

# **Religion in Nigerian Political Space: Implication for Sustainable National Development**

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## **Abstract**

Nigerian politics has been replete with lots of anomalies and upheavals because the country leaders past and present have dragged religion and ethnicity into politics in their quests for leadership in the country. It's a known fact that since independence, more than 2/3rd of the country's independence has been spent by military junta. It is heartwarming to also note that within these periods of military and civilian rule, most of the military heads of states are from the north and most of them are Muslims. But it is disheartening to also know that since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, power has shifted from the southern bloc to the north and back to the south, but the recent activities of politician by employing religious violence into politics thereby causing all sorts of mayhem and violence to satisfy their selfish sinterests leave much to be desired. It has been discovered that the recent Boko Haram insurgency in the country that has claimed more than 20,000 lives of innocent citizens and the state agencies are politically motivated, if this is true then, how can these religious intolerance perpetrated and transposed into politics lead to a sustainable national development in Nigeria? This research adopted literature review and found out that both Christianity and Islam have a stint in Nigeria politics and so many people have dragged religion into politics and are also using religion as a tool for achieving political powers by using it to cause violence and destruction of properties in the country. The paper therefore recommends that religious leaders and

politicians should be encouraged to preach peaceful coexistence and piety amongst their adherents, while Nigerian government should do everything within the country's powers and revenue profile to combat corruptions and provide employments for her teeming populace especially the youths. This will go a long way to reduce criminal tendencies amongst the youths who are recruited by these corrupt politicians causing bigotry to achieve their selfish aim.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram insurgency, Religious violence, Ethnic politics, Terrorism, Sustainable national development

## **1. Introduction**

History is replete with the recurrence of violence and discrimination as orchestrated by the activities of extremists and religious fanatics in Nigeria and in most sub Saharan African nations. Given that Nigeria is a country with her proliferated ethnic nationalities with concurrent religious diversities, it is incumbent on Nigeria as a nation to peacefully co-exist among the different facets of the country's ethnic nationalities, but this seems not to be the case. This has threatened the very existence of the entity called Nigeria and its democratic processes. It is however observed that the introduction of these alien religions into the political lives of Nigerians has done more harm than good to the peaceful coexistence and national harmony that the people of Nigeria once enjoyed. While this is true, one begins to wonder if the religion as practiced in Nigeria is that of peace or violence and conflict.

Research attention has been shifted now from technological and scientific development to centre on the politics of religion and the democratization of Nigeria and religion in politics in Nigeria's new democracy. This tacit reality has been discovered that not enough justice has been done to this phenomenon in recent times, most especially on its significance to the multiple conflicts and violence that has engulfed the entity called Nigeria. This illusion caused Sulaiman (2009), to observe however that there have been competing interests amongst the various religions and ethnic nationalities as to who should run the government of the country, this is premised on the fact that most ethnic nationalities have developed along religious conglomeration between Christians or Muslims?

It is as a result of these conflicts of interests amongst the adherents of the various religious and ethnic nationalities and their political leaders that have generated these spates of violence in the country. This is so because different political parties came around with different candidates and different interests in terms of party manifestoes and regions where the presidency should be zoned to. This has resulted in a lot of accusations and counter accusations being made as to which zone should lay claim to the presidency and the zone that should not. It is a known fact that if equity is to be preserved, the north in its entirety should not even seek to hold the presidency in the next 20 years since they have produced the first civilian president in 1979-1983, after which the military took over and since then till the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999, it has always been the north and nobody else. Shehu Shagari, Mohammudu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Sani Abacha, Abdulsallam Abubarka, before Olusegun Obasanjo took over in the civilian regime and handed over to another northerner Umar Musa Yar' Adua and back to Goodluck Jonathan.

Can Nigeria as a country and a sovereign nation blame the spate of violence on the ethnic conglomeration of the country or accuse history of being unfair with the amalgamation of the country in 1914 to a united nation as being responsible for the political and religious violence and security situation observed in the country today? It is therefore pertinent to address some of the fundamental questions for which this research therefore seeks to answer. How has religion influenced politics and democracy in Nigeria? The interest of this research therefore is to investigate the link between religion and politics and the increasing rates of religious and political violence experienced in the country within the practice of democracy in Nigeria and how these translate into sustainable national development of the country or otherwise.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this study is the literature review method. This is because not much empirical studies have been carried out on religion and political dialectics and most related topics by scholars, hence the need for the adoption of the review method for the study.

## **3. Historical Account of Religion in Nigeria**

Historically Islam had an early arrival, while Christianity was a late comer in Nigeria, however, they are the two major religion with African Traditional Religion (ATR) as the third. But majorly, Christianity and Islam are the major religion in discourse in this paper. Although before the coming of Christianity and Islam, Africans and indeed Nigerians practice their indigenous religion which they believed is their source of existence and exist in a psychic form, where they pray and ask for divine provision, guidance and protection. But with the coming of the Arab traders and our colonial master's this traditional African religion was jettisoned by these colonial warlords and replaced by Christianity and Islam. Most Africans and indeed Nigerians since then preferred to be identified either with Islam and Christianity.

### **3.1 Origin of Islam in Nigeria**

The first contact of Nigeria with Islam predates the country's contact with that of Christianity and European colonialists. This was orchestrated by the trade and commerce interests of the Arabs who first made contacts with the northern part of the continent and the country in particular. In Nigeria, the northern part of the country is symbolic with the history of Islam in Africa, south of the Sahara and Nigeria in particular, as it penetrated the area through the Kanem-Borno Empire in the 11<sup>th</sup> century before spreading to other Hausa states. The entrance of Islam into the traditional Yoruba land was through the establishment of commercial links with the northern part of the country particularly the Nupe and the Fulani speaking people. This was made possible through the initiation and conversion of the kings and traditional rulers of the Yoruba people; hence the conversion of some influential rulers and chiefs in the western region of the country became a significant milestone in the religious history of Islam in Yoruba land.

Sodiq, (2009) however observed that Islam was easily accepted by the Yoruba's because it had passed through the kings and chiefs who had desperately wanted sufficient answers to some of their various traditional and spiritual problems, this answers were also in tandem with some of the traditional Yoruba cultural practices which Christianity tended to abolish or discarded. For just like the traditional Yoruba culture which appreciate and believe the existence of the *Jinn*

which the Yoruba religiously deified and dreaded and the methods, ways and strategies of handling them, this phenomenon is also held sacrosanct by the Moslems who are adherents of Islam. Sanni, (2011) also observed that the justified preaching's of Islam which allow for the marriage of more than one wife by a Muslim, the Yoruba culture patronizes the marriage of many wives which the husband uses as a source of cheap labor in his farm and their children as a source of wealth. The acceptability of Islam was further boosted by the return of the liberated former slave from Sierra-Leone and Brazil in the 19th century who came with Islamic evangelization in the region, most especially in Lagos. Today in Nigeria, researchers suggest that more than 42% of Nigerians are Muslims.

### **3.2 Origin of Christianity in Nigeria**

The visitation of the Roman Catholic missionaries to the coastal areas of the Niger-Delta region in the southern part of Nigeria marked the beginning of Christianity in the 15th century, where few churches were built with reasonable numbers of converts recorded. At this period, Christianity was felt most in a few selected areas, but the proper evangelization of Christianity was felt most during the return of some freed and liberated slaves from Sierra-Leone and Brazil in 1842. Though during the period of the return of these liberated slaves, some missionaries were sent to evangelize the western region of the country through Badagry and Abeokuta and the southern part through Calabar, these missionaries included the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesley Methodist Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic Mission (Fafunwa, 1968; Sanusi, 2003).

Christianity soon recorded a boost in the southern region given its opposition to the slave trade and its promotion of Western education. In 1888, an indigenous Church was established following a break away from foreign missionary leadership in response to accumulated grievances of perceived and observed racial discrimination. This breaking away and formation of indigenous churches' event marked the emergence of indigenous Christian churches in Nigeria. This breaks out introduced the beginning of wave of indigenous Christianization in Nigeria with the concomitant proliferation of churches in the country today (Fafunwa, 1968; Sodiq, 2009; Adogame, 2010).

Obadare, (2006) averred that comparatively, while Christianity's evangelization had a smooth landing in the South, it was full of upheavals in the North with somewhat rough terrain for some obvious reasons. Some of these obvious reasons, Nwankwo et al., (2009) observed is because Islam had already become well established in the North and its Muslims had read extensively and known much about Christianity in their Islamic texts given their exposure to early Islamic education (Sodiq, 2009), so Christianity at this time was seen as an alien religion which was viewed as coming to obliterate the teachings and belief system of the already established Islamic religion with most of its teaching and believe systems contrary to the teaching of Islam. To further compound the problems of acceptability of Christianity in the north was the alliance established by the British colonial masters with the ruling class involving the protection of the traditional Islamic institution of the northern societies (Dudley, 1968). To further buttress this reason was the fact that the Europeans were also afraid that Christianity would provide Western education to the people of the North thereby catalyzing the political consciousness of the north against the traditional institutions which will inherently pose threat

to the unchallenged and successful indirect rule which the colonial masters had been enjoying in the region (Rasmussen, 1990).

To nip these forecasted problems at the bud, the British government banned all missionary activities in the northern region in the first 30 years of their rule except for the CMS which had existed in a village in Zaria prior to their government (Ojo, 2007).

Propelled by this situation, Ostien, (2009) posited that despite this institutional barrier to all missionary activities in the northern region, the missionaries were able to penetrate the northern region through the Middle-Belt region by evangelizing the non Muslim communities by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM).

It is however noteworthy that because of the resistance of the Middle belt to the Holy Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio, the people had already established a history of acrimony with the Hausa-Fulani Muslims of the core north (Morrison, 1982). It is therefore on this sad note that this development contributed significantly to the wide acceptability of Christianity by the Middle-Belt as an indication of their opposition to the religion and culture of their sworn opponents – the Hausa Fulani Muslims (Dan-Fulani and Fuswak, 2002).

### **3.3 Islamization of Politics in Nigeria**

Given the philosophy of Islam as a complete way of life for Muslims, Islam has always been closely attached to politics in Nigeria, especially in the Muslim dominated north. As alluded above, the British government duly recognized this fact in their dealings with the northern Islamic societies and explored it to legitimize their colonial rule in the region. Oyegbile and Abdulrafiu, (2009) observed that after the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria and emergence of indigenous national politics, Islam has effectively represented a source of ethnic identity, group unity, political mobilization, de-mobilization, regime legitimization and de-legitimization in the country. As a result of this, the northern Hausa-Fulani therefore see themselves as the off-springs of the Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio, representing the epitome of the Islamic holy Jihad and a product of an enviable Islamic socio-cultural history.

Based on this, the popular Hausa-Fulani Muslim cleric, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, asserted that Islam has a cultural and religious affinity with its members, thereby providing ‘many common cultural elements’ that united the people of the region who become adherents together (Human Rights Watch, 2005, Ihedirika, 2011 and Okune, 2011) thereby empowering them to be politically cohesive and formidable and using same for political mobilization. It is however popularly held that the north were absolutely been held in contempt because of its unique historical, religious, cultural and political antecedents (Akaeze, 2009). Thus, Islam has since been conceived to be synonymous with the North in the political matrix of the entity called Nigeria.

### **3.4 Christianity and Nigerian Politics**

Politically, Christians’ consciousness has sparked some interest in the country’s political terrain as orchestrated by Islam’ challenge. These situations have become most pronounced as a result of the recurring religious crises fermented by the adherents of Islam especially against the northern Christian minorities. Onapajo, (2012) averred that the need to hold tenaciously to the

politicization of Christianity in Nigeria was also informed by the greed to uphold the historical dominance of the educational and economic sphere by the Christians, particularly in the southern part of the country as the employment of the gains of Christianity for political ends started with the northern Christians in the era of regional politics. Ojo, (2007) further observed that due to the increased perception of discrimination and gross dissatisfaction with the 'Islamic reign' of the NPC-led government under the leadership of Ahmadu Bello by Christians, they mobilized themselves to challenge the rule. The Christians decided to form themselves along different political groups. Ojo (2007) went further to observe that the first attempt by the Christians in this direction was the establishment of the Northern Nigerian Non-Muslim League following a motion raised in 1949 on the floor of the Northern House of Assembly for the restriction of the activities of the Christian missionaries (see, Rasmussen, 1990, Uchendu, 2004, Ojo, 2007 and Owuamanam, 2009).

This Christian League with the strong backing of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan Union Mission (SUM) Christian missions developed and designed administrative and organizational framework for the formation of the Middle Zone League (MZL) as a political party with the major agenda of reducing the strength of the 'Islamic expansionist movements' in the North. With the Middle Zone League (MZL) facing some difficulties and deficiencies, there was a merger between MZL and the Birom Progressive Union in 1955 to form the United Middle-Belt Congress (UMBC) as they had a common ideological, political philosophy and religious interest (Owuamanam, et al., 2009). As a consequence, much of the political intrigues that reigned during the period were centered on this mutual maneuvering among these different political parties.

Consequently, the Igbo felt rather aggrieved at the inter-regional level, with the dominant regime of the Hausa-Fulani (Muslims) after independence. This was what orchestrated the first military coup experienced in Nigeria led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogu; researches however have shown that that was the major factor in the 1966 coup that shattered the first republic in Nigeria (Owuamanam, et al., 2009).

Observing the text of takeover of government by the Orka Coup made in 1990, attempting to topple the government of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, a Muslim of the Hausa-Fulani origin, and we quote:

"We wish to emphasize that this is not just another coup but a well conceived, planned and executed revolution for the interests of the marginalized, oppressed and enslaved people of the Middle-Belt and the South [Christians] with a view to freeing ourselves and children yet unborn from eternal slavery and colonization by a clique [Hausa-Fulani Muslims] of this country"

Arising from this background, all accusing fingers were again pointed to the Christians Association of Nigeria (CAN) as the major actors behind this attack and coup against a Muslim led government. Of course, IBB again indicted the CAN and its leadership where about 59 Christian leaders were arrested as usual and detained for about three months for a coup they virtually knew nothing about.



To further compound these problem came the early 1970s rise of new Christian Pentecostalism and the syndrome of born again "born againism", which became a re-engineered force for political strength of the Christians in the country. Both the traditional and the Pentecostal Christians renewed their agitation for the opposition to matters of doctrines, in this situation sheath their anger and came together to fight the common enemy by adding more strength to the CAN with the principal objective of challenging an 'Islamic oligarchy (Magbadelo, 2004, Loimeier, 2007 and Marshall, 2009).

### **3.5 Religion in Nigeria's Democracy**

Nigeria has been under the military rule for well over 2/3rd of her existence as a sovereign entity, immediately after the country's return to democracy in 1999, all sort of religious manipulations in the name of politics took place beginning with the establishment of the Sharia penal code and legal system by the former governor of Zamfara state, Ahmed Sani Yerima. This Sharia legal system became a prominent topical issue in the national burner. This earned him an overwhelming support and patronage from his Muslim brothers and external elements in other countries. The introduction of the Sharia system is a fulfillment of his promises during his electioneering campaign for the governorship election. In any case, his campaign promises materialized under the All People's Party (APP). As a result of this feat, the APP became the major political party in the state and some other states within the neighborhood, and APP in the north became what the NPC and NPN were in the Muslim occupied north. As a result, it was the most popular party in the North as the major opposition to the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (Obadare, 2006).

To buttress this point, most Muslim clerics heavily mobilized both resources and votes for Yerima to empower him to legitimize his government given the *Sharia* factor, and they were also well recognized by the regime and integrated into strategic aspects of the state's public service. Chanting of *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) were most popular at major political rallies in the state. All this successfully gave an Islamic coloration to the regime, because this had taken the political order of the day. Similarly, this was also the case with Ibrahim Shekarau of Kano state of the same political party with Yerima (Wakili, 2009). The case was not different in Kano state as Shekarau under the same political platform (APP) adopted the same strategy, again the Muslim clerics vigorously campaigned for him during the elections because of his agenda for *Sharia* and also headed major state agencies such as the *Shura* Committee, *Zakat* and *Husbi* Commission and the *Hisbah* board established in the spirit of *Sharia* after his emergence as the governor of the state between 2003 and 2011. The establishment of the *Sharia* legal system began generating some controversies across the country after it became a policy for the remaining Muslim northern state to adopt *Sharia* (11 other states after Zamfara).

This development was not too comfortable for the Christians in the country as they suspected some foul play by the Muslims in the country. Christians in the North suspected the move as another attempt by the Muslim majority to finally silence their voice in the scheme of affairs. This move was strongly opposed by the Christians across the country as they encouraged all Christian denominations to organize sensitization workshop and rallies to challenge the introduction of *Sharia* and other negative trends to the latter (Imo, 2008 and Angerbradt, 2011). Besides, all these were predicated on the premise that the introduction of the *Sharia*

system was a political strategy against the Christians by the Hausa Muslims to bring down the government of a Christian president— Olusegun Obasanjo (Obadare, 2006, Imo, 2008).

To avert the seeming danger by the Sharia, Obasanjo destabilized the nation's Armed Forces in such a way that the Muslim Hausa-Fulani top military officers who had hitherto dominated the defense and power structure since the 1960s were systematically dislodged. The Muslim elites in the North therefore felt insecure with this restructuring which in turn almost led to the syndrome Sanusi, (2003) referred to as 'tribal mentality'. However, when it was becoming clear that the pendulum of power was again swinging to the side of the North, the heightened tension of *Sharia* sharply reduced. But when the winds of change altered, Obasanjo was among the first individuals to publicly announce the 'death' of *Sharia* in the North:

At the end of his regime in 2007, he told a congregation of Christians at an annual event that he warned the Sharia actors in the North that: If Sharia was from God, it will survive but if it was politically motivated it will die and this has happened.

Having the premeditation of Islamizing the entire Nigeria, it was therefore no surprise that the first political party that would emerge from the North, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), would inherently and latently bear the torch of Islam. Dudley (1968) cited by Onapajo, (2012) observed authoritatively that even the political party symbol of NPC was problem laden, he further asserted and we quote again:

'The NPC was a consensus of the larger Muslim society – the Ijma' – and an iota of its rejection by any member of the society signified a sinful Islamic act. Similarly, Falola (1998) notes that the NPC adopted 'one raised finger' as a symbol of the Unity of God of the Islamic monotheistic faith and at the same time passed the message to its people that the 'two-fingered V-for-victory' symbol of its opponents in the South was a sign of polytheism, which Islam prohibits out rightly. Upon this realization, the non-Muslims of the North floated various oppositionist political groupings and parties to protest the ethno-Islamic political hegemony of the NPC in the region. These include the Tiv Progressive Union (TPU); Middle Zone League (MZL); Middle-Belt People's Party (MBPP); United Middle-Belt Congress (UMBC); Northern Nigeria Non-Muslim League; Birom progressive Union (BPU), with a strong backing from the Christian missionaries, especially SIM and SUM (Onapajo, 2012).

Currently there are two power blocs in Nigeria since the end of the civil war in Nigeria (1967-1970), these power blocs are the north and the west. This is on account of their location of their center of gravity (Madunagu, 2006). The Sharia is a formation of some power blocs in the north, where the Boko Haram sect including their insurgent activities are seen as a product of these northern power bloc, inspired and supported by powerful forces in and outside government. It is however disturbing to note that religion and religious manipulations is being regarded as a political weapon in the continuous struggles for shift in the balance of power. Based on this, Nigeria current situation of forces since 1998 has always been decided by the faction of this country: the north, the western bloc and the new imperialism/global dictators (international communities), (Ntamu, et al., 2013).



PDP and the APP are the parties found from the northern power blocs predominantly Muslims, while the AD is from the western power bloc. This formation continued to metamorphosized with change of appellations by the Alliance for Democracy which metamorphosized into Action Congress, Action Congress for Democracy, Action Congress of Nigeria (AC, ACD, and ACN respectively). Before this time, People Democratic Party and All Nigerian People's Party (PDP and ANPP) were the party of the north, while the AD, ACD and AC were for the southern power bloc. Ostien, (2009) however further observed that the ACD lacking in the political wit and might coupled with their low financial muscles cannot win any national election on its own, Bola Tinubu, the then national leader of the ACD agreed to form an alliance with Atiku Abubarka, the then Vice President to Olusegun Obasanjo to form the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), even at this point the southern political power bloc still have the new ACN as their party.

More political parties were formed chief amongst which are the Congress for Progressive Change, All Progressive Grand Alliance, Labor Party, Accord Party, Progressive People Alliance (CPC, APGA, LP, AP, PPA respectively) and so many others, presently, there are about 54 political parties in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that the late Dim Odumegu Ojukwu (the Biafran veteran warlord) wanted to re-establish the eastern power bloc by the formation of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), while Major General Muhammadu Buhari was also instrumental to the formation of Congress for Progressive Change and the former governor of Abia State Orji Uzor Kalu was solely responsible for the formation of PPA (Madunagu, 2006, Ntamu et al., 2013).

Looking further at the political space in the country between 2012-2013, the north see power as their traditional birth rights and began agitating for power shift to the northern bloc from the south not minding the period they had held power till 1999 before a southerner took over power. To them, power has over stayed in the south from 1999-2007, back to the north 2007-2009 and by the sudden demise of the president Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, the doctrine of necessity was proclaimed and implemented on Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who finished the remaining two years of the former and then contested and won in a fresh poll. It is necessary to state also that because of the agitation to shift power back to the north, the northern forces were not satisfied with the ruling PDP, they began causing a lot of political heat in the PDP, the four viable opposition parties, (ACN, ANPP, CPC and a fraction of APGA) settled for a merger, this gave birth to the formation of the All Progressive Congress (APC). Even at this, the party APC is still seen as the western party (southern power bloc), while the PDP is seen as the northern people's party. But the political calculations and manipulation in ruling People Democratic Party, does not seem to favor the north, since the incumbent is still interested in running for a second term and this situation is very unpalatable for the northern power bloc. Fortunately or unfortunately, most of the leadership of the APC cuts across the country, but the configuration is more of Muslims than Christians. This again can also be seen as a formation of opposition party along religious line, (Ntamu, et al., 2013).

#### **4. Sustainable Development**

What then is sustainable national development? Sustainable development according to the Brundtland convention is defined as living within the carrying capacities of the supportive ecosystem without compromising the need of the future generations. It can also be defined as

a system of governance and cohabitation where any government strive to develop areas within the territorial integrity of the country so that citizens of that country can live comfortable lives and maintain the available infrastructures and resources to meet the need of today without compromising the infrastructural and social needs of tomorrow's generation, (Borger, 2008, Eneji, et al.2011). Omare, (1999) had earlier on defined sustainable national development as a process and ideologies where national governments implement and develop policies and programs that is long lasting and continuous, which is beneficial to the present generation while still being useful to the generation yet unborn.

Sustainable national development causes all forms of long lasting development, human resources, and material, social, infrastructural, industrial and structural development including security of lives and properties and improvement in existing social economic human and other social facilities, (Baker, et al., 2000)..

Some religious activities have deterred the spate of political development in Nigeria, negative religious fundamentalists in the northern region of the country has been discovered to be a threat to sustainable national development in Nigeria. Religious riot orchestrated by Maitatsine and the Shiite sect holding tenaciously to their religious dogma including sacrificing anything including their own lives and those of other persons in pursuits of their heinous objectives, have in no small way disturbed the relative peace and security of the lives and properties of the inhabitants of this country. Marshall, (2009) observe that since 1980, Nigerian politicians have therefore exploited these ugly trends to advance their political ambitions. This has become more worrisome based on the injuries it has caused on individuals, properties and national development.

Literally speaking, Nigeria is made of three principal power blocs, the northern, western and the eastern blocs which includes the core east and the south-south, but the eastern bloc was annihilated during the Biafra war (1967-1970), so we have basically two power blocs now in the country. The concept has been watered down to ethnic or tribal politics of understanding Nigerian politics. Power blocs are large political groups which are in power or are pushing for power that are a fraction of a class with the same political and economic interest, (Magbadelo, 2004). Political struggles are waged by power blocs and political groups at the level of social formation, where by social formation, we mean, the aggregate of the whole mode of the production process existing in a state. They wage economic and political struggles. In economic struggles, they operate in pure form with or without alliances, but in political struggles, they must seek alliances beyond their specific classes which they intend to go beyond ineffectual protest.

Sustainable development does not stop at provision and accessibility of physical infrastructure in a particular moment, but is a continuous process. Sustainable peace is not just the mere absence of war or maintenance of balance of power between enemies and dictatorship. It has to do with the sustainability and promotion of peace always and at every time of the year and among persons and group irrespective of the tribe, ethnic nationality or religion at all given moment. Any religion that does not propagate peace remains inimical to sustainable development. The bombing of the world trade center and pentagon house in September, 11, 2001, the 2003 bombing of the train station in Madrid and Manila Spain, the bombing of train

station and double decker bus in London are all aspects of religious bombing which are very inimical to sustainable development in the world (Uchendu, 2004, Mcconnell, 2009).

The efforts of international communities' under the new imperialism is also contributing severely to deterring the sustainable development of the third world and other developing countries, this led Fidel Castro to propagate a theory that the people of the world should be able to say and I quote:

The war against terrorism is unwinnable and unrealistic until exploitation, oppression, big power violence, humiliation, impoverization, gross inequalities, terrorism propagated through globalization must continue in leap and bounds, the root causes of terrorism are banished from the face of the earth from the so called super powers, global dictators, (Madunagu, 2006).

Model democracy, political stability, socioeconomic development, human resources development and civilization in Africa will be far from achieving the desired goals, it has been severally said by most Nigerian leaders that Nigeria cannot survive another civil war, this is a fallacy- the issue is not whether Nigeria can survive another civil war but whether another civil war can break out. To some eminent citizens and victims of the civil war in an armed conflict, a civil war has the same effect as armed rebellion or even a successful coup d'état inspired by mass hatred.

In his paper Bakare, et al, (2009) concluded that religion represents a significant element of ethnicity and an important source of identity which informs the basis of group discrimination and grievances in any particular nation. Fox (1997) however posited that 'religion is salient if it is a defining trait that sets a group apart' and has the capability of shaping all forms of group's political and social activities (Fox & Sandier, 2003). Emanating from the above situation, the possibilities of breeding discrimination against minor religious groups by the majority based on their dissimilar interests and goals in the society is very high (Fox, 2003, Bakare, et al, 2009; Owuamanam, et al., 2009; Hines 2009, Adedeji 2009; and McConnell 2009).).

It is was however also observed that where there is a perceived disagreement, discrimination, dissatisfaction or threat to the survival of a religion, religious institutions can therefore become a cheap recruiting ground for the recruitment and mobilization of dissidents for both protest and rebellion' (Fox & Sandier, 2003 and Obadare, 2006). This is more worrisome when such religion supports the use of physical force when issues concerning its core values and interests are under threat (Fox & Sander, 2003 Obadare, 2006). This situation was captured by the study of Juergensmeyer (2003) who found out that a lot of modern day popular religions have a strong link with very violent situations; this can be seen in modern day Christianity and Islam in Nigeria and most African countries where religious violence is prevalent in scope and dimension.

Onapajo, (2012) however observed that the establishment and formation of the *Jama'at Nasr Islam* in 1962 and the *Jama' atlzala al-BidaWa-Iqamat as-Sunna* in 1978, under the strong influence of the Muslim cleric Sheikh Abubakar Gumi were the foundation for using religion as a force in Nigerian political terrain. These two organizations had as a major ideological

framework, hence, the revival of the traditional and pristine version of Islam as a major opposition to the practices of the reigning Sufi brotherhood in the North. This singular event acted as catalyst and prepared the ground for the emergence of a radical trend of Islamic youth movements such as the 'transformed' Muslim Students Society (MSS); the *Dawa* group; the Brothers or *Ikhwan*; and the Islamic Movement (Loimeier, 2007, Onapajo, 2012). The emergence of these groups was also significantly influenced by international events, especially the Iranian revolution in 1979, and the heightened disenchantment from West by the Muslim world (Onapajo, 2012).

Imo, (2008) further observed that this development shaped the national politics of the period as Muslims radically redefined their political interests in line with Islam and began to clamor for the incorporation of the *Sharia* legal system into the national judicial system. Resulting from this aforementioned fact, there was the establishment of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) in 1973, with the sole purpose of unifying the overall Muslim adherents within the national polity of Nigeria. With the establishment of NSCIA, Nigerian registered as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1985, ostensibly to harness opportunities accruable from Muslim countries. Of course, these developments heated the polity of Nigeria as Christians nurtured the fear of domination by their Muslim counterparts and a possibility of a domination and gradual extinction of their religious and political strength in the nation political structure. This development led to various uprising and political violence. Various political and religious violence arose like the constituent assembly *Sharia* riot of 1988, crises at Kafanchan in March 1987; Ahmadu Bello University Zaria crises of June 1988, these followed a series of other ethno-religious and political riots in the 1990s to the current period, (Madunagu, 2006).

It has been found that religion possess a strong influence and social force in the politics of the state given its capacity for effective political mobilization. It was however gathered that Fox and Sander (2003) gave six major reasons why this is so, these reasons are as follows: (i) religious organizations have strong international links and enjoy global solidarity, (ii) religious organizations have the capability to easily unite differential social groupings in the society;(iii) religious organizations are often strong in weak states;(iv) the restriction of religious activities is often difficult for state regimes;(v) religious organizations often enjoy good patronage in the media and (vi) religious organizations have the 'ready-made' platform for political meetings.

Adisa, (2011) however found out that the introduction of the *Sharia* legal system in the northern state of Zamfara by Governor Ahmed Yerima was the public beginning of religious violence with political stint. Despite this official beginning of religion in politics, it has only come to consolidate the struggles began by late Ahmadu Bello who was the first prime minister of the northern region. This new order and the previous one only came to challenge the national government and its legal system and most especially to provide the impetus to the modernization agenda, kick-started by the late Prime Minister (see also Loimeier, 2007 and Adesoji, 2010).

Ntamu, et al. (2013) defined national development as the ability of any nation or group of nations to grow from dependence on other countries to independence on locally manufactured goods, develop technologically, socioeconomically, scientifically bringing about an

improvement in the standard of living of its citizens and those residing within the territorial boundaries of such a nation. This involves the improvements on the social welfare of its people by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, functional transportation infrastructure, medical care, security, employment and industrial development among others. It is therefore worthy of note to pose a question here; "with the spate of bombing and killings can any country grow sustainably with this situation"? it is however discovered that without sustainable development, a country cannot grow beyond the extent of such development, since this involves a development that is sustained and continuous. Thus national development can only be achieved when there is a peaceful coexistence between the different facets of the society (Uchendu, 2004 Bartolotta, 2011).

Sustainable development cannot therefore be achieved since the country has been bedeviled by one form of riot or violent killing and destruction of properties, like the Niger Delta militants and their mayhem in the Niger delta region, the Bakassi boys in the east, robbery and ritual killing including kidnapping in the south and west, while the Boko Haram insurgency is raiding in the northern part of the country. Outside the previous riots observed in the 1980s, the Boko Haram riots lasted from 25 July to 30 July 2009 and spread across the states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna and Borno with the most recent being the killing of forty student of the Adamawa state University, Mubi, 50 students in Yobe, 1200 insurgent in Borno. This in recent times have created further national destabilization which has taken new dimension in recent times. The declaration of state of emergency in the three states of Yobe, Borno and Admawa since the month of April, 2013 till date is s a result of the activities of Boko Haram. It is estimated that over 7000 persons, mostly sect members and innocent members of the society have been killed by both the state agencies and the sect in either a reprisal attack or ransacking or open confrontation. From the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009 till today they have been a recorded killing of more than 17,000 persons, bombing of more than 100 public and private residential houses including the Louis Edet Police House and the UN building at Abuja the federal capital territory, (Madunagu, 2006, Ntamu, e al., 2013).

However, Handley, (2010) cited in Ntamu et al, (2013) further observed that these struggles for political control of the country is just to control the fortune of the country by lording over part of the country that has consistently resulted to these political and religious unrest in the country. Handley,(2010) further observed that poor distribution of national resources and the wealth of the nation has also sparked conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger- Delta region, where militants lobbying for a greater share of oil revenue regularly blow up pipelines and kidnap foreign oil workers (Ibrahim, 1997, Madunagu, 2006).

It is however crystal clear that Nigeria's political system has been tailored towards religious and ethnic lines. The first military coup d'état by Major Kaduna Nzeagu where Ahmadu Bello, the Sadauna of Kaduna was killed was done along religious line, the killing of Major Gen. Aguyi Ironsi, the then military head of state in a bloody coup on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1966 was a reprisal attack by the northern military for killing Ahmadu Bello a Muslim leader by a Christian army Major Kaduna Nzeagu, this was also for religious purpose.

In all, most of these manipulations in the name of politics and religion are orchestrated by external forces in order to protect their business interest through globalization. This is another



aspect of world imperialism. It has been severally observed that most political decisions taken in the country are tailored made for Nigerian leaders by the western imperialist and global dictators who must attach conditions to all aids enjoyed from them. As this continues in the country, human rights is abused, development is hampered or at best dictated by the global dictators. An acid test to show the impacts of global dictators and world imperialist activities in Nigerian politics is the case of Bakassi and the Lake TChad region. Lake Chad region and Bakassi are classic examples of criminal neglect of a people by a state that claims their allegiance and control their lives.

These measures by these global dictators and world imperialist are to suppress development and impoverish the economy of lesser and developing countries to make them weak and dependent on them. The activities of these global dictators with the Bakasi peninsular of Nigeria is that of gross negligence by a country on the rights of her citizens where they claim allegiance, this is inhuman but it is informed by the powers and dictatorial influence of the new imperialists. This treatment by the global dictators on Nigerian state may have been a case with Cameroun before the world court, but the people of Bakassi and the Lake Chad region have a case with Nigeria in the court of history.

## **5. Conclusion**

These religious activities and the attendant mayhems do not only pave way for bigotry but also determine the atmosphere in our political space thereby fanning the embers of hatred and supremacy, (see Matt. 5, Romans 1, RSV). These are the sources of good citizenship which are not injurious to the society, but enhancing unity and development. Respect for mother earth produces piety promoting reverence for natural laws. Those engaged in the Boko Haram sects are the people of Allah, they should not destroy and be destroyed. All these are sources of peace building, consciousness and sustainable development. Negative fundamentalists engage in violence-Boko Haram, wanton destruction of lives and properties and disruption of economic and social activities are detrimental to sustainable national development. No country therefore can grow, develop and prosper technologically, scientifically, economically and socially without peaceful cooperation and coexistence. It is on this basis that we advocate for religious tolerance and political cooperation in the world. If this is done truly, then sustainable development can be achieved in Nigeria.

## **6. Recommendation**

- ❖ There should be a fixed tenure or period for rotational presidency in Nigeria
- ❖ Proper resources control should be properly enshrined in the constitution where minor ethnic groups or nationalities with resources can properly be taken care of in the federated government.
- ❖ Politicians trying to use religion to campaign in politics should be disqualified from running such elections
- ❖ Appointments and elections into national offices should represent the federal character principles



- ❖ Religious organizations and political parties should advise and force their members to enforce the tenets of their faith and political philosophy.
- ❖ It is necessary that all religious groups should preach and practice peace and peaceful coexistence in our communities.
- ❖ The issue of security should be a collective matter for everybody, Muslim, Christian and adherent of traditional African religion. We should learn and practice empathy and sympathy within our communities and where we live.
- ❖ We should also be open to donating security information to the law enforcement agencies and the law enforcement agencies should try and build public trust by keeping secret all useful security information volunteered to them.
- ❖ Poverty eradication should be tackled in all sense of it, employment should be created to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country as this is the root cause of all social maladermar in Nigeria and world over.

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