

# **A DISCOURSE ON RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND TOLERANCE IN MULTI-FAITH NIGERIA**

***S. Awoniyi, PhD***

Department of Religion and African Culture Adekunle Ajasin University,  
Akungba –Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

---

## **Abstract**

Previous studies have revealed gruesome accounts of horrors in Nigeria, arising from atrocities committed against humanity in God's name. Scholars have exerted frantic efforts in order to resolve the dilemma with a view to manifesting the spirit of tolerance and peaceful co-existence . However, the grounds still remain uncovered. This is because, the current situation in the country regarding bomb blast and acts of terrorism by the Boko Haram religious sect sends a signal that requires more scholarly attention from local vis-à-vis global perspective. The act of religious terrorism which is suddenly foisted on the people for intrinsic reasons needs more detailed explanation. Therefore, the paper examines the ideological characteristics of religious creeds, historical antecedents of Nigerian situation and its socio-political outlooks. The task facing Nigerians and the path towards resolving the dilemma are discussed. In analyzing the data, a socio-ethical, historical and theological approaches are used.

---

**Keywords:** Religious Conflict, Multi-faith, Tolerance, National Ethos, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

The issue of fundamentalism illustrates the fact that religion appears to be associated with conflict in many parts of the world (Haralambos and Holborn 2008). This assertion is equally reinforced by Takaya (1992) when he asserts that the first of religious upheavals in Judeo-Christian tradition is established in the book of Exodus chapter 32:28. When Moses returned from Mount Sinai, three thousand people were massacred on the spot by the Levites on instruction from him because the people turned to 'idol worship', while he was still communicating with Yahweh on their behalf. In a similar but different perspective, the account of such religious horrors is even more gruesome in the history of the origin, spread and consolidation of the Islam within its first eight provinces: Mecca, Medina, Syria, Jazira (Mesopotamia),

Bastra (Persia or Iran), Kufa (Iraq), Egypt and Palestine. The same terror repeated itself during the spread of Islam to North Africa, the Mediterranean and Europe (Khan, cited by Takaya, 1992:109-123). Moreover, within the same faiths, cases of intra-religious disputes have been recorded in which suffering and bloodshed were the result of factional rivalries for power, doctrinal supremacy or leadership tussle (Winkworth, 1974:25). It is important to note that the history of the two major received religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam, is more or less stories of conflicts.

In view of the above, some salient points should be borne in mind while discussing the issue of religious conflict and tolerance in multi-faith Nigeria. One, that religions are parochial and emotional socializers that specialize in building one-faith and exclusive brotherhood communities; second, that religious creeds usually excite and extract the deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties from their adherents when in political competition with people of other faith, and finally, that the two received religions predominant in Nigeria with their longstanding rival ideologies have a history of ethno-political antagonisms. The rationale behind this is to appreciate the motive forces that inform and impel them to political action (Takaya, 1992:10, Gofwen 2004:47-49).

The objective of this paper is to examine the phenomenon of religious conflict, highlighting among others, conceptual discourses on the subject, its forms, and implications. This study illuminates, through some case studies, measures which can be applied to manage the phenomenon from global perspective. The phenomenon of conflict and its attendant effects with our day-to-day struggles over inter-locking agitations on issues like primordial ties, national resources distribution, power sharing, ethnic tolerance, social justice and welfare should be critically examined. Religio-political conflict is a very big problem facing Nigerians today, and this calls for more serious research, thinking and study in order to find ways of minimizing its frequency and devastating impact on the people. This paper, therefore, generates more ideas and debate that will form a basis for resolving the problems posed by religio-political fundamentalists.

### **Conceptual discourses**

The term conflict etymologically derives from the Latin *confligere*, *conflictum* meaning to engage or to contend. Literally, conflict presupposes the existence of some interest for which different individuals or groups enter into a contest or duel. (McDonald, 1977: 273). The term conflict can be used to express arguments, tensions and violent struggle that occur both within and between states. For Bakut (2006] the term denotes a pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals. This implies that conflict is often seen as a threat to peace and depicted as if it is totally negative. However, it depends on how it is handled, it can be either

constructive or destructive. This is because, the word conflict can be used to explore different solutions to a problem and as well stimulate creativity by bringing emotive and non-rational arguments into the open, while deconstructing long-standing tension. Faleti (2006) argues that conflicts are used mainly to inflict injuries, neutralize or subvert the aspirations of opponents. These destructive tendencies can hinder progress in the society, encourage unfriendly behavior, and enhance egocentricity. Furthermore, he opines that the term conflict is a fluid and elastic concept which can be twisted into different shapes. Obviously, theories abound as to the meaning, causes and impacts of conflict. However, conflict in this paper precisely is designated as armed and as well seen from negative perspective except otherwise stated. Also, it is the resort to the use of force and armed struggle in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interest and goals (Oraegbunam, 2007: 218). In a related development, the term terror simply means great fear, something or someone that causes great fear or dread .Wilkinson [1974:9] states that the word terror comes from the Latin verb, *terrere*, meaning to cause to tremble. Although, there are various things that can generate terror in human beings apart from the actions of man such as death, natural catastrophes, accidents and magical processes, terrorism is used here as systematic violence armed at undermining the structure of authority through creating fear, intimidation, havoc, destruction of lives and property in society.

Existing studies have shown that peace can exist independent of conflict, violence, or war, but war is only one form of violence which is physical, open and direct. But a society cannot be described as peaceful where structural poverty, exclusion, intimidation, oppression, want, fear and all sundry types of psycho-social pressures still constitute the society's mainstay (Galtung, 1990:2:3). In sociological realm, peace can be referred to as a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonisms; individuals and groups are able to meet their social needs; and expectation such as food, cloth, housing and social amenities for a worthy life (Haralambos, et. al. 2008: 396-401). Two basic theories could be derived from the above which are structural-functionalist and dialectical materialism. The former explains that peace is achieved where existing social structures perform their functions adequately, and supported by the requisite culture, social norms, and values (Haralambos, et. al. 2008:396 and Gofwen, 2004:35) While the latter is viewed from Marxian position that peace can be realized only in a condition where there are classless people in the society (Haralambos, et. al. 2008:401). Peace here suggests a condition where all the above factors are acknowledged and allowed to come into play for the survival of humanity.

The word tolerance means to bear, to endure or suffer, but this is not a quality of passivity or indifference. The term entails an active, and sometimes difficult response to an issue. Thus Hewman cited by Smith (2002) endeavours to distinguish between tolerance and toleration. For him, toleration attracts more broad application because it could be referred to any kind of openness that suggests passivity. However, tolerance is explained as a behavioural concept that suggests a response of activity the demonstrable concrete actions. This distinction informs basic difference between passive and active responses to the order. Nevertheless, in the context of this paper, certain points are recognized regarding the principle of tolerance. That ecclesiastical tolerance does not mean doctrinal compromise; and that theological openness is often the plea of the powerless, which is even difficult to explain by those in position of power. Also, the idea of complete separation of church and state is usually being advocated by some people in the name of religion. The issue of relativism in relation to tolerance is accepted as an undeniable fact (Smith, 2002).

### **The Ideological Features of Religious Doctrinal Dimension**

Religion contains an overwhelming and complex variety of positions as a result of conflicting truth claims. Religious particularism is a unique feature that cuts across nearly all matters relating to every religious belief system. It is the belief that one's own religion is a special, and in fact, the best and the only one that gives assurance of ultimate salvation to man. For example, the scriptures of the received religions particularly keep this belief irreconcilably clear as in Jesus' reply to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews that 'He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him' (John 3:36). Furthermore, Jesus said:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (John 15:5).

This is an exclusive and, to non-Christians, mentally disconcerting statement when seen in terms of religious co-existence, mutual respect and co-operation. So are the Quranic verses which state: 'Surely the true religion with God is Islam' (Quran 3:19) and 'O my sons, God has chosen the religion for you; so die not unless you are Muslims (Quran 2:132)'. Given these strong and authoritative statements, some kinds of 'holier than thou' attitudes are inevitable on both sides and an attendant emotional irritability is implied when such religions are in perpetual competition for the souls of

men within the same political system. In Nigeria, received religions are in keen competition for the conversion of unbelievers and the proselytisation of one another's adherents.

More importantly, religions build brotherhoods across human races. Members of the same religious sects therefore offer each other unmerited help, favours and considerations. In Nigeria, the recourse to same 'brotherhood' in public offices blurs merit in appointment and performance in a heterogeneous community. Hence, politicization of religion appears to be a natural outcome of a multi-religious society. Then, these exclusive ideological world outlooks make religions not to co-exist easily. This is because, once religions are politicized, they become exclusive political parties whose members may never adhere to nor respect the outcome of normal democratic processes. The result is instability and bloody rivalries. Today there are major religious groups with numerical strengths that significantly affect the outcomes and direction of a democratic political process in Nigeria. Religion legitimizes hegemony, and the exiting leadership feels the *status quo* is under threat.

### **Religious Conflict and its Forms in Nigeria**

Conflict is the inevitable paradox of human existence and civilizations. While dynamism, a geometric matrix in human existence usually creates complexity in human society thereby entangled in a web of men with different tastes and needs which is insatiable. Men, therefore, become antagonistic as they organize towards satisfaction of needs in society (Otte, cited by Gofwen, 2004:46). Conflict can be described as a stubborn ubiquitous fact of social life. The nature of human interaction is that, if every interaction among men is a sociation, conflict then is one of the most vivid interactions (Simmel, cited by Gofwen, 2004:47). Terrorism is one of the dynamics in the spectrum of religio-political conflict which covers organization of agitation groups like Maitatsine sect led by Mohammed Marwa in the 1980s, Darul Islam, Boko Haram and Kalakato sects. The Maitatsine sect had as its rallying point the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria, but the Boko Haram opposes Western education and insists on upholding and imposing shariah legal system (Kukah, 2010:14). The expression 'Boko Haram' has become popular name for the sect also known unofficially as the 'Yusufiya' 'Boko' is the Hausa word for western system of education while 'Haram' means 'forbidden'. That is to say, the group is opposing western education for Muslim children. The sect went about to express their resentment over what they perceived as negative elements being propagated through western education and thought. Clarifying the fact that they are opposed mainly to what they consider depraved from the Islamic perspective, they are referring to only negative side of it which they perceived as contradictory to Islamic principles and some basic heretical and

anti-Islamic ideas embodied in western education. However, educational dimension of the Boko Haram activities should not be considered in isolation from the general attitude of Nigerians about the type of education that prevails in the country. It is common knowledge that not a few stakeholders in education have decried and continued to raise an alarm about the prohibitive retrogression in the country's educational sector (Anyanwu, 2010:36-37).

The rejection of western education by the Boko Haram sect is, therefore, understandably a protest against the mediocrity and the eclipse of spiritual, moral and intellectual fervor that are bastardizing formal education at various levels in the country. It is, as it were, an overreaction, against the enthronement of a type of education that is bankrupt, unable to promote people's genuine freedom, empowerment and integral human development. However, the Boko Haram offensive against western education should be considered from the background of qualitative education. The horrible and objectionable violence notwithstanding, the search for qualitative education should be seen as what accounted for the recourse of thousands of young men to Mohammed Yusuf and his Boko Haram sect to search for a liberating and self-fulfilling education perceived as not possible in the educational set-up on ground (Anyanwu, 2010:38-39). Against this background, terrorism is manifested in the following activities such as laying of mines and explosives at strategic places, arrests, kidnapping, and detention, beating and torturing, murder and assassination, arson, sabotage of installations; mysterious phone calls, intimidation and suicide bombing. (Nwolise, 2005: 12-13; Anyanwu, 2010:39 and *The Nation*, 2012: 1&5).

Religious conflict is conceptualized here as a specific form of conflict between groups which differed ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting with each striving for political relevance. One distinctive feature that is ubiquitous with all religions is the categorization of the world, such that every religion is characterized by sharp subdivisions of the world, specifically with clear-cut dichotomies as follows: the 'good' and the 'bad', the 'we' versus 'they', the 'saved' and the 'lost'; 'sacred' and 'profane', or 'brethren' versus 'the rest of the world', who are expected to share in the life after (Takaya 1992:110). This 'we' feeling among members propels the fencing out on non-believers who are technically condemned to hell except they repent. Historical trends have been found replete with various atrocities committed in the name of God. All these come about as fall-outs of either inter-religious or even intra-faith competition for political supremacy in Nigeria.

### **Forms of Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

Nigeria has never been the same with a catalogue of religious conflicts. These put together, sufficiently buttress the highly explosive nature

of religion in the country. Thus, as Eliagwu [cited by Gofwen] reports, a summary of violent religious incidents unveils the following:

**Table 1:** Religious Conflict in Nigeria (May 1980 – July, 2010)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Principal Actors</b>
May 1980	Zaria (Kaduna State)	Disturbance in Zaria during which property belonging to mainly Christians were destroyed.
December, 18-29, 1980	Yan-Awaki Ward in Kano (Kano State)	Riots by Maitatsine sect, 4, 177 people died, extensive destruction of property.
October 29-30, 1982	Bullumkutu, Maiduguri (Borno State)	Kala-Kala and Maitatsine sect... 118 people died, extensive damage to property.
October 29-30, 1982	Kano (Kano State)	Muslim demonstrators burnt down churches.
February 27- March 5, 1984	Dobeli Ward, Jimeta-Yola (Gongola State)	Maitatsine sect, 586 died, wanton destruction of property.
April 26-28, 1985	Pantami Ward, Gombe. (Bauchi State)	Maitatsine sect, 105 died, extensive destruction of property.
March 1986	Ilorin (Kwara State)	Muslims and Christians clashed during a Christian procession at Easter.
May 1986	Ibadan, University of Ibadan (Oyo State)	Demonstrations by Muslims in which they burnt the figure of the Risen Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection University of Ibadan.
March 1987	(a) Kafanchan (Kaduna State)	Clashes between Muslims and Christians at the College of Education, Kafanchan... loss of some lives and the burning of some Mosques by Christians and native Kajes.
	(b) Katsina, Funtua, Zaria, Gusau and Kaduna (Kaduna State).	Wave of religious riots in which Muslims burnt down numerous Church buildings, and damaged property belonging to Christians. Many lives were lost.
February 1988	Kaduna, Kaduna Polytechnic (Kaduna State)	Religious riots, ostensibly among students, destroyed the foundation walls of the Christian Chapel.
April 1991	(a) Katsina (Katsina State)	Religious violence spearheaded by Mallam Yahaya Yakubu, leader of the fundamentalist Shiite sect in Katsina. It was a protest over a blasphemous publication in Fun-Times. Several lives were lost and property destroyed.
	(b) Tafawa Balewa (Bauchi State)	Started as a quarrel between a Fulani man and a Sayawa meat seller in Tafawa Balewa. Escalated into a full blown violence and later took the colouring of a religious war in Bauchi Several lives were lost and property valued over hundreds of millions of Naira was destroyed.
October 1991	Kano (Kano State)	A peaceful procession initiated by the Izala sect to halt Rev. Reinherd Bonnke from having a crusade in Kano, later degenerated into very bloody religious violence. Thousands of lives were lost and property-

		valued at millions of Naira was destroyed.
May 1992	Zangon Kataf, Zaria, Kaduna, Ikara. (Kaduna State)	A communal feud between the Katafs and the Hausas later took the dimension of inter-religious war between Muslims and Christians in other major cities of Kaduna State. Several lives and property were destroyed.
January 1993	Funtua (Katsina State)	The Kalakato religious sect assaulted the village Head and burnt down a Police vehicle. Lives and property were also lost.
February 2000	Kaduna	Conflict engulfed the city between Christians and Moslems over the implementation of Sharia law. Thousands of lives and property worth millions were destroyed.
February May 28, 2000	Abia State	Religious riots in Aba and minor disturbances in Umahia. Over 450 persons killed in Aba. Abia State, as a reprisal killing for the Kaduna crisis.
September 8 2000	Gombe	The Kaltungo religious crisis. The crisis erupted over the implementation of <i>Sharia</i> in the State.
Oct 12 2001	Kano	Religious riot in Kano. In protest of US invasion of Afghanistan in search of Osama bin Laden: over 150 person were killed.
Nov. 16 2002	Kaduna	The Miss World crisis in which Muslims attacked Christians and churches. The crisis was triggered by an article by Isioma Daniel, published in the newspaper; over 250 people killed and several churches destroyed.
June 8 2008	Adamawa	Religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Numan town. Caused by the location of the town's Central Mosque close to Bachama paramount ruler's palace; over 17 persons killed.
February 18 2006	Bornu	Religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in Maiduguri. The riot was caused by the 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.
March 22 2007	Gombe	Muslim pupils killed their Christian teacher, Mrs. Oluwatoyin Olusesan. The pupils claimed that their teacher had "desecrated" the Quran in the process of stopping a student from cheating in an examination hall.
November 28 2008	Plateau	Religious violence between Muslims and Christians in the city of Jos. The crisis ensure from the controversial results of a local election; over 700 people killed and thousands internally displaced.
February 21 2009	Bauchi	Ethno-religious conflict at the Makama New Extension. Over 11 people were killed, more than 400 houses burnt, and over 1,600 families displaced
June 11 2009	Bauchi	Clash between members o the Boko Haram and the police. 17 members of the sect were killed.

July 26-30 2009	Bauchi, Bornu, Kano, Yobe	Religious violence unleashed by the radical Boko Haram sect. Over 700 persons killed; 3,500 persons internally displaced; 1,264 children orphaned; over 392 women widowed; and several properties destroyed.
December 29 2009	Bauchi	Religious violence unleashed by the Kala-kato sect. Over 38 persons killed; about 20 suspected members of the sect arrested; and over 1000 people internally displaced.
January 17-20 2009	Plateau	Resurgence of religious crisis in Jos. Police announced at least 320 killed, but aid workers and local leaders place death toll at over 550; some 300 persons arrested; and over 40,000 displaced.
March 7 2010	Plateau	Attacks by Fulani Moslems on Christian –dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa, Shen and Fan in Jos. Over 500 people were killed mainly women and children.
March 17 2010	Plateau	Suspected Fulani militias attacked residents of Biye and Batem village in Jos. 13 persons killed, including 6 women 4 children and 3 men. One of the women a pregnant woman, was burnt with a baby on her back.
April 11 2010	Plateau	Attack on a Berom village some 30 kilometers south of Jos by suspected Fulani herdsmen. The attackers targeted the homes of some officials in Kura Jenta. No life was lost but 3 houses and 6 vehicles were torched. Kuru Jenta was the scene of a deadly massacre where about 150 Fulani were allegedly killed and dumped in wells on January 19, 2010.
May 22 2010	Plateau	Murder of three (Muslim) Fulani herdsmen at Tusung village in Barkin Ladi Local Government. The attackers was alleged to be Berom youths.
May 24 2010	Plateau	Attack on some Christians, who were returning from their place of worship along Bauchi road in Jos. Alleged reprisal attack by Muslims over the kill of 3 Fulani herdsmen. Many sustained injuries and one was feared dead.
July 17 2010	Plateau	Muslim Fulani herdsmen launched an overnight attack on a Christian village, Mazah, a village North of the city of Jos. About eight people were reportedly killed. The wife, two children and a grandson of a Christian priest, Rev. Nuhu Dawat, was among those killed. Seven houses and a church were razed.
July 19 2010	Plateau	Attack on Tagir village a nearby community to Mazzah village which was attacked on 17 July 2010. Although no life was lost in Tagir, wanton destruction of property, including loss of livestock was reported.

**Source:** J.I. Eliagwu,[ cited by Gofwen ,2004: 65-67]..

**Table 2:** Record of Boko Haram Menace of Sweats and Tears in Nigeria (26 July, 2011 – 18 July, 2012) .

<b>Record of Boko Haram Menace of Sweat and Tears Across Nigeria</b>
26 July 2009: First clash with security agencies in Bauchi state
27 July 2009: First attack in Yobe State during an invasion of Potiskum Divisional Headquarters, leading to the death of three policemen, one fire service officer.
29 July 2009: Confrontation with security men at Mamudo Village, along Potiskum/Damaturu Road, Yobe 33 Boko Haram members killed.
29 July 2009: An all-night battle with combined security operatives at Railway terminus, Maiduguri Borno State. Scores Killed and operational based destroyed.
8 September 2010: Set ablaze Bauchi Central prison and fired members of the sect who were jailed there.
28 January 2011: Killed governorship candidate of the Borno State chapter of the All Nigerian peoples party (ANPP), Alhaji Modu Fannami Gubio and six others at Lawan Bukar ward, Maiduguri.
2 March 2011: Killed two policemen attached to the residence of a Divisional Police officer (DPO). Mustapha Sandamu at Rigasa area of Kaduna State.
30 March 2011: Bomb Explosion in Damaturu Injuring a policemen
2 April 2011: Bombed Dutsen-Tanishi police station, injured two policemen.
4 May 2011: Shot dead a prison warder at Maiduguri prison on Kashim Ibrahim way.
5 May 2011: Shot duty officer at Maduiguri Government House Umaru Shehu at his Abuja Talakawa residence of Maisandami ward killing a 13 year old boy and injured another.
9 May 2011: Killed two Islamic clerics, Sheikh Goni Tijani and Mallam Alhaji Aburat their residence in Mairi and Bulabulum wards of Maiduguri.
9 May 2011: Killed Bauchi State Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport workers (NURTW), Ibrahim Dudu Gobe and injured his son, Mohammed.
13 May 2011: Planted bomb at Lagos Street, Maiduguri which injured two soldiers, three policemen. A policeman was also shot dead same day in the city.
29 May 2011: Bombed Bauchi military barrack, killing 14.
29 May 2011: Eight victims lose their legs after an explosion occurred at Zuba, a suburb of Kubwa in Abuja
31 May 2011: Shot dead Shehu of Borno's Brother, Alhaji Abba Anas Garba El-Kanem.
1 June 2011: Five people killed during attack on police stations in Maiduguri.
12 June 2011: Four persons killed at a drinking joint in Bulumkutu, Maiduguri,
16 June 2011: Four children killed in a bomb explosion at Dambo a town Maiduguri.
16 June 2011: A Massive explosion at the National Police Headquarters building in Abuja.
20 June 2011: Seven people including five policemen killed in gun and bomb attacks on a police station and a bank if in Kankara, Katsina State.
27 June 2011: Boko Haram's gun and bomb attack on a beer garoten in Maiduguri at least 25 dead and dozens injured
July 2011: Government say it will open a negotiation panel to initiate negotiations with Boko Haram sect
3 August 2011: The government rejects negotiations with Boko Haram.
25 August 2011: Gun and bomb attacks by Boko Haram on two police stations and two banks in Gombi, Adamawa State, kill at least 16 people including seven policemen.
26 August 2011: Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide bomb blast on the UN compound in Abuja, killing 23 people.
1 September 2011: A Shootout between BH gunmen and soldiers in Adamawa state, kills one sect

member while another is injured and captured.
4 September 2011: Muslim Cleric Malam Dala shot dead by two BH members outside his home in the Zinnari area of Maiduguri
12 September 2011: Seven men, including four policemen, are killed by BH gunmen in bomb and shooting attacks on a police station and a bank in Misau, Bauchi State. The attackers rob the bank.
13 September 2011: Four soldiers shot and wounded in an ambush by Boko Haram members in Maiduguri shortly after the arrest of 15 sect members in military raids on Boko Haram hideouts in the city.
17 September 2011: Babakura Fugu, brother –in-law to slain Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf, is shot dead outside his house in Maiduguri two days after attending a peace meeting with Nigeria’s ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo in the city. BH denies any involvement in the incident.
1 October 2011: A butcher and his assistant are killed by the Boko Haram gunmen at Baga market in Maiduguri in a targeted killed. In a separate incident, three people are killed in a shoot-out following BH bomb and shooting attacks on a military patrol vehicle delivering food to soldiers at a checkpoint in Maiduguri three victims are civilians
3 October 2011: Three killed in BH attacks on Baga market in Maiduguri Borne State. The victims included a tea-seller, a drug store owner and a passer-by.
23 October, 2011: Boko Haram members kill a policeman and a bank security guard in bombing and shooting attacks on a police station and two banks in Saminaka, Kaduna State.
23 October 2011: Boko Haram sat members open fire can market in the town of Katar in Kaduna state, killing two.
25 October 2011: A policemen is shot dead in his house in a targeted attack by Boko Haram gunmen in Damaturu.
29 October 2011: Boko Haram gunmen shoot dead Muslim cleric Sheikh Ali Jana’a outside his home in the Bulabullin Nagarnam neighborhood of Maiduguri. Jana’a is known to have provided information to security forces regarding the sect.
November 2011: Boko Haram sect says it will not dialogue with the government until all of its members who have been arrested are released.
2 November 2011: A soldier on duty is shot dead by sect members outsides Maiduguri’s main market.
4 November 2011: The motor code of Borna State Governor Kashim Shettima comes under Boko Haram bomb attack in Maiduguri on its way from the airport to theG overnor’s residence as he returns from a trip to Abuja Around 1.50 are killed in coordinated BH bombing and shooting attacks on police facilities in Yobe State. Two Boko Haram suicide-bombers blow themselves up outside the military Joint Task Force Headquarters in Maiduguri in a botched suicide attacks.
9 November 2011; Boko Haram members bomb a police station and the office of Nigeria’ Road Safety Agency in Maina village, Bornu State. No one is hurt.
26 November 2011: Three policemen and a civilian are wounded in Boko Haram bomb and shooting attacks in Geidam, Yobe State. Six churches, a police station, a beer parloer a shopping complex, a high court, a local council building and 11 cars are burnt in the attacks.
27 November 2011: A Bornu State protocol officer in the office of the Governor is shot dead by motorcycle-riding sect members while driving home.
4 December 2011: A soldier, a policemen and a civilian are killed in bomb and gun attacks on police buildings and two banks in Azare, Bauchi State. Boko Haram open fired at a wedding in Maiguguri killing the groom and a guest.
7 December 2011: An explosion linked to Boko Haram kills 8 in the Oriyapata district of Kuduna city.
13 December 2011: A bomb attack on a military check point by Boko Haram and resulting shooting by solders in Maiduguri leaves 10 dead and 30 injured.

17 December 2011: A shootout between sect members and policemen following a raid on the hideout of a Boko Haram sect leaders in the Darmanawa area of Kano State kills seven, including three police officers. Police arrested 14 BH suspects and seize large amount of arms and bombs. Three BH members die in an accidental explosion while assembling home-made bombs in a hideout on the outskirts of Maiduguri.
19 December 2011: One suspected BH member dies and two others wounded in an accidental while assembling a home-made bomb in a hideout in Damaturu.
22 December 2011: BH bombs in parts of Maiduguri kill 20. Four policemen and a civilian are killed in gun and bomb attacks on a police building in Potiskum, Yobe State. Around 100 are killed following multiple bomb and shooting attacks by BH gunmen and ensuring gun battles with troops in the Pompomari outskirts of Damaturu.
25 December 2011: A Charismas Day Boko Haram attack on Saint Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla town, near Abuja Kills 42 Worshipper, Three Secret Police Operatives [SSS]and a BH bomber are killed in a suicide attack when the bomber rams his bomb-laden car into a military convoy at the gates of SSS Headquarters in Damaturu. A policeman is killed in a botched BH bomb attack on a church in the ray field areas of Jos, capital of Plateau State.
30 December 2011: For Muslim worshipper are killed in a BH bomb and shooting attack targeting a military checkpoint in Maiduguri as worshippers leave a Mosque after attending Friday prayers.
1 January 2012: President Goodluck Jonathan imposes a state of emergency on 15 local government areas hardest-hit by Boko Haram. Attacks, in Bornu , Yobe and Plateau States. He orders the closure of Nigerian borders in the North.
3 January 2012: Boko Haram gunman attack a police station in the town of Birniwa in Jigawa state killed a teenage girl and wounded a police officer.
5 January 2012: Six worshippers are killed and 10 others wounded when Boko Haram gunman attack a church in Gombe city.
6 January 2012: Eight worshippers are killed in a shooting attack on a church in Yola. Boko Haram gunman shoot dead 17 Christian mourners in the town of Mubi in the Northeastern State of Adamawa. The victims are friends and relations of one of five people killed in a Boko Haram attack on a hotel the previous day.
7 January 2012: Three Christian poker players are killed and seven others wounded by Boko Haram gunman in the town of Biu.
9 January 2012: Boko Haram gunman shoot dead a secret police operative along with his civilian friend as they leave a mosque in Biu, Borno State, 200km South of the State capital, Maiduguri. The President says Boko Haram has infiltrated the executive parliamentary and judicial wings of government.
10 January 2012: A Boko Haram attack on a beer garden kills 8, including five policemen and a teenage girl, in Damaturu, capital of Yobe State.
11 January 2012: Four Christians killed by Boko Haram gunman in Potskum, Yobe state, when gunman open fire on their car as they stop for fuel.
13 January 2012: Boko Haram kills four and injures two others, including a policemen in two separate attack in Yola, Adamawa State and Gombe city in neighbouring Gombe State.
17 January 2012: Two soldiers and four Boko Haram gunmen are killed in an attack on a military deck point in Maiduguri, Borno State.
18 January 2012: A key suspect in the 2011 Charismas Day bombing in Abuja, which killed more than 40 people, escapes police custody.

**Source:** Shehu Sani 2011: 39-41; and Local and Agency Reports adapted from The Nation on Sunday 27, May 2012: 20 and 22.

It can be deduced from the summary of the results in Tables 1 and 2 above that religious crises in Nigeria had brought a lot of hardship , tears, socio-economic retrogression on humanity .Particularly, the recent Boko Haram phenomenon has cost the nation huge human , economic and financial loss. For instance, the World Investment Reports put the loss at ₦1.33 Trillion in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) (Oyedepo, 2012:7). There is huge unemployment in the country, however, the few existing institutions and organizations re-located to neighbouring countries like Ghana,Cameroon,Niger among others because investors consider security as key to their continued existence.

### **The Sources of Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

Religious intolerance has been identified as the major source of religious conflict in all multi-faith societies existing as long as the history of mankind. Balogun (1988:166) defines religious intolerance as the hostility towards other religions as well as the inability of religious adherents to harmonise between the theories and the practical aspects of religion in areas like the diversity of interpretations of doctrine, acculturation process and indoctrination. Unreasoning imitation of religious prime movers by their adherents and other obvious cases of indulging in an extravagant notions towards the pursuit of religion. Against this background, religious fundamentalists thereby re-present the scriptural text as ‘timely, out of time, and so valid for all time’. Whereas the fundamentalists’ knowledge of history is at variance with that of modernism, the differing political philosophy of the major religions in Nigeria is another cause of religious conflict. The mutual suspicions and fear of domination between the major two religions have been basis for rivalry. This is equally supported by mutual ignorance of the belief and teachings of each one’s faith and followed by provocative acts which hurt the religious sensibilities of people of other faiths whether they are intended or inadvertent (Metuh 1994:88-89).

Nigeria has been experiencing one of its most profound crises in its history since the 1970s which has brought repercussions with fundamental implications for the economy as well as for the other political, ideological and religious structures and relations. There is a dialectical correlation between the biting economic crisis and accompanying political repression, religious intolerance and revolts. Intolerance emerged from the conditions of uneven development among religious-cum-ethnic nationalities leading to domination, oppression, segregation and repression (Bako, 1992:147-176). Moreover, religion has become the platform for socio-political articulation as well as tool for emergence of cross-cutting cleavages today. For example, agitation for the creation of more states and local governments from the late sixties to the early nineties usually raise and inspire hope among various ethnic minorities of Nigeria with a view to liberating themselves from the

control of either Muslim or Christian leadership to which they have been subjected. This type of struggle often took on inter-religious overtones (Metuh 1994:88-89).

Also identified, are the accelerating process of globalization and democratization, the deepening economic hardship and social inequality, the resurgence of neo-liberal ideology, seeking to enforce market reforms, whittling down of state legitimacy and capacity, have sharpened the crisis of the nation state project in post-colonial Africa, particularly Nigeria. These have also led to the emergence of different individual groups such as Maitatsine, and Boko Haram sects redefining and reinventing the identities. Egwu further submits that the very nature of the federal government and struggle for state powers contribute immensely to ethnic and religious conflicts. The result may be that the struggle for state power may be wrongly or correctly perceived. Besides, the unevenness generated by the modernization process is also perceived to be the major incentive to ethnic and religious conflicts. It has become an issue of contention as the effect of ethnicity and religion on the politics of resource allocation because the nature of Nigerian politics is that, it is organized around the distribution of resources and not around production.

In 1977-1978 Constituent Assembly, the issue of religion and politics became political problem in Nigeria. In the debate, for the Christians, introducing sharia or a federal sharia court of appeal amounts to giving undue preference to the Muslim in a religiously pluralistic society with secular constitution. On the other hand, for Muslims, the common law is essentially Christian law and even the spirit of the Constitution is Christian in orientation. The Muslims have to struggle to get a position in the constitution (Mu'cizzam and Ibrahim, 2000:64). Since this controversy, the history of Nigeria has been plagued by problematic events right up to, as it were, the year 2012. Topical of these has been the heated debate in January 1986 over Nigeria's membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Jama'atu Nastril Islam in a counter offensive called on the government for a work-free day on Friday (Mu'azzam et.al 2000). Other incidents that pointed to the change of attitude in politics of religion in Nigeria were: the 1987 Kaduna State religious riots, the Katsina March 27, 1991 religious riots, the December 26 1994, the July 26 2009 Boko Haram religious uprising in Maiduguri among others. (Mu'azzam et .al. 2000:69 and Anyanwu and Nwanaju 2010:125). The exploration of the root causes of religious conflict gives dual purposes. Apart from the exposition of the roots of the conflict, it opens the possible pathway which may be followed to resolving the conflict.

## **Implications of Religious Conflict in Nigeria**

Egwu [1998] observes that communal crises, devastating religious uprisings and conflicts which have engulfed several states in Nigeria have become major issues for media coverage. Religious conflict has adverse consequences for a virile and good nation building. Apart from the killing of innocent citizens, the psychological trauma and destruction of property is great. Religious conflict vis-à-vis terrorism leads to a breakdown of law and order, weakens government resolve and ability to govern effectively, discourages investors both domestic and foreign, and as well threatens national productivity. The country's international image is badly affected by destructive conflict and terrorist activities. As indicated earlier, conflict can be revolutionary and at times desirable as an instrument of pursuing and achieving positive change in the society. The inference is that it may become legitimate, aimed at promoting the common good in the face of hardship and corruption.

However, there is no justification under the name of God, for criminal terrorists to violently pursue their private gains and repudiate the authority of a government. The key aims of terrorists are to kill, gain publicity, seek revenge, and force a change in policy or societal structures. The implications of conflict/terrorism may vary in accordance with the root causes, objective and amount of forces applied. Nevertheless, the following are identified as the negative implications of conflict/terrorism: physical injury and pain, death, mental agony from psychic terror, feeling of helplessness, destruction of property, damage to infrastructural facilities like electricity, installations and police posts, diversion of public funds from socio-economic development to security, abuse of human rights and loss of resources.

## **Religious Tolerance and Sustainable Mutual Confidence in Nigeria Inculcation of the Spirit of Tolerance**

Downs (1999) defines tolerance as the posture and cordial effort to understand another's beliefs, practices, and habits without necessarily sharing or accepting them. This does not imply a shift from one's belief; however, it helps to consolidate the distinct primordial ties from shattering or being pulverized into various fragile tiles. The principle is simply to show empathy or indulgence for beliefs and practices differing from or conflicting with one's own. The ultimate reality is the same divine personality who is at the center of all religions. Thus, there are many paths that lead to the Truth, the only One, who knows no distinction. Therefore, no single tradition can legitimately claim superiority or definitive truth. Nigeria is a religiously pluralistic society inhabiting African traditional adherents, Christians, Muslims, and adherents of other secular ideologies; their harmonious co-existence requires positive tolerance. This is because, there will be no

lasting peace in Nigeria unless the people learn not merely to tolerate but to respect other faith as their own.

### **Refocusing Attention on the Issue of National Ethos**

Nnoli (1980:124) observes that a secularist national idea that respects and accommodates internal peculiarities, differences in religious and ethnic ways of life, is a necessity for a multi-faith Nigeria. These are the basic guidelines for the definition of the rights, duties, obligations, and responsibilities of members of Nigeria and its institutions, systems, and channels of interaction for the members. This is because the belief system which embodies the internalized values, in part, propels action. Indeed, Nigeria's problems over the years have been that of being torn along multiple ethnic, regional and religious perceptions of life, with no single set of nation-wide cohering principle. For instance, War Against indiscipline, (WAI) and National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) are good examples but not strong enough. Additional national ethos need to be fashioned out with high commitment and unity of purpose for nation-building.

### **Inculcation of Secularist Principle**

Secularism, as a state policy, is the philosophy and practice of separating the affairs of governance from religion. This is not an anti-religion policy but it is the refusal to grant more favours to one religion over others. The United States of America had her break-through contributions to political sociology which she discovered in her experiment with a federal constitution. For example, Article VI of their federal constitution expressly prohibits religious discriminations in filling public offices as well as state religion. Britain equally borrowed America's idea to govern the affairs of her heterogeneous Nigerian colony. Nigeria's various constitutions have consistently been based on secularist principles. However, we need to look more in-ward and have the commitment to live by the provisions of secularist policy.

### **Democratic Culture**

Mutual trust and faith in a pluralistic secular state can exist only when the culture of truly free and fair democratic practices gain root. Deliberate efforts have to be made by a truly dedicated, selfless, and visionary leadership to purge all the electoral, and other civil processes of corrupt and unpatriotic practices. Moreover, there should be social justice in national exercises like recruitment into public services, admission into national institutions of higher learning and access to other socio-economic opportunities. All these must rest on the true concept of fair representation based on merit rather than personal connections and privileges (Kukah, 2010:17-19).

## **Recognition of Basic Rights**

Religious fanaticism, confrontation and threat to security emerge and thrive best when the basic rights of the citizens such as food, shelter, medical care, right to work and other necessary social amenities are threatened. In Nigeria, there are massive unemployment and excessive marginalization of the poor from the mainstreams of the economy. These are sure reasons that trigger religious extremism and intolerance. Takaya (1990) affirms that such indeed has been the situation that contributed to the emergence and turbulence caused by the Maitatsine Islamic sect between 1980 and 1985. The present situation in Nigeria is charged with another turbulence caused by Boko Haram since 26 July 2009 to-date. To avoid these horrible experiences there is the need to address poverty in every ramification such as economic, political, social, cultural, educational, psychological and spiritual poverty. This is because a hungry man is an angry man. Until poverty ignorance and corruption are addressed, the people's social mobilization for self-awareness and sustainable mutual confidence cannot be materialized.

## **The Management of Religious Terrorism**

The greater part of the fight against terrorism has to be done by governments and not by corporate bodies and individuals. This is because the things that generate terrorism in a state or across national boundaries mostly arise from the policies, commissions and omissions of governments. The Federal Government should show visible concern on the issue of crushing poverty, the provocative rate of unemployment, hunger, and neglect of the youths. After these, the following measures should be provided:

- Building of strong intelligence unit
- Training the security men in anti-terrorist operations
- Design and put into effect a comprehensive anti-terrorist security system.
- Making contingency plans of what is to be done on security challenges and mapping different scenarios.
- Provision of direct and secret alarm system and communication lines with the relevant agencies.
- Installation of electronic security gadgets.
- Giving high morale building attention to the security staff and other personnel when terrorism occurs.
- Life insurance is crucial for security agencies
- The use of intruder detection equipment alarm systems.
- Constant collection and analysis of threat intelligence.

There are lessons to be learnt from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the United States, and the terrible attacks organized in London city on July 7, 2005. There are outstanding demonstrations that terrorism is a real and deadly threat against democracy, human liberty, sustainable

development, good governance, personal and material prosperity as well as national security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This message concerns Nigeria in the area of re-assessing threats and redefining the concept of national security to cover all dimensions and equipping Nigeria's security and defense forces to meet the new challenges (Nwolise, 2005:18-31).

### **Conclusion**

The paper examined how religious fundamentalism is associated with conflict and violence from time immemorial because of its inherent ideological creeds such as parochial emotional socializers, excitement and extraction of deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties as well as longstanding rival ideologies. Besides, religious conflicts, forms, root causes and the horrible implications of violence for Nigerian citizens were exposed and discussed. Then, it was established that the causal connection between socio-economic hardship and religio-ethnic conflicts are a result of the neglect of government's responsibilities. The unbearable situation in turn impels and compels the people to take solace in religio-ethnic manipulations as basis for coping measures and gap-filling strategies. It was equally pointed out that the current Nigerian outlooks made it imperative that governments must rise up to their responsibilities to address the ailing socio-economic problem and high level of corruption. It was suggested that unemployment, starvation and hunger, poverty, marginalization, uneven distribution of resources should be honestly and sincerely addressed. Job opportunities for the youths should be the topmost priority because several young people are now of the opinion that armed struggle for survival is the only language governments understand (Asari-Dokubo 2004:4). It is equally suggested that the current security strategies should be reviewed towards modern and more effective ones capable of meeting the prevailing challenges. All these will go a long way in helping Nigerians for peaceful co-existence and sustainable mutual confidence in a religiously pluralistic society. In order to abolish this predatoriness of wolfishness and all the antihuman consequences of religious violence and conflict; social welfare of citizens in every ramification should be the basic aim and concern towards conscientious revolution of conscience of Nigerians.

### **References:**

- Anyanwu, S. (2010) Boko Haram Riot: Matters arising. In S.O. Anyanwu and I ..Nwanaju, I. (Ed.) *Boko Haram Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria [pp.30-44]* .Owerri: Edu-Edy.
- Asari-Dukubo (2004). *Daily Sun* Newspaper, October 19, 2004 p.4.
- Bako, S. (1992). World Recession and Growth of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria. In J.K. Olupona (Ed.) *Religion and Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria [pp.147-176]*.Ile-Ife: O.A.U.

- Bakut, B.T. (2006). The Environment, Peace and Conflict in Africa. In: Best, S. O. (ed). *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*[p.236]. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Balogun, K.A. (1988). Religious Intolerance as a Cause of National Disintegration. In S.B. Mala., (Ed.) *Religion and National Unity*[ pp.166 ]. Ibadan: University Press
- Downs, T. (1999) . *Finding Common Grounds*. Chicago: Moody .
- Egwu, S.G. (1998). Political Economy of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria. In: Okoye, F. (ed). *Ethnic and Religious Rights in Nigeria*[pp.16-29] . Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor.
- Eliagwu, J.I. (1993). The Shadow of Religion on Nigerian Federalism 1960-63. NCRI Monograph Series, No 3.
- Faleti, S.A, (2006) “Theories of Social Conflict” In Best, S. G. (ed) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*[p.36]. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd
- Galtung, J. (1990) .Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27,3.
- Gofwen R. I. (2004) *Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and Nation Building: The Throes of Two Decades 1980-2000*. Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor.
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. (2008). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (7th Ed). Hammer Smith, London: HarperCollins Publisher Limited, 396-401.
- Khan, M.A. (1982). *The Pious Caliphs* .Safat, Kuwait: Islamic Book Publishers.
- Kukah, M.H. (2010). Boko Haram: Some Reflections of Causes and Effects. In S.O. Anyanwu and I .Nwanaji [Eds.] *Boko Haram Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria* [pp.1-28].Owerri: Edu-edu.
- McDonald, M. A. (1977) *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* Great Britain: W & R Chambers.
- Metuh. E. I. (1994). Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace. *Bulleting of Ecumenical Theology* 6 (1): 69-93.
- Muazzam, I. &Ibrahim, I. (2000). Religious Identity in the Context of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria. In: A Jega (ed). *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*: Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.
- Nnoli, O. (1980). *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Nwolise, O.B.C, (2005). Terrorism: What is to be done about an Emerging Threat to Democracy, Good Governance, Development, and Security of Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? In The French *Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA)*, *Ibadan Special Research Issue*, 1:1-35. Ibadan: Gold .
- Oraegbunam, K.E. (2006). The Metaphysical Foundations of Contemporary Armed Conflicts: Implications for Human Dignity and Global Peace. In

- Odimegwu et. al. (Ed.). *Philosophy, Democracy and Conflicts in Africa* [pp.218-232 ]. Awka: Department of Philosophy.
- Oyedepo, D. (2012). Towards the Rescue of a Nation on the Brink of Collapse: Necessarily for a New Generation of the tinkers. *The Nation*, Saturday June 30 p. 7.
- Smith, J.I. (2002) *Religious Tolerance*, Retrieved on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010 from <http://macdonaltt.hartsem.edu/>
- Summral, L, (1980). *Jihad, The Holy War: The Destiny of the Moslem World*. South Bend, Ind. LESEA Publishing Inc.
- Takaya, B.J. (1990). The Foundations of Religious Intolerance in Nigeria: Backgrounds for Understanding the Maitatsine Phenomenon. *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*. 2 (2-3): 31-43.
- Takaya, B.J. (1992). Religion, Politics and Peace: Resolving the Nigerian Dilemma. In J.K. Olupona (Ed.). *Religion, Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria* [pp.109-123. Ile-Ife:O.A.U. Press.
- The Nation* (2012). Boko Haram: Scores Feared dead in Kano Multiple Explosions Vol. 05 No. 20011 Saturday, January 21, 1 and 5.
- Usman, B, (1980). *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria 1977-1987*. Kaduna: Vanguard Printers.
- Wilkinson, P. (1974). *Political Terrorism*. London: Macmillan.
- Winkworth, D.E. (1974). *A Critical Look at Religion* London: Regency Press.