, and religious groups particularly between farmers and itinerant herdsmen across the country and other many virulent social and political issues challenging the unity of Nigeria as envisaged by Dalhatu (2012), Muzan (2014) and Peace Direct (2017). There are of course many definitions of the term conflict, To Shittu, (2020) conflict could be referred to as a form of friction, discord or strong disagreement arising within a group when the behavior or action of one or some members of such groups are unexpected or restricted by some or other members of the group, especially in fierce or bloody manner. In this context therefore, conflict can be defined as an opposition, disagreement or struggling between and amongst diverse groups over the supply of scarce resources within a social system. In any given social entity, there are many inherent economic and social factors that can fuel or instigate conflict among people of diverse cultural and religious orientation and backgrounds such as; Ethical, political, economic, cultural, and religious tensions and land space impact on the relationship between these different ethnic and religious group in Nigeria (Braukämper, cited in Li, 2018). In the case of Nigeria, for instance, its historical evolution suggests that these diverse ethnic groups before now are bounded historically which in the words of (Boulding, 2000 and Cyril,

2018) contributes to a shared vision of the nature of the conflict. These conflicts have brought terror and misery to many families and state government in Nigeria, particularly in the north. The economic and political cost of these conflicts are altogether huge and indeed, have resulted to serious danger to the means of survival and livelihoods according to (Egbuta, 2018; Genyi, 2017 and Cyril, 2017), and equally questioning the continuous existence of Nigeria as a nation (Onifade, Imhonopi, and Urim, 2013).

However, Onifade, et al. (2013) has observed that, in any social system conflict is inevitable due to scarcity of scarce resources at any given time and place. The unavailability of essential resources are reasons why people struggles to acquire these scarce resources, claim over ownership and rights to political position of power in a given social system. These struggles have brought the insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria. It is important to note that, these violent conflicts ravaging the entire country irrespective of the political rhetoric's and clamor over scarce resources by both levels of government have religious undertone as its major driving force. Nevertheless, the insensitive posturing of government to this security menace has culminated in the present day security challenges, especially between Fulani herdsmen (Boko Haram and Bandits) and host communities in the north and southwards- the Niger Delta Avengers, and other separatist movement like IPOB and call for Oduduwa nation (Onime, 2018; Omede, 2011 and Onifade et al. (2013) and Aliyu (cited in Li, 2018) argue that, the historical tensions between Nigeria's pastoralist Fulani and settled indigenous farmers have intensified in recent years, with dwindling natural resources and land availability greatly contributing to the ongoing escalating conflict in the country. It is important to consider the fact that pastures, woody vegetation, water resources and land which could be regarded as a common property resource that causes severe bloodletting violence as witnessed in Nigeria.

### **Development**

The term development is defined in many ways by various authors depending on their perceptions and perspectives on development as a field of study (Ikenna, 2009). Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing (Rodney, 1972; Okoli and Onah, 2002). However, to Lin (2008) and Matowanyka (1991), the term "development" has various meanings to different people and can be explained in different contexts. For example, the development needs of a starving population must be different from those where there is sufficient nutrition. Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system according to Todaro (1977).

### **Politics**

The term "politics" originates from the Greek word "polis" which is referred to a "city-state". In pre-colonial era, city-state is small countries regarded as world's centers of culture and civilization where people relate and interact under one single government. Hence, Michael as cited by Egobueze (2020) states that, in the ancient era what happens in the polis is politics. He further argued that the origin of the word "polis" suggests that politics is a term that embraces or encompasses the totality of man's activities happening within a city-state. In this wise



therefore, man's interaction and activities within a society cannot be devoid of politics. To the renowned philosopher, Aristotle, in his famous book "Politics" (cited in FYBA, 2012) argued that, man is by nature a political animal and he who is by nature or by accident is without the state is either above humanity or below it. Therefore, in the words of Dahl (1995) he opined thus: Whether a person likes it or not, virtually none is completely beyond the reach of some kind of political system. A citizen encounters politics in the government of a country, town, school, church, business firm...and a host of other organizations. Politics is an unavoidable fact of human existence. Everyone is involved in some fashion at some time in some kind of political system.

Generally speaking, politics could be said to refer as the acts of achieving or exercising positions of governance - organized control over human community, particularly a state or "the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society" according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. To the Oxford English Dictionary, politics is defined as 'the science and art of government; the science dealing with the form of organization and administration of state, or part of one, and with the regulation of its relations with other states. Easton (1971) defines politics as the "authoritative allocation of values". To Ndoh (1994) politics is therefore concerned with the articulation of class struggle in the society, concerned with conflict, its nature and the methods designed to cope with it, the methods designed to resolve the conflicts, wars, riots and other disruptive acts, it deals with how society (like Nigeria) organizes to resolve conflicting and competing interests (in regards to the lingering Herders and Farmers conflict) in ways that will not tear the society apart.

To this end therefore, Pious (1986) from a different perspective, perceived politics as "power and influence", the pursuit of position, conflict management, who gets what, when and how, continuity and change, future shock and ends. Egobueze (2020), again adduces that, the main objective of politics should be to guide a country to achieve real development in a positive way by helping to identify areas of common interest and how to achieve them. Generally, in any country or society as people interact and relate with others over scarce resources, there are bound to be disagreements over its allocations. Politics should be played objectively than using it as a tool to suppress others due to ethnic and religious sentiments, as is the case with Nigerians where religion and ethnicity become a yardstick to determine who gets what, how and when? (Cyril, 2018). Put succinctly, politics is an act of conflict management in any given state/country like Nigeria. It is in this wise that, the overall interest of politics is clear. It concerns how to use power and influence to get others' submission or the struggle to retain power as the case in Nigeria and most countries of the world (Robson, 1954).

### **Impact on National Development**

With the way things are going on in Nigeria since 2015, many fear whether the federal government under President Muhammed Buhari has the enabling capacity and what it takes to stem the tides of the growing insecurity, in view of its grueling and humongous impact on the national economy. Nigeria as an oil dependent country knows too well how dangerous it is when its only source of revenue is being threatened by the state of insecurity. Indeed, as a

mono-cultural economy, no doubt, the importance of the oil sector cannot be overemphasized, and undermining it would spell doom to the country and invariably questions its statehood (Onime,2018; Omede, 2011, Onifade et al., 2013). It is a fact that, in a globalized economy, no country can survive under a state of insecurity. Insecurity is the antithesis of real development to any country that aspires to build infrastructure for development of its economy for the enhancement of the living conditions of its citizenry (Onime, 2018; Cyril, 2018; Onifade et al., 2013). Fortunately, since 1999, Nigeria became a fully democratic nation, and the then former President Olusegun Obasanjo glob-throttled around the world seeking foreign support for the nation's development. To attain this vision, he strenuously embarked on many domestic economic and policy reforms aimed at diversifying Nigeria's economy away from oil to attract foreign investors to help grow and develop the economy of Nigeria. The impact of these reforms, to a large extent boosted the economy and brought infrastructural development to Nigeria.

In the areas of insecurity, his government was very decisive, apt, focus and strategically was able to contain the rising security tension in Nigeria, especially in the North because of the introduction of Sharia, an agenda to Islamize Nigeria, and the increasing rate of vandalization of oil wells and installations in the Niger Delta (Suberu, et al., 2015). In Zamfara State, Muhammed Yusufu, the leader of the Islamic sect was killed. Spurred by the huge loss and in a bid to control the restiveness in the region, the federal government had gone on to institute various agencies geared towards enhancement of the living condition of the Delta people and mitigate the restiveness in the region from 2000-2015. Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) was introduced as a more effective means of stemming the conflagration, killings and kidnapping in the region and to bring development down to the region. Unfortunately, with the change in government in 2015, the political stability Nigerians enjoyed that impacted on economic growth positively diminished and worsened with the emergence of President Muhammed Buhari given the myriads of economic, social and religious circumlocutions in the country and these have robbed off negatively on the country's economy (Cyril, 2018).

To push the point further, Adebayo (1981) argues that:

*When a weak personality of limited intelligence suddenly appears by accident of history at the summit of human affairs, the consequences are often disastrous. It became tragic when such an individual is clothed with autocratic powers to assume's possibility for the government in his own person alone.*

Buhari's health challenge, religious posturing and sentiments incapacitated governance and made it extremely impossible for his government to govern effectively, and stem the rate of violence, which many claimed gave undue religious impetus to the incessant ethnic and religious killing organized and executed by these dreaded monstrous groups - Boko Haram, herdsmen and bandits from the northern extraction which many Nigerians have termed as a genocide or ethnic cleansing. This made his government ungovernable, even as his government regularly claims, 'it is on top of the situation'. The situation in the country was more pronounced due to his frequent foreign trips abroad for medical check-ups that, have caused havoc to the economy considering the huge sums of money spent on such trips. This is

a clog in the wheel of national development in Nigeria. Sadly, the Amnesty International (2018) claimed that, from 2015, the conflict got increasingly worsened; the victims of the clashes only in this year 2018, were more than the total who died in 2016 and 2017.

To Clark (2018) and Onime (2018), it has become apparently clear that, many Nigerian have been killed by ethno-religious or political crisis and even in the Fulani-farmers violence due to an expansion of the agriculturist population and deteriorating environmental conditions. Although, the recent herdsman-farmers conflict has assumed since 2019 an ethnic war between the Fulani group and settled ethnic groups, including Christian communities in Nigeria. In another way round, the multi-dimensional nature of the sectarian crisis has pinned majority of farmer herders along religious lines, in such a way that, the conflicts have put Muslim Fulani against Christian farmers at both the national and local level (Mustapha & Ehrhardt, 2014). To Cyril (2014); Genyi (2017); Gursoy (2020) and Egbuta, (2018), the ensuing crisis since independence (and till date is being viewed as) an attempt to Islamize Nigeria, which highly placed authorities have refuted and dispelled it as a rumor. Hence, Ndubuisi (2018) stated that, in the wake of the crisis, Christian farmers saw the Fulani as an Islamization force. The dreaded tetra headed scourge-the Boko Harem, Bandits and Herdsmen have come under heavy attacks for executing these unimaginable fatal attacks on Christians and bent on Islamizing Nigeria as well as its disgust for Western education. And painfully, the present government led by Buhari did nothing other than making political statement like "we are on top of the situation" and that, the "perpetrators would be fished out", to no avail.

Records from the, International Crisis Group (2017) adduced that, the economic toll of these violence is huge and impact heavily on the nation's economy. In 2015, the International Crisis Group, noted that, the federal government was losing \$13.7 billion in revenue annually because of herder-farmer conflicts in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau states. The study found out that on average, these four States lost 47 per cent of their internally-generated revenues. In March 2017, Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom asserted that attacks by herders coming from more northerly States, and possibly also from Cameroon and Niger, had cost his State N95 billion (about \$634 million at that time) between 2012 and 2014. Communities and households also pay a heavy price. The ethnic Nzor-Tiv Global Association estimated that its Agatu communities in Benue State lost N65 billion in properties (\$204 million) during the early 2016 herdsman attacks. The loss of large cattle herds, crops (due to population displacements and damage to irrigation facilities), as well as increases in transport and labor costs in post-conflict environments all increase poverty and food insecurity in affected communities – and beyond (Ananti and Iloanya (2018).

The incessant violent attacks on communities and on Oil installations, government institutions, productive citizens as well as farmers to a large extent have reduced production and weakened the economic development and growth in Nigerian. The economic situation under Buhari's regime has retrogressed and worsened since 2015, as Nigeria continued to undergo recession coupled with recent global economic lockdown occasioned by the Covid'19 pandemic that is still ravaging and affecting all sectors of the economy. The Covid'19 scourge

further commented on the growing poor masses and fueled the rise of conflict and mass protest against his regime. The #ENDSARS mass protest culminated to the death of many Nigerian youths. Nigeria, since the #ENDSARS protest has continued to face political instability. On the other hand, the paradox of plenty in Nigeria even in the whole of Africa is that the continent is rich, its people are poor- and in many cases extremely poor. It has been variously observed that security fears together with poor governance and rampant corruption from the oil sector has push out Nigeria's oil output in the recent times to the steep side of decline (Timms, 2016). As the situation continuous unabated, Nigeria might collapse or be declared a failed state by the international community due to its multi-faceted magnitude and frightening outlook both in terms of human and material loss. Indeed, more than 6000 lives have been loss to insurgency including properties worth billions according to Cyril (2014), whereas, the Amnesty International (2018) claims that, 312 incidents of attacks and reprisal attacks in 22 states and Abuja between January 2016 and October 2018. As a result of these attacks Amnesty International estimates that at least 3,641 people may have been killed, 406 injured, 5,000 houses burnt down and 182,530 people displaced” (Amnesty International, 2018).

Down south, the rate of militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta region is now a threat to Nigeria's economic development and survival as a nation. The situation has worsened the state of affairs in the region, especially the destructive activities of Niger Delta Avengers undoubtedly, had inflicted untold levels of destruction on key oil sites and have put a serious dent in production. The attack on Focado export line by militants in the Niger Delta has left a total of 79 million barrels of crude oil shut in February 2016, causing oil firms and the nation a huge of loss of revenue according to Punch Newspaper (cited by Durugo, 2020). Furthermore, Niger Delta Avengers have gone as far as keeping their promise to hold the economy to stand still under their operation tagged, “Red Economy”. Their constant attacks on oil production facilities or installations have worsened Nigeria's economic woes and standard of living. The first of their nefarious attacks was the damage to Chevron's main electricity feed pipeline at Escravos terminal cute. Also, Chevron, has said that the damage to the Okan platform had affected about 35,000 bpd of its not crude production or about 15% of its output in the country. Unfortunately, according to New Telegraph (2020), these attacks on the oil facilities are persistent, sophisticated, and appeared timed to inflict debilitating and disruptive effects. Specifically, the vandalism of oil assets cost the country \$825milliom while, \$725million was lost to pipeline vandalism in 2019.

According to the Oxfam briefing paper 107, Africa (Nigeria inclusive) suffers enormously from conflict and armed violence. As well as the human tragedy, armed conflict cost Africa around \$18bn per year, seriously derailing development. The most commonly used weapons in Africa's conflicts are Kaiashnikov assault rifles. The vast majority of these weapons and their ammunition, perhaps 95 percent-come from outside Africa. This situation by many is unimaginable, unacceptable as it has since the past decade in Nigeria heightened the spate of violence in Nigeria during and after the election, and of cause, its impact on national development since the coming of President Mohammed Buhari to power is unquantifiable. The activity of past regime before 2017 is not the concern of this study. Nevertheless, the truth remains that, the violent religious and political unrest since 2015, had unambiguously

wrecked the economy and brought with it unacceptable, unquantifiable and unimaginable humongous cost and reduced national development (Omede, 2011; Onime, 2018 and Genyi,2017).

However, the uncontrollable and unimaginable nature of the killings, theft, kidnappings, vandalization of oil installation or security challenge in Nigeria currently, have gone a long way to prove that the situation has overwhelmed the government despite, the humongous amount of money spent on security vote or the procurement of arms by the present administration or put Succinctly, in Nigerian political parlance, President Buhari's government has done nothing to show that his government is "on top of the situation" as its security architecture has failed to save the situation because of the general issues of corruption, nepotism, ethnic chauvinism, lack of good governance and over politicization of policies as well as religious jingoism and others; which have since 2019, assumed a frightening dimension and threat to the survival of Nigeria (Onifade et al., 2013 and Clark, 2018). TIME (1999) questions weather if "Africa (and Nigeria inclusive) can be at peace with itself"? the continent is plagued with both internal and cross-border conflicts that show no sign of ending. To this end, therefore, the government became distracted as a result of the political instability in the country; the focus of the government became more parochial and highly politicized with an overriding consideration for religious sentiment and personal survival rather than national development. Therefore, Government's failure to handle the insurgency quickly caused social instability and pressure which led to the underdevelopment of the Nigerian economy within the periods under review (Omede, 2011; Onome,2018; Onifade et al., 2013; Clark, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

The interplay of religion and politics no doubt, have grave socio-economic implications to a developing country like Nigeria. Considering its consequences, the federal government must ensure that it utilizes both the strength and gains of religion to integrate its citizens while, considering the impact of a united country for its developmental aspirations to better harmonize its diverse and heterogeneous cultures and belief systems for the growth of Nigeria. To achieve this, as spelt out by few authors, that, moral education must be instilled and injected into our educational curriculum to enhance tolerance for the other religions. Unfortunately, the absence of tolerance amongst Nigerians and their political leaders has over the years brought unimaginable cost to our national development.

Despite, the growing security challenges that are bedeviling our society, this present regime must take strong and decisive actions against such acts of violence and the perpetrators prosecuted without delay and serve as a deterrent to criminalities in Nigeria. While ensuring the country's security networks are beefed up. Besides, there also need for use of dialogue to douse tensions and bring most of the pent up economic and political gladiators fomenting these conflicts to the negotiating table to ensure political stability which is a *sin qua non* for foreign investment and national development. Furthermore, the government must ensure that, the right policies are initiated to quell the tides of insecurity caused by environmental, economic, social and political factors, especially in the northern region where most of the conflicts and violence emanate from which has since 2015, culminated to the death of many

and loss of billions of naira. Finally, the government should liaise with the international community, The UNO, state actors and experts working on the Arms Trade Treaty should regulate the influx of small and light weapons in the hands of insurgents.

## References

- Abdui, R. Y. et al. (2014). PCR 271 understanding conflict and war published by National Open University of Nigeria, In, M. A. Popoola Effect of Farmers and Herders conflict on entrepreneurial practices in Southwestern Nigerian, *International Journal on Economic, Finance and sustainable development*, 4(2)
- Adegoke, K. (2020). *The New Telegraph*, 6 July, 2020.
- Ahmadu, L. H. (nd). *Farmer herders' conflict: Exploring the causes and management approached in the lake chad basin Nigeria*, University of Utara Malaysia
- Appleby, R. S. (2000). *The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence and reconciliation*, In, D. U William Religion and Political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective Review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2).
- Adedipe, B. (2004). *The impact of oil on Nigeria's economic policy formulation*, Test of a paper presented at the Conference on Nigeria's: *Maximizing Pro-poor Growth*; Regenerating the Socio-economic Database, organized by Overseas Development Institute in collaboration with the Nigerian Economic Summit Group, <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/237470277-the-impact-of-oil-on-Nigeria's-economic-policy-formulation>.
- Ananti, M. & Iloanya, K. O. (2018). Marriage of convenience between herders and farmers in Nigeria: Can elephant and hippo tango? *Arts and Humanities Open Access Journal*.
- Achunike, H. C. (2008). Religious practices in Nigeria as source of social conflict', In, D. U. William religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2).
- Abbas, I. M. (2018). No retreat no surrender conflict for survival between Fulani cattle herders and farmers in Northern Nigeria, *European Scientific Journal*, 8(1).
- Aliyu, A. S. (2015). Causes and resolution of conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers in Kastina State, In, M. A. Popoola effect of farmers and herders' conflict on entrepreneurial practices in Southwestern Nigerian, *International Journal on Economic, Finance and sustainable development* 7(3)
- Bukari, K. N., Sow, P., & Scheffran, J. (2018). *Cooperation and co-existence between farmers and herders in the midst of violent farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana*,

- Li, N. (2018). Nigeria's Fulani herdsmen-Farmers conflict and peace building, *Global Journal of Agricultural Research*. Nova Southeastern University
- Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S. & Akpor-Robaro, M. O. M. (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development, *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 4(2).
- Amnesty International. (2018). *Harvest of death: Three years of bloody clashes between farmers and herders*, Abuja: Amnesty International Ltd.
- Boulding, E. (2000). *Cultures of peace: The hidden side of history*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- BBC News. (2019). *Nigeria election: Muhammadu Buhari re-elected as president*, Retrieved from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47380663>
- Cyril, A. (2018). *Conflicts in Northern Nigeria; A historical perspectives*, Kano State; Sound bock Publisher's
- Candland, C. (2000). Faith as social capital: Religion and community development in Southern, Asia. In, D. U. William religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2).
- Cox, D. F., Orsborn, C. R. & Sisk, T. D. (2014). *Religion and social cohesion in Nigeria: Frustration, polarization, and violence*, Josef Korbel School of International Studies and Sie Cheou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy.
- Clark, H. (2018). *Over 6,000 Nigerians in Christian-identified communities murdered or Maimed by Fulani Muslims in 2018*, Retrieved from
- Christopher, I., & Ndubuisi, C., I. (2018). *A critical analysis of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria: Causes and socio-religious and political effects on national development*,
- Li, N. (2018). Nigeria's Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict and peace building, *Global Journal of Agricultural Research*. 4(1) Nova Southeastern University
- Dahl, R. A. (1995). *Modern political analysis*, New Delhi, Prentice-Hall of India private ltd.
- Dalhatu, D. D. (2012). Causes and effects of conflict on Nigeria's development, *Multi-disciplinary Journal of Research and Development Perspectives*, 1(1). Cross River: University of Calabar,
- Durugo, C. N. (2020). *The political economy of crude oil in the Niger Delta*, PhD Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of Port Harcourt.

- Easton, D. (1971). *The political system: An enquiry into the state of political science*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Egobueze, A. (2020). *The state and the people*, Port Harcourt: Pearl Publisher's International Ltd.
- Egbuta, U. (2018). *Understanding the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria*, Retrieved from African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria/>
- Familusi, O. O. (2019). *Religious politics and its implications for sustainable development in the post-independence Nigeria*, [www.researchgate.org](http://www.researchgate.org).
- Fox, J. (2001). Clash of civilizations: Which is more determinant of ethnic conflict, *Ethnicities*1 (3).
- Gus, M. (2015). *Understanding terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives and issues. 4(ed)*, Sage Publications Inc. United Kingdom.
- Genyi, G. A. (2017). Ethnic and religious identities shaping contestation for land-based resources: The Tiv-farmers and pastoralists conflicts in central Nigeria until 2014, *Journal of Living Together. 4-5* (3).
- Girsoy, G. (2020). *Farmers herders' conflict in Nigeria*, [www.researchgate.org](http://www.researchgate.org).
- Gopin, M. (2000). *Between Eden and armageddon: The future of world religions, Violence and peacemaking*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Huntington, S. (1991). Religion and the third Wave' *National Interest* 24(Summer), In, D.U. William religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy, 4*(2).
- Hornby, A. S. (2010). *Oxford advanced learners dictionary(4ed)*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- International Crisis Group. (2018). *Stopping Nigeria's spiralling farmer-herder violence*, Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/262-stopping-nigerias-spiralling-farmer-herder-violence>.
- Kwaja, C. M. A. (2009). Strategies for rebuilding state capacity to manage ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria, *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3 (3).



- Li, N. (2018). Nigeria's Fulani herders-Farmers conflict and peace building, *Global Journal of Agricultural Research*, 4(3) Nova Southeastern University.
- Muzan, A. O. (2014). Insurgency in Nigeria: Addressing the causes as part of the solution In, E. Nwakanwa, and S, E, Boroh demography of conflict and the herders-farmers crisis in Nigeria, *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 17(2), 28-40. [https://doi.org/10.36108/NJSA/9102/71\(0220\)](https://doi.org/10.36108/NJSA/9102/71(0220))
- Mustapha, A., R., & Ehrhardt, D. (2014). *Creed & grievance: Muslim-Christian relations & conflict Resolution*, 5(2)
- Mubarak, A. (2009). *Religion and politics: Integration, Separation and Conflicts*
- Maiangwa, J. & Ahmadu, H. J. (2007). *Reflections on and insights into the Nigeria's political instability since independence: Alternative proposal for consideration*, In, L.H. Ahmadu Farmer Herders conflict: Exploring the causes and management Approached in the lake Chad basin Nigeria. University of Utara Malaysia
- Ndoh, C. A. (1994). *An introduction to political science*, Enugu; Tudor and Group Printers.
- Nnoli, O.(nd). *The poor and the politics in Nigeria*, Michigan State University Libraries
- Nwakanwa, E. & Boroh, S, E, (2019). Demography of conflict and the herders-farmers crisis in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 17(2), 28-40.[https://doi.org/10.36108/NJSA/9102/71\(0220\)](https://doi.org/10.36108/NJSA/9102/71(0220))
- Nyuot, Y. (2005). Notes on ethnicity, democratization and nation building experience in Africa and relevance to West Africa, In, D.U. William religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2).
- Onifade, C, Imhonopi, D. & Urim, U. M. (2013). Addressing the insecurity challenge in Nigeria: The imperative of moral values and virtue ethics, *Global Journal of Human Social Science Political Science*, 13(3).
- Ogugua, P. I. & Ogugua, I. C. (2015). Religion and politics in Nigerian society: Problems and prospects (a philosophic probe). Scientific Research Publishing Inc, *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 5.
- Onime, E. B. (2018). Insecurity and economic growth in Nigeria: A diagnostic review, *European Scientific Journal*, 14(4). Uniport. PhD Thesis.
- Olaniyan, A. & Yahaya, A. (2016). *Herders-farmers' communal conflict In Nigeria: An indigenized language as an alternative resolution mechanism*, AFER SPECTR

- Oxfam Briefing Paper (2009). 107-[http:// www. oxfam, de/download/Africas\\_ missing\\_billions.pdf](http://www.oxfam.de/download/Africas_missing_billions.pdf). Accessed on 6 June.
- Omede, A. J. (2011). Nigeria: Analysing the security challenges of the Goodluck Jonathan administration, *Canadian Social Science*, (7),5.
- Ohajiriogu, A. & Chiefe, F. (2000-21) War crisis in Africa: its implications on Christianity and justice, In, *Enwisdomization Journals*.
- Punch Newspaper (2013). *Theft knocks Nigeria's oil output to four-year low*, 28 August.
- Punch Newspaper, (2013). *Nigeria's oil revenue drops by 42 per cent*, 24 August.
- Pious, R. M. (1986). *American politics and government*, New York: McGraw-Hall Book Company.
- Popoola, M. A. (2020). Effect of farmers and herders' conflict on entrepreneurial practices in Southwestern Nigerian, *International Journal on Economic, Finance and sustainable development*.
- Rahim, M. A. (2010). Towards a theory of managing organizational conflict, *International Journal of Conflict Management*. 13(3).
- Shittu, M. O. (2020). *Farmers and herders' conflict in South-West Nigeria. From 2011 – 20219*, Unpublished M. Sc. Thesis. Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Faculty of Social Science. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).
- Singh, G., Marquette, H. & Alolo, A. (2007). *Political science, religion and development*, In D.U William, religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls. *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2).
- Suberu, O. J., Ajala, A. O., Akande, M. O. & Adeyinka, O. B. (2015), Diversification of the Nigerian economy towards a sustainable growth and economic development, *International Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Science*, 3(2), 114.
- Salau, B. M. (2009). Religion and politics in Africa: Three studies on Nigeria, *Journal of Law and Religion*, 35(1).
- TELL Magazine (1999). *Can Africa be at peace with itself?*
- William, D. U. (2018). Religion and political conflict in Nigeria: A reflective review of the April 2011 polls, *Journal of Humanity and Social Policy*, 4(2)