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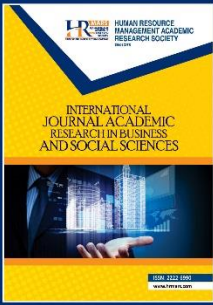
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## The Effects of Religious Crisis on Economic Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*There's no gain saying that crisis is a great predicament in any human society and most times, it is predictable. In fact, history indicates that crisis is a continuous process in human relations and may occur within and among groups and communities at anytime. In the case of Nigeria, the persistent religious crisis and insecurity has given Nigerians a cause for concern in recent times. Many wonder why religion which used to be the cohesive factor and core of national unity, peaceful co-existence and national development has become a tool for violence and destruction of lives and property in Nigeria, looking at it from the northern part between 2007 and 2017 has left adverse effects on the Nigerian economy. This paper examined one on one Dialogue as a catalyst for resolving crises and enhancing national security and economic development in Nigeria. It also reviewed some religious violence and crises experience in Nigeria together with their causes, and effects particularly, on economic development.*

*This paper utilized both secondary source and observation method. Findings showed that religious crises are endemic in Nigeria in the last two decades. The Christians and the Muslims adherents have fought wars in Nigeria than they had actually sought, for peace, thereby threatening peaceful co-existence, national security, and economic development in the country. The study concluded and recommended that the government should employ meaningful ways such as establishment of Federal ministry of religious and Federal dialogue resolution to enhance peaceful co-existence among the citizen and economic development.*

**Keywords:** Crisis, Development, Dialogue, Economy, Religion.

### Introduction

It is a fact that over hundred Nigerians have lost their lives in fighting religious crisis across the federation since the beginning of democracy in 1979. The number of those injured triples the dead, while those displaced are put at million. Umar, (2009), Onabanjo (2011) Observe that crisis have also hindered genuine economic development and national integration. More than fifty years after Nigeria's independence thus raising serious concerns on the unity of the nation. It is observed that the religious crisis has been an obstacle to progress, economic prosperity, and

peaceful co-existence and over all socio-economic development of Nigeria because of its destructive tendencies. Nigeria is populated by the adherent of Christians, Islam and African traditional religion. However, the adherents of three religions, especially Muslims and Christians are often engaged in crisis, leading to loss of lives and properties, a day hardly passes without the adherents of these two religions engaging in one crisis, or the other. This has led to suicide bombing, loss of innocent citizens and property (Amadu, 1989). Even if there is a seeming peace, the relationship between the Muslims and the Christians is marked with mutual suspicion and distrust. These religious crises are more frequent in the North and they sometimes give birth to reprisal attacks in Eastern part of Nigeria. Many have attributed the recurring spate of religious crisis in Nigeria to the stroke and functioning of Nigerian Federalism. Elaigwu (2005) writes on violent protests in the Niger-Delta over perceived injustice in resource distribution, the Modakeke Communal violence, the MASSOB Feeble attempt to resuscitate Biafra, the South-South demand for the control of its resources, the recent Benue, Kaduna, Adamawa herdsmen attack and all the recent inter religious crisis in various states across the country. Crises in Nigeria particularly, religious crises has affected the growth and development of communities and people in particular and economy in general. Many lives have been cut short, properties worth millions of naira destroyed innocent Nigerians displaced and turned refugees in their father's land. Farmers have deserted their farm land as a result of violence, the artisans can no longer work due to instability and violence. This problem has not only crippled economic activities but has also debarred sustainable development. The attendant effect of this unpalatable situation manifest in poverty, joblessness, low productivity, low income and poor infrastructural facilities. In 1979, the Federal Government in an attempt to resolve, promote unity among the various religious ethnic groups in Nigeria, established the National Youth Services Corps (N.Y.S.C.) and some Federal Institutions to ensure cohesion among its religious ethnic groups. Despite these various attempts by the government, not much has been achieved in terms of peaceful co-existence amongst the various religious groups and economic development. In view of this, the paper examines the effects of religious crisis on economic development with a view to finding lasting solution capable of addressing this avoidable problem.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory adopted for this work is social-conflict theory.

The social-conflict theory is rooted in Karl Marx's critique of capitalism. According to Marx, in a capitalist society, religion plays a critical role in maintaining an unequal status quo, in which certain groups of people have radically more resources and power than other groups of people. Marx argued that the bourgeoisie used religion as a tool to keep the less powerful proletariat pacified. Marx argued that religion was able to do this by promising rewards in the after-life, instead of in this life. It was in this sense that Marx asserted that religion is the sight of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people (Marx, n.d).

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness".

From the foregoing, Marx is calling for the proletariat to discard religion and its deceit about other-worldly events. Only then would this class of people be able to rise up against the bourgeoisie and gain control of the means of production, and only then would the real rewards

be achieved, in this life. Thus, the social-conflict approach to religion highlights how religion, as a phenomenon of human behavior, functions to maintain social inequality by providing a world view that justifies oppression. If religions are practiced without hatred by the adherents, certainly, there will be peace and development.

It should be reiterated here that Marx's approach to social science was critical in the sense that it advocated for change in the practices of religious in the world.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Concept of Religion**

Religion is the set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas and practices that define the relations between human being and sacred or divinity. A given religion is defined by specific elements of community of believers: Dogmas, sacred books rites, worship, sacrament moral prescription, interdicts organization. The majority of religions have developed starting from a revelation based on the exemplary history of a nation of a prophet or a wise man who taught an ideal of life (atheisme.free.fr/ religionandbeliefs.visitedon28thmarch, 2018).

### **Concept of Religion**

Crisis is an emotional and physical response to some precipitating event or series of events that disrupts our normal day-to-day functioning. Everyone experiences a crisis now and then, some experts say that we can only grow and develop through resolving the normal developmental crises that are part of being human (www.mic.ul.ie.>documents>8crisis management.visitedon19thmarch, 2018).

### **Concept of Development**

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. Development is a process of improving the quality of all human lives social economic, political and human development (www.uu00idata.org>course>sns}

### **Concept of Economic Development**

Economic development is the process by which a nation improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. The term has been used frequently by economists, politicians, and others in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The concept, however, has been in existence in the West for centuries. Modernization, Westernization, and especially industrialization are other terms often used while discussing economic development. Economic Development has a direct relationship with the environment. Essentially, economic development is a policy intervention that aims at improving the economic and social well-being of people.

### **Overview of Religious Crisis in Nigeria**

With a population of over 150 million inhabitants, the major religious groups in Nigeria are Christianity and Islam. The foremost incidence of religious crisis since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 was triggered by an alleged violation of a traditional religious rite. Although lack of statistical data has made it extremely difficult to estimate the exact number of religious crisis in Nigeria and their resultant fatalities (Salawu 2010:345), the general assumption is that the incidence of religious crises has grown exponentially since the return to democracy rule in 1999. The history and findings on religious crises across the country however show that 90 percent of them occurred in the northern part of the country (Ezeanokwasa, 2009).

In view of the perennial religious tensions between the two dominant religious groups in Nigeria, there is a sustained culture of mutual suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between them. The introduction of sections 38(1) and 10 into the Nigerian constitution, which have guaranteed freedom of religious and prohibited the declaration of state religion respectively, has done little to attenuate the frequency of religious crisis, as state patronage and veneration of the two dominant religious groups has helped in heightening the underline tensions and rivalry. Thus, the perceived hatred between Nigerian Christians and Muslims, have often manifested in inter-religious crisis. Most of these crises had led to destruction of lives and properties particularly in the Northern part of the country. Economic goods worth of millions of naira are often destroyed in this process thereby constraining socio-economic development and peaceful co-existence. Some of these cases are listed in the table below for further confirmation and as evidence to the foregoing submission.

**Table 1: Cases of Religious Crisis in Nigeria, 1999-2018**

S/N	Date	Place/Town/State	Nature of Crisis
1	July 1, 1999	Sagamu, Ogun State,	Crisis between Yoruba traditional worshipers and Hausa groups as a result of the killing of a Hausa woman by the Oro Masqueraders for violating traditional rites.
2	December 20, 1999	Ilorin, Kwara State	Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 Churches, properties worth several millions of naira destroyed.
3	February 28, 2000	Aba, Abia State	Religious crisis that led to the killing of over 450 persons.
4	February 21-22, 2000	Kaduna, Kaduna State	Crisis over the introduction of Sharia, an estimated 3000 people died.
5	October 12, 2001	Kano, Kano State	Religious crises, in protest to U.S. invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden. Over 150 persons were killed.
6	September, 7-17, 2007	Jos, Plateau State	Religious crisis between Muslims and Christians. Mosques, churches and several properties were damaged.
7	November 16, 2002	Kaduna, Kaduna State	Attacked of Christians by the Muslims over article written by Isioma Daniel on Miss World, over 250 people were killed and several churches destroyed
8	February 14, 2004	Numan, Adamawa State	Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims over location of the Central Mosque close to Bachama Paramount ruler's palace. Over 17 persons killed.
9	February 18, 2006	Maiduguri, Borno State	Religious crisis between Christians and Muslims over Danish Cartoon on Prophet Mohammed in Jyllands-posten newspaper. Over 50 persons killed and 30

			churches destroyed over 200 shops, 50 houses and 100 vehicles vandalized
10	March 22, 2007	Gombe, Gombe State,	Religious crisis over the killing of Christians teacher for allegedly desecrating the Qur'an while attempting to stop a student from cheating in an examination hall.
11	November 28, 2008	Jos, Plateau State,	Religious crisis between Muslims and Christians over the controversial results of local election. Over 700 people killed.
12	July 26-30, 2009	Bauch, Borno, Kano and Yobe State	Religious crisis unleashed by Boko Haram sect on Christians. Over 700 people killed 3,500 persons internally displaced, 1,264 children orphaned, and over 392 woman widowed, and several properties destroyed.
13	March 7, 2010	Jos, Plateau State	Attacks by Fulani Moslems on Christians-dominated villages of Dogo-Nahawa, Shen and Fan. 13 person killed.
14	April 11, 2010	Jos South, Plateau State	Attack on a Christians villages Fulani herdsman. 3 houses and 6 vehicles were torched.
15	January 5-6, 2012	Gombe, Gombe State,	Gunmen stormed a Deeper Life Church, shooting indiscriminately at worshippers. The Boko Haram Islamist sect claimed responsibility for the shooting
16	January 5-6, 2012	Mubi, Adamawa State	Suspected Boko Haram militants stormed a gathering of Igbo Christians and shot sporadically, killing over 12 and injuring others.
17	May 2016	Padongari, Niger State	Religious crisis that left 4 persons dead.
18	June 8, 2016	Kakuri, Kaduna State	A Christian man was stabbed for not joining Ramadan Fast.
19	March 14, 2018	Abuja	Protest by Muslim Groups Rocks National Assembly on the Public Hearing over Amasa Firdus, Law School Hijab controversy.

**Source:** Adapted from Sampson, 2012; Sahara reporter, 2017.

### **Causes of Religious Crisis in Nigeria**

According to Salawu (2010) a major cause of what we now see as religious crisis in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. In every nation (Nigeria inclusive). There is no complete agreement on how wealth, power and status are to be shared among individual and groups.

There is also no agreement on how to effect necessary changes and reforms. This is because, different groups and individuals have diverse interest in which case, some groups will have their aims met, while others will not. This can make the crisis of religion inevitable, as this usually occur when deprived groups and individuals attempt to increase their share of power and

wealth or to modify the dominant values, norms, beliefs or ideology. Notably, in Nigeria going by the various examples of religious crisis cited in this paper, there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, and religion, which has consequently led to the rising nationalism and militancy of various religious movements. It is interesting to note that the overall consequence of this is the escalation of various religious crises that are witnessed all over the country today which are meant to correct any perceived form of marginalization, oppression or domination (Salawu, 2010).

Omotosho (2003) mentioned four major factors causing religious crisis in Nigeria. These are:

1. **The lack of genuine desire to understand each other's belief and culture:** It is true that institutions of higher learning here and there offer some courses under various names but a careful study of such programmes has shown that they were not intended to foster understanding and respect. Instead they are used as a means of black malling and incitement, under the cover of academic freedom.
2. **Campaigns of hatred and black mail:** Both Christians and Muslim are actively involved in campaigns of hatred against each other. It has manifested in various forms including: distortion of fact about each other, incitement, blocking each other's chances as demonstrated in the issues of Shariah and organization of Islamic conference (olc).
3. **The inadequate recognition of one another:** Muslims in particular, believed that Christianity does not recognize Islam as a religion that is entitled to exist and consequently, it does not recognize their (Muslims) other rights. They believe and maintain that if there is any recognition of Islam by the Christians in Nigeria, it is simply because the Muslims have refused to be ignored.
4. **Extremism:** Extremism from the two sides is another important reason behind religious crisis in Nigeria. In most cases this extremism is based on poor knowledge of the teaching of the religion being defended by the group in both sides.

### **The Effects of Religious Crisis on Economic Development**

The resultant effects of religious crisis in Nigeria are enormous. It pervades all the sector of the economy. Generally, crisis breeds insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust and slow economic development. This is the case in Nigeria where in addition to gratuitous killings and maiming of thousands of persons properties worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Certainly, these huge losses have deprived the nation of needed manpower and services for the growth of it's wobbling economy.

Another major consequence of religious crisis on the economic development of Nigeria is on the reputation of Nigeria in the international community. Many countries have started seeing Nigeria as a terrorist country which affects our business men and women that travel round the world to do business. Onwumah (2014) also affirms that religious crisis portrays Nigeria in a very bad light internationally. It depicts our leaders, at all levels and in different facets of life as weak, naïve, selfish and self centered. In an environment of strong dedicated and selfless leadership, the diversity and complexity of the Nigerian society would have been harnessed and channeled into national development efforts.

In an atmosphere of peace, the economy tends to grow more as more foreign investment and earnings are attracted via FDI and tourism. Nigeria would have been a tourist haven, but the frequent occurrence of crisis in different parts of the country at different points in time will

definitely discourage foreign tourists (Onwumah, 2014). The effect of it is that, foreign exchange needed to drive development that could have been brought in by foreigners is lost.

Though Nigeria is richly endowed in terms of tourism and resources, it is said that, by African standards, her performance is an abysmal failure. Places like Kenya, Ghana, Egypt and others have more people coming into their countries than Nigeria. The reason for this is not farfetched. Nigeria is perceived as unsafe and indeed not conducive in terms of security caused mainly by communal and religious crisis.

Religious crisis has had devastating effect on Nigerian educational standards ranging from incessant closure of schools, destruction of school facilities to abduction and raping of schools children which has serious effect on the psychologies of school children in the nation. This assertion was supported by Adebayo (2010), according to him, education is very vital in any sustainable developmental program. The nation is striving to put in place amenities for the purpose of elevating the education standard of the country. This is, however, hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in places where religious crisis are being witnessed.

Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months. The education of innocent youths was equally disrupted under tumultuous situations created by religious and ethnicity crises, as many were forced to emigrate from crisis area.

Religious and ethnicity crisis will definitely affect the foreign direct investment (FDI) flow into Nigeria. FDI has positive relationship with economic growth as the more FDI flows into the country the more jobs are created, the per capital income and the higher the standard of living. This was buttressed by Onwumah (2014) when he posited that in economic terms, religious and ethnicity crisis damages resources and facilities which took time to be acquired. No foreign investor will like to invest funds in country that is divided by communal, religious and ethnic crises (Ayinla, 2003). There are fears at two levels.

- i. The basic aim of foreign investment is to make profit which is not possible in an environment of crises.
- ii. The resources invested already will definitely go down the drains.

Meanwhile, the source of Muslims and Christians crises in Nigeria has been religious ethnicity, social and political. The dramas of intolerance by the two religions led to successive misunderstanding between them, sometimes degenerating into violent open war or skirmishes. This drama was marked by the 1980 religious crises that started in Zaria involving members of two religions, resulting to the Wanton destruction of live and properties. The misunderstanding led to loss of lives, torching of churches/mosque, business premises (Adega' 2001).

In 1986, Nigeria was rocked by the controversy over its alleged registration as a member of the organization of Islamic Countries (O.L.C) by the General Ibrahim Babangida's regime (Atanda, 1989). This crisis generated a lot of controversies and cold blood between Muslims and the Christians.

## **Conclusion**

From the study it is crystal clear that, crisis have hindered genuine economic development and national integration, religious crisis has been an obstacle to progress, economic prosperity, peaceful co-existence and over all social economic development of Nigeria because of its destructive tendencies.



To change this evil on the nation's economic development, let adherents of various religious practice what they preach as love, and we as Nigerians must rise to the challenge, all hands must be on deck, we must understand our differences, resolve to respect one another and live together as one regardless of tribe and religion, the government should become transparent, responsive, proactive and equitable in their allocation of national resources and political powers. If the religious crisis is solved in this country Nigeria, it shall be practically possible to see a Nigeria that is truly the giant in terms of economic development.

To ensure religious harmony, cohesion and peaceful co-existence among the adherents of various religions, particularly between the Christians and Muslims for the purpose of sustainable economic development, the following recommendations are put forth.

### **Recommendations**

Economic development and societal wellbeing can only be achieved in an environment where multi-culturalism, multi-religiosity, love and peaceful-co-existence are guaranteed.

The first recommendation is for the country to establish a Federal Ministry of Religion whose duty will be educating the populace on the principles of equity, freedom of religion, religious tolerance and the power of unity and love for one another. The commission should also be charged to find out the primary root causes of religious and ethnicity crisis in Nigeria and ways of eliminating them.

Government should convene an Ad hoc' National summit on Religion with the primary mandate of developing a National Policy and strategy on Religion (NPSR). This summit should be drawn from major stakeholders, i.e. the religions groups in the country (Christians and Muslims) religious practitioners, and also state representative.

The Christians and Muslims leaders in Nigeria must continue to reach out and sustain the dialogue processes, spear head inter-religious education and seek every opportunity to educate its followers to shun violence so as to give room for social and economic development in the nation.

Christians and Muslims leaders should endeavour to impress on their followers the teaching on the solidarity of humankind, and forgiveness (Martin Luther King Jr. as cited by Kunhiyop (2004) opines: 'We must develop and maintain the capacity of forgive'.

We must be willing to overcome the temptation to mix religion and politics. And also make religion a tool of our national partisan politics because of the intricacies involved.

One on one Dialogue, this should not be a conversation involving two persons, but the exchange of ideas or view or opinions and amiability. It has to do with exchanges of religious experiences by those who have faith in their religious traditions for mutual enrichment therefore, it is the willingness to question one's self-understanding and openness to understand others and to resolve misunderstanding and break down barriers, hostility and crisis for peaceful co-existence.

The good thing about dialogue is that it has never been tried and prove wanting as an instrument for the resolution of crisis.

Dialogue and reconciliation centres should be established at local, state and geo-political zone in the nation where matters of religious differences between members of difference religious will be discussed and resolved.

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