

Contemporary Ethno-Religious Development Crises in Northern Nigeria with a Special Reference to Some States: Genesis, Implication, Impact and the Quest for Prospect

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Abstract

A study has been conducted purely for the exploration of the remote and immediate factors that frequently lead to the outbreak of the studied subject matter in the region and period under review. In this study, a multitude number of published and unpublished sources have been put into use for appropriate historical reconstruction of some major obstacles associated with political, economic, social, tribal and religious aspects of the region and its populace with the sole aim of proffering an outstanding solution for the well-being of the Region, Nigerian state and society by and large. According to the report, the main causes of crises are unequal resource distribution, young political manipulation, abuse of religion teachings, corruption, unfair elections, and a decline in public confidence in the government. In order to further particular political, economic, and social goals, it contends that incidents such as the 1986 Kafanchan riots, the Maitatsine in Kano, the religious clashes in Jos, and the current Boko Haram insurgency were staged. However, it is also not out of place for the study to bring into light that the evolution of contemporary economic and commercial ideologies such as banditry and kidnapping for ransom are not only Islamically, inhumane, misleading, irreligious and forbidden by both Islam and Christianity (Abrahamic Religions), but also irrelevant, false claims, devastating in nature and too disastrous to humanity and globe at large. Other contributing factors which the study holds responsible for the outbreak of the crises include indigene-settler-dichotomy, failure of the traditional, religious leaders as well as relevant policy making bodies to rise to the responsibilities ahead of them. Strategies for the Northern Region and Nigeria's political, economic, social, and religious advancement are suggested in the study's conclusion. Important suggestions include adopting democratic ideals, promoting trust, equity, good governance, and equitable resource distribution. Additionally, it calls on Northern politicians, elites, and traditional leaders to confront important issues for the benefit of the country and the region.

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INTRODUCTION

This scholarly work has been initiated and carried out as a study to examine the fundamental causes,

implication and impact of religious intolerance on the Northern Region and its populace with the sole aim of proffering an outstanding solution.

However, in any case, for a proper understanding of the main focus, objectives and obstacles that artificially bring about a conflict of this nature under review therefore, it would not be out of place but equally important to sub-divide the contents of this scholarly work into an appropriate and relevant sections each treating a particular and separate aspect of the study basically for a better comprehension of the study as a whole. Further to the above point raised, it is also interesting to note that the study largely centres on the examination of some major concepts applied into use herein among which include conceptual interpretation and analysis of some basic concepts applied. In another related development, the study critically assesses and draws into light how the doctrines, teachings and practices of two Abrahamic Religions (Islam and Christianity) have been neglected and ignored to the background by some misguided followers, who are mostly and frequently responsible for these ethno religious conflicts under review which largely occur due to the high rate of illiteracy, selfishness interests, religious misconceptions, distortions and misapplication of sincere religious teachings and practices by and large.

Furthermore, the study explores and highlights the negative role of some unpatriotic politicians and the youths of Northern Region in the artificial creation of so many anti-social vices that disrupt peace, progress, harmony, unity and stability basically for the satisfaction and attainment of long-term plans, targeted goals and objectives. The last but not the least of the major findings of the study among which include the danger associated with the artificially created poverty, hunger, unemployment, evolution of modern commercial and economic ideologies of kidnapping for ransom, banditry activities and religious insurgency (*Boko-Haram*) [1]. Further to the above, the study also highlighted that the fundamental factors of ethno-religious conflicts are countless, remote and immediate in nature.

Finally, the study argues that violence of whatever nature is not only disastrous to the life of humanity and society at large but economically, downgrading/under-developing and depopulating the affected society. At the tail end, the study strongly recommends the way forward for the progress, unity, peace, cohesion, well-being and betterment of the Northern Region and its populace in general.

Conceptual Interpretation and Analysis

A scholarly work titled “Ethnic and Religious Crises in Northern Tafawa Balewa; Issues in Informal Repression [2].” Highlighting those conflicts is an unaligned contradiction in opinion and perspectives between two or more persons or groups. To him, conflict in developing countries has often been perceived negatively by many people. In any case, it is imperative to note that what actually determines the direction of conflict are the attitudes of the people involved. Further to the above, conflict of whatever nature brings about destruction of human and material resources, as well as negative developments as it is embedded in the pursuit or quest to achieve an incompatible interest of the opposing camps to the detriment of other party. A study shows conflict as a social phenomenon, that mostly occurs in all spheres of human interactions and relationships [3]. The type of relationship discussed in this study could be in the form of any of these; political, economic, religious or a combination of all even.

However, in another related development on the concept of Ethnicity, strongly argues that ethnicity may mean a gloss of ethnic identity, i.e. when people share in a common historical and cultural antecedent [4]. It is a social formation built around certain cultural practices and unique symbols. Ethnicity usually influences groups’ social relationships and personal identity as a result of its complex social constructs. This is certainly nothing more than the kind of discrimination that exists between members of the opposing groups. In any event, it is worthy to be borne in our intellectual minds that this studied subject matter effectively concerns with the feelings of our practices of alienation and identity which characterize both International and Intra-National Relationships. In this tradition people are classified based on their social, religious and cultural background instead of nationality.

Recent past studies conducted have further shown that in many parts of Northern Nigeria with an emphasis given to Bauchi state as far as Tafawa Balewa ethno-religious conflict is concerned, ethnic sentiments are products of numerous forms and practices, as the study pointed out that many citizens regard themselves as belonging to one religion or primordial ethnic group. Other related studies conducted like that of titled *Kinsmen At War On The Borderline* stresses that ‘ethnicity’ got prominence under the pretext of political discourse in the 21st century consequent upon the disintegration of the multi-ethnic Soviet Union, which led to the outbreak of numerous violence and civil wars on massive scale, from the foregoing therefore, in any case one might be convinced to accept ‘conflict’ itself as a situation in which two or more groups are in serious disagreement leading to fight and results in generating hatred and antagonism, dishonesty and absence of peace, progress and stability. However, on the whole the interest of the study is to briefly bring into light that “Ethno-Religious Conflicts” Centre on serious misunderstanding between peoples of different ethnic and religious background [5]. However, last but not least and of equal relevance and importance is the discovery of the fact that ‘ethnic’ is used to describe people of equal origin, language and culture. It is found largely within the confines of a defined geographical and territorial boundary. In view of the above light drawn into therefore, it could be safe to justify that “ethnic conflict” it is structural multi-dimensional and lethal violence among different ethnic groups which one or more of the conflicting parties is/are yet to achieve the targeted goals and objectives at the expense of the other conflicting party. In any case, ethnicity should be regarded as human collectivity, real or imagined, driven by the consciousness of having a common origin.

CAUSES AND IMPACT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

However, in any case it would not be out of place but of great concern, relevance and importance to be borne in our intellectual minds that a very good number of relevant studies conducted recently have highlighted that the genesis/fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflicts in the area under review are not only, numerous, historic, purposeful and artificially created in nature, essence and extent but are mostly financially funded development crises, created for the satisfaction of some people’s political, economic, social and religious interests purely for the satisfaction and attainment of some targeted goals and objectives. In view of the above point raised, therefore it could be safe to justify that the list of the principal causes of the ethno-religious conflicts, causal factors seem inexhaustible for instance; ethno-religious schism/division of religion/ sects and fanaticism for long have been generating various forms of violence. This could be exemplified with the cases of Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi state from 1983-2013, Bulunkutu riot, Zangon Kataf, Kafanchan all of Southern Kaduna state in 1985, and so many parts of Northern Region and some of such conflicts that occurred in the aforementioned parts of the North were not only devastating in nature but too disastrous to the existence and survival of the affected humanity and society by and large.

Furthermore, recent past studies conducted by a grounded scholar in person of points out that both the remote and immediate causes of the subject matter of study are not only harmful and threat to human’s life but disastrous and myriad in number among the major ones include; failure of the security personnel to rise to the task of peace-keeping, prosecute the perpetrators/offenders of law, high rate of tension, deprivation of freedom of worship, neglect of fundamental human rights to the core, political instability, fear and chaos. To him, this is not only malicious assault by one religious group on the other which certainly threatens the foundation of Northern Nigerian unity, progress, peace and stability, with a concrete reference drawn from Tafawa Balewa of Bauchi state, Southern Kaduna state, Kano metropolis and *Boko Haram* (Religious Insurgency) in Borno state to state but a few amongst various parts of Northern Nigerian region [6]. In addition to the above, for a proper comprehension of the root causes of conflict in any given human society a study strongly argues that.

“In any event, it is not the ordinary people or deluded general masses that cause a war, turbulence, mental confusion, political disorder and ethno-religious conflicts in general but people of the

government/policy makers basically for the satisfaction of their long-term plan, political, economic, social and religious interests and commitments”.

The above implies that the political, economic, religious and social ambitions of the Northern politicians, elites and policy making bodies is one of the major causes of ethno-religious conflicts that have been occurring in the Northern region, Nigerian state and society in general since the declaration of Nation's Political independence October 1st, 1960, to contemporary period. In his incisive and constructive criticisms against the obstacles confronting Northern Nigeria, he strongly argues that *“Historical scholarship is one of the essential instruments of peacebuilding as it generates mutual trust, understanding, peace, unity and progress as well as advancement of human's society by and large.”* He further views Historical studies this way in his scholarly work titled *“Northern Nigeria Under British Overrule: Essays and Documents”* [7]. Every Person has a History and the more and the better we understand all these Histories, the better we shall all be.

However, of equal importance and relevance herein is how the study highlights that one of the ways forward against ethnic religious conflicts is to embrace Historical scholarship as an essential tool of peacebuilding. In another related development, some previous studies have explored and highlighted that cases of religious fanaticism, fundamentalism and extremism are also contributing factors that lead to the outbreak of religious violence in any given human's society talk less of Northern Nigeria. From the foregoing, in any case, one might be convinced to accept that the aforementioned concepts are always beyond Muslims and Christians feud as the study discovered that both exist even in the midst of particular religion. For example, in Borno metropolis *Boko Haram* members, the so-called religious insurgents had burnt down a number of comprehensive Mosques and categorically stated that those destroyed mosques were established and possessed by infidels [8]. Studies conducted have also revealed that other related causes of religious and ethnic conflicts include; indigene-settler dichotomy, partisanship of security agencies, journalists failure to stick to objectivity, overcome falsification, distortions and blasphemous as well as governmental inability to ensure appropriate, equality and justice in resource control, management and efficiency and as well as failure to ensure equal allocation of human and material resources against inequality, injustice and maltreatment are both inclusive too.

IMPACT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE ON NORTHERN NIGERIA

In any case, it is imperative to understand that this study of ours strongly argues that ethno-religious violence is not only complicated and devastating in nature but two disastrous to the people's lives, belongings, political, economic, social and religious life of the region under historical exploration, analysis and reconstruction by and large. However, for the furtherance of knowledge on the above point raised therefore it could not be out place to quote in his studies titled. *“Northern Nigeria Under British Overrule Essays and Documents”* views conflict this way as additional basis [5].

“In any event, the genesis, causality and effects of any given crises or a war must all be connected to the political, economic, social and religious interests of the policy makers and elites by and large. Above all, the question of inefficiency of resource control, unequal allocation of resources, mismanagement and inefficiency are as well part of the fundamental or the root causes of conflicts. This is basically because it is not the ordinary people that cause a war but people of the government.”

The above quoted scholarly work of a grounded Historian highlights the fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflicts and negative impact on human's society in general with an emphasis given to some parts of Northern Nigeria. For Ibn-Khaldun known as Abdurrahman, a Tunisian grounded scholar views human's existence this way in his famous book titled *Al-Muqaddimah* *“I accept everything comes from Almighty Allah, but human labour is necessary for capital and profit accumulation and as well as for absolute human's survival hitch-free”* [9].

However, in another related development recent past studies conducted on *Northern Nigerian Youth: Violence, Religion and Politics*, has stressed that violence of whatever means or dimensions has become

a common occurrence in the Northern Region of Nigeria. For example, current uncontrollable, commercially, economically and ideologically evolved terrorists' development atrocities such as banditry, kidnapping for ransom, religious insurgency and farmers-harders conflicts are not only depopulating Northern Region's population but found destructive to the economic life of the North and one of the major factors responsible for the backwardness of the Northerners in the field of socio-political and educational developments.

Furthermore, Cyprian Ekwensi, points out that for the betterment and progress of our beloved country (Nigeria) "*United we stand and divided we fall*" for views it the same "*A divided house cannot certainly stand on its feet [10]*." This implies that the root causes of our societal problems could be attributed to the fact that there is a nostalgia feeling by the old such as the feelings of despair and frustrations, uncertainty in the heart of every citizen of the Nigerian state and society, particularly the North. However, relevant studies recently conducted have highlighted that hospitality, patience and peace as well as general security to human's life and property have partly disappeared leaving in its wake a near cataclysmic region, demons of religious and ethnic bigotry, vulnerable children, extreme poverty, unemployment and the grand of them. The study explored and argued that the relevance and validity of youth in any given human's society cannot be quantified. It is therefore against the above backdrop, this study brings into light that whenever youth are in a state of desperation, the cases of commotion, disagreement and destruction must have a portion for existence in human society.

However, it is still pertinent to note that some similar studies conducted have demonstrated that, Northern part of Nigeria is one of the world's most complex regions but has always been the most particularly interesting setting owing to its complexities, reflective in population and land size, ethnic multiplicities and the propensity for religious extremism and regional or sub-regional sentiments. In a nutshell, this shows the analogies that trail the acceptability decadent political, social, cultural and economic misfortunes of the North and Northerners themselves by and large. Further to the above, it is also of relevance and importance to note that the North under-review herein it is unquestionably as multi-ethnic as any part of the globe can be, with more than 200 well-defined and distinct ethnic groups co-existing within it.

However, studies have revealed that the people of the North are very hospitable, generous and accommodative in nature and character compared to their counterparts. They are also hardworking, submissive and adaptive as affirmed and highlighted by numerous scholarly works. Further to the aforementioned research results, still other relevant studies have stressed that the Northerners on contrary to the wrong assumptions of the Southerners, are both promising up to date, humble, honest, straight forward hospitable, non-violent, academically minded people and very keen on scholarship if closely observed. This clearly points out that it is an intellectual rejoinder of the study against the Southern and Western Regions negative impression wrongly/falsely claimed to have on the Northerners. Contemporarily, the Northerners are fast in transforming into a more positive and radical approach and equally get along with modernity well as explored and pointed out by various studies conducted and above all it could be seeing how adaptive they are today. However, from the foregoing it could be justified for the study to state that treasury looting/ diversion of public accounts to private, inappropriate resource control, inefficiency, poor governance, mismanagement, maltreatment of deluded masses by the policy makers, traditional rulers, religious leaders, Northern elites and democratically elected classes are as well part and parcel of the factors responsible for the outbreak of unfortunate state of affairs not only in the North but Nigerian area as a whole.

Furthermore, other related studies conducted on the subject matter under review have argued that there is no doubt in the propensity of the Northern youths to indulge in the violence and unbecoming behaviors with regards to the reason solidly behind the matter. Further studies highlighted that relative deprivation, rising expectations, frustrations of any sort and aggression hypothesis are as well frequently part of the remote causes of restiveness of the youths. There must also be the case of economic

phenomenon in which poverty has been artificially created as a compounding element of indulgence in violence by youth in particular. Further to the above, the manipulative tendencies of the ruling class have been found involved to tune and push the youths towards violent acts for the attainment of their targeted goals and objectives.

In a similar negative development, previous research conducted have revealed that from the period of Nation's political independence October 1960, upwards incidental cases of brutal killings of innocent citizens, boys, girls, men and women on massive scale as well as loss of properties were both witnessed and recorded in different nooks and corners of the Nigerian area, particularly the Northern Region. Further points out that such list of casualties are countless and endless, from the bottom in Northern Nigeria since 1966, Military coup, and encounter coup d'état (Civil War, 1967-1970), this had in particular claimed millions of lives and unquantified properties, the 1980 Zaria violence, the Maitatsine riot in Kano, Maiduguri current ongoing religious insurgency (*Boko-Haram*) Bulunkutu riot, Tafawa Balewa riot, Gombe and many others such as the Ilorin and Ibadan in 1986 the 1987 Kafanchan religious intolerance, Funtua, Kaduna and Zangon Kataf crises of 1992, the 1999 Kaduna riots, Ijaw and Itsekiri violence in the Delta state.

In view of the above, it is still not out of place but equally important and relevant to bring into light that other studies interacted with have demonstrated that Nigeria as a whole has witnessed a series of violences attributed to the re-introduction of Islamic Law Sharia in Zamfara state in the year 2000 A.D. the heights of these of 2001 and Kano riots of an equal period. Other related crises that occurred included the Jos crises of 2001 and Kano riots. Sanni (2011) has stated that there have been elaborate arguments regarding the reasons that bored economic backwardness of Northern Region some of such arguments intellectually raised have since pointed fingers at the colonialists for prioritizing Southern's economic potentials relegating the North to a supportive role [11]. In view of this former President of America in person of Bill Clinton has also puts it this way; "*The Extreme Poverty of Northern Nigeria is partly responsible for the drive by youths towards the scourge of violence within*" [12]. This sounds not only simplistic to comprehend but anything obviously seen and witnessed. Above all, poverty itself is questionable, not that it doesn't exist, but why does it occur?

However, from the foregoing, it could be quite convincing for an intellectual mind to agree that the fundamental causes of ethno-religious conflicts are not only remote and immediate in nature or devastating but too numerous and the most fundamental ones include administrative weakness/ poor governance as well as irrelevant and inappropriate democratic culture found in operation which is politically ruthless and oppressive in nature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

However, from the aforementioned details offered and list of some major challenges explored and examined for the attainment of an outstanding solution, it could now be relevant and appropriate to state that the interest and objective of any constructive and meaningful research conducted is to proffer solution to the obstacles identified under the studied subject matter. In any case, it is also worthy to note that the challenges confronting peace, unity, progress and positive developments of Northern Nigeria in the 21st Century in particular are not only numerous and disastrous but equally and promptly deserved to be given a serious attention. However, it is against the above backdrop this study has been able to generate some positive and constructive ideas as the way forward among which include:

- Both the Nigerian three tiers of government; local, state and federal, governments, traditional rulers, religious leaders, academics, consummate politicians, local and cosmopolitan opinion leaders of any given levels should equally and seriously rise to the responsibilities a head of them with the sole aim of saving the Northern region and its populace against the brink of decline and collapse.
- Religion and ethnic politics should be suppressed down completely and be willing to practice it purely on merit, efficiency, equity and fairness for the well-being of Nigerian state and society as a whole.

- Develop and practice the spirit of forgetfulness and forgiveness in respect of the past conflicts occurred.
- Absolute freedom of worship, respect for religious beliefs and tolerance should be mandatory and put into practice.
- Partisanship of security agencies should be discouraged.
- Tribalism, nepotism, corruption and bribery should be overcome for the sustenance of sound and advancement of democratic culture in the North and Nigeria as a whole.
- Proper allocation on equal basis of both human and material resources should be ensured.
- The authorities concerned should note that there is always high tension and panic among the Northern peoples as lives and properties are not safe, high blood pressure, casualties are also both common. This highlights that drastic measures are highly relevant and needful. For the people concerned to place their minds at rest.
- The correlation between ethno-religious conflicts and general insecurity in the Northern Region are both fundamental, interwoven, disastrous and escalating to the highest point. The study herein calls for immediate and drastic action against for the well-being of the North and its people.

The last but not the least, the study strongly recommends bargaining/round table conferences, negotiation, mediation, dialogue, compromise, moral and financial motivations as the essential instruments for peacebuilding as well as the appropriate way forward. However, still it is not out of place to quote some scholarly points of view and put them into application for our betterment. (Aminu Kano, 1980) in his political philosophy and ideology in respect of the validity and relevance of tolerance opines that *"I have seen light from far horizon but extremely difficult to reach in the absence of constructive efforts and tolerance in human's life and existence therefore both efforts and tolerance are needful in human's existence"*. In a similar development a grounded International Islamic Religious Scholar in person of late Sheikh views life and human's shortcomings this way. Even to accept correction, one needs to be intellectually matured, responsive and responsible this is basically because it is only a generous and soft-hearted mind could admit a mistake in public.

From the foregoing, it could therefore be safe to justify that both the aforementioned sections highlight the significance of human's positive understanding of life and tolerance in peace building, as well as socio-political, economic and religious advancement of any given human's society.

In a nutshell, the study calls for an effort to be made and reach an appreciable level of constructive inference, inter-marriages and inter-faith conversations should be promoted, accepted and applied into consideration as the way forward and as well as comparative religious studies should be given a special priority with the sole aim of overcoming ethno-religious misunderstandings.

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to explore, sequentially and critically examined some major fundamental factors that favour the outbreak of a waves of ethno-religious violence on massive scale among numerous of them include; the adoption and implementation of poor governance, (poor governance/administrative weakness) the practice of undemocratic culture, unequal allocation and distribution of political authoritative values/powers and the quest for power sharing, financial mismanagement and inefficiency, exploitation of human and material resources at the expense of the "Haves-not" (deluded masses) by the ruling class, diversion of public accounts to private/ treasury looting as well as the failure of the Northern elites, traditional and religious leaders to rise to the responsibilities ahead of them without any sentiment and self-centeredness are some of the root causes of the crises in the region under review and Nigerian state and society by and large. The study has further discovered and analyzed how despotic leadership, corruption, inappropriate understanding and application of the teachings and practices of Abrahamic Religions: (Islam and Christianity) negatively play a leading role in generating a series of devastating conflicts in the North. Other contributing factors

include wrong instigations and brain washing of the youths by unpatriotic politicians to satisfy their long-term plans, commitments, political, economic, religious and social interests.

However, recent past studies interacted with have further highlighted that loss of confidence in governments and policy makers, absolute absence of free and fair elections, disunity and lack of patriotism are inclusive, as witnessed in these Northern states namely; the 1986 Kafanchan, Zangon Kataf and Kaduna Metropolis riots, the Maitatsine riot in Kano, the Jos religious violence and the current ongoing religious insurgency of Maiduguri (*Boko Haram*), artificially created for the attainment of targeted goals and objectives of few individuals. However, the evolution of economic and commercial ideologies of banditry, kidnapping for ransom and other related inhumane and irreligious movements claiming lives and properties are as well part and parcel of the major obstacles confronting Northern Region, Nigerian state and society, and it is also imperative to note that the case of indigene-settler dichotomy is another related problem which the study found and considered it to be one of the major challenges of the 21st Century confronting Northern Nigeria in particular.

Furthermore, the study strongly argued that religious practices and obligations are until today being accompanied with a flame, gatherings, passionate, unwavering allegiance and dedication to the respective faiths. It is also worthy to note that contemporarily in the North or Nigerian state as a whole whenever a religious conflict breaks out some Christians violently react against Muslims by relating the root causes to Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand, too, when it comes to some Muslims points of view it would be traced and related to Christians' Zealots/Zionism. This certainly needs no further explanation beyond what has for long been in the minds of the followers of Abrahamic Religions; (Islam and Christianity) in particular.

The last but not the least, the study has at the tail end strongly recommended the way forward, part of the suggestions include good governance, proper and equal allocation and distribution of human and material resources, implementation and adoption of sound democratic culture and practices free of all forms of sentiments. But most important of all is the need for the policy makers, politicians, academics, religious and traditional rulers to rise to the responsibilities a head of them for the political, economic, social and religious developments of their region, Nigerian state and society to a large extent.

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