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RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIA CASE

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TITLE PAGE

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

THE NIGERIA CASE
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father for his words of encouragements and unending love even when I thought I had no chance.
I acknowledge foremost, God for giving me life and laying the foundation of my being. To my parents who ensured that my very existence was not a failure. To my cousin, Ikechukwu Ezeanyagu for letting me use his system for both research and compilation of this term paper and all those who have contributed in so many ways to make this work a success.
PREFACE

Wanton "slaughtering" of humans and destruction of properties in the name of "religion" is not something new in Nigeria. Vasanas or desires, ignorance, the three gunas, or modes of material nature, cognitive deficit and stress have driven more than a few Nigerians to the brink of "religious" disaster. Television, gang, unemployment, poverty, drug abuse/alcoholism, denial of basic civic and human rights and pseudo religiosity have contributed immensely to religious crises in Nigeria.

When religion is practiced under the checks and balances of shastra, or authentic scripture or exemplary anti-material mentor, and or holy men or women, it creates cohesion, which engenders sustainable democracy and national development. The study viewed the foregoing amongst others and proffers that if we repose unalloyed love on the supreme personality of Godhead, automatically religious crisis becomes historical remains and sustainable democracy and national development will thrive.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has suffered incessant religious chaos because of its ethnic and regional diversity. Approximately half of the country's population practice Islam, approximately 40 percent practice Christianity, and approximately 10 percent practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Nigeria's democracy cannot be sacrificed at the "alter" of religious crises. It becomes imperative for the citizenry to pull resources together to resolve religious crisis for sustainable democracy and national development to thrive.

One of the most noteworthy paradoxes of more than a few Nigerians involves communication. Altogether we have been experiencing a lot of information culture yet the ability of some of us to communicate clearly and lovingly with others of differing religious convictions has declined, causing much pain, suffering and crises. Nigerians are being called upon each day to discover and apply new ways of communication in order to settle religious differences effectively and bring about an end to suffering (Oguagha 1994).
1.2 RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

According to Pittsburg State University (PSU 2005), a crisis is any critical incident that involves death, serious injury, or threat to people; damage to environment, animals, property and/or data; disruption of operations; threat to the ability to carry out mission; and/or, threat to the financial welfare and image of the university. Information Technology Johns Hopkins Institutions (ITJHI 2006) asseverates that crisis is a critical event, which, if not handled in an appropriate manner, may dramatically impact an organization's profitability, reputation, or ability to operate. An operational definition of crisis: A crisis is a situation which invokes unstable equilibrium in the minds of the citizenry that needs to be addressed; a situation with an unpleasant incident or event with consequences, which pose a significant threat to the strategic objectives of an organization.

The term crisis is usually applied to situations, which are perceived (usually quite subjective) as involving an immediate threat of unacceptable adverse consequences (Exton 1986). Threat is a potential hindrance to some state or goal desired by an organization or individual. For a religious crisis to take place, all these elements must be present.
CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOUS CRISES IN NIGERIA

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS CRISES

There are varieties of characteristics associated with a religious crisis situation. A religious crisis is often a turning point in an unfolding sequence of events or actions. It is a situation in which the requirement for action is high in the minds and planning of participants. It is followed by an important outcome whose consequences and effects will shape the future of parties to the religious crisis.

A religious crisis is a convergence of events whose combination produces a new set of circumstance. It is a situation in which control over events and their effects decreases. It is a period in which uncertainties about the assessment of the situation and activities for dealing with it increases.

A religious crisis is characterized by a sense of urgency, which often produces stress and anxiety among people. It is a circumstance or set of circumstances in which information available to the participants is usually inadequate. A religious crisis is characterized by increased time pressure for those involved. It is marked by changes in the relations among participants, and it increases tension among people.
2.2 CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS CRISES

The etiologic or causative factors of religious crisis will be viewed under two categories namely, extrinsic and intrinsic factors. By extrinsic factors we are referring to those forces outside of the organism that impinge on the organism to elicit response from the organism that are counter productive to religious tolerance, national integration and cohesion such as religious violence (Vasudev 2001\textsuperscript{H}; 2002\textsuperscript{A}). Intrinsic or organismic factor refers to those factors, which lie inside of the embodied soul, or organism, which are instrumental to religious crisis (Vasudev 2001\textsuperscript{H}; Okoye 1989:8). First, we would like to take a look at the intrinsic factors that are responsible for religious crisis.

2.2.1 INTRINSIC ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS CRISIS

(b) Ignorance

It is a contributing fact that the ignorance of man’s pristine identity has continued to be the bane of religious crisis. Our original identity is that we are spirit souls, parts and parcels of God. When we drift from this basic knowledge of our original position, we are bound to encounter lots of problems such as ethnic hostility, religious crisis, and other related ills.
In as much as a conditioned or embodied soul is devoid of transcendental wisdom, he is bound to contemplate and act on bodily identification. One affected by the 'ignorance' of bodily identity thinks: “I am a Muslim”, “I am a Christian”, “I am a Hausa”, “I am a Yoruba”, “I am an Ibo” etc. This reinforces their fanaticism, which is counterproductive to religious tolerance, sustainable democracy and national development.

(c) Cognitive Deficit:

The cognitive deficits that sometimes accompany Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may contribute to the development of violent behavior in bigots. In general, children with ADHD do not develop violent behavior. Research studies suggest that the cognitive handicaps experienced by some children with ADHD may check not only their academic functioning but also their learning of pro-social skills and moral principles (Eron et al 1993). Such children could become “useful” tools in the hands of agents of religious crisis.

(d) Stress

According to Michael (1989) the increased stress of modern living is an etiologic factor of real life violence. Eron et al (1993) define violence as immediate or chronic situations, which cause injury to the psychological, physical, economic
and/or social well-being of a person or group. It could therefore be asserted that more than a few cases of religious violence cannot be dissociated from stress situations.

2.2.2 EXTRINSIC FACTORS OF RELIGIOUS CRISIS

(a) Television

According to Eron et al (1993), higher levels of viewing violence on television are correlated with increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behaviour. Psychologists (SwamiBT 2000) define general states of awareness, based on the type of electronic signals that are dominant in the human brain as measured by electronic encephalogram, or EEG. The beta state is the state of normal waking consciousness, when we are awake and are attuned to our surroundings. The alpha state is associated with deep meditation, hypnosis, daydreaming and REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep.

A review of several studies arrived at the conclusion that violence on television does lead to aggressive behaviour by children and teenagers who watch the programs (SwamiBT 2000). Television is helping to aggravate religious crisis situation.
(b)Gang

Vasudev (2001) opines that some youths are enamoured to join gangs for the sake of a sense of connection, belonging, and self-definition. In the gang they hope to find peer friendship, pride, an identity separate from their families, self-esteem enhancement, status, excitement and the acquisition of resources. Gang armed robbery and/or gang religious violence result from a variety of internal and external “provocation” and gang members may be hyper vigilant in the attention to possible slights.

(c)Unemployment.

“An idle mind is the devil’s workshop” goes a common aphorism. Religious crisis is also associated with lack of beneficial employment. More than a few religious disturbances are carried out or executed by persons who are not gainfully employed. Such persons very easily become useful tools in the hands of agents of religious crisis.

(d)Poverty

Eron et al (1993) asseverate that many social science disciplines, in addition to psychology, have firmly established that poverty and its contextual life
circumstances are major determinants of armed violence. Religious violence is most prevalent among the poor, regardless of race (Eron et al 1993).

(e) Drug Abuse/Alcoholism

Alcohol and other drugs play important role in youths' involvement in religious crisis. Alcohol and other drugs appear to lower inhibitions against religious violence cum violent assault and other antisocial violence. About 65% of all homicides perpetrators and/or victims had been drinking. Due to the influence of hard drugs sometimes drug consumers deliberately foment religious crisis so that they could kill, maim and loot.

(f) Pseudo Religiosity

Oguagha (1994) define pseudo as not genuine, pretended or insincere. By Pseudo religiosity, we are referring to so-called religious practices devoid of checks and balances in bona fide guru or an authentic living anti-material mentor, sadhus or holistic practitioners. This invokes antisocial values and demonic manifestations in the form of religious violence, which is averse to sustainable democracy and national development. Oguagha (1994) argues that conflicts between Islam and Christianity have quite often revolved on political power sharing.
2.3 CASES OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

The most significant incident occurred between September 7 and 13, 2001, when 2,300 persons were killed in ethno-religious violence in Jos. It is unclear how the unrest began; however, the appointment of an ethnic Hausa to the chairmanship of a local Poverty Alleviation Program had increased tensions and accompanied earlier violence between Christian Sayewa and Muslim Hausa in Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi, only 37 miles away. There also were reports of summary executions of Hausa in outlying villages. Approximately 80 percent of the victims in Jos were Hausa Muslims, who constitute a significant minority in Jos.

On October 12, 2001, 600 to 1,000 Muslims peacefully demonstrated in Kano against U.S. and allied air strikes against Afghanistan. Several hours after the conclusion of the demonstration, rioting broke out in the largest marketplace in the city of Kano. While sparked initially by street thugs, the violence later took on religious and ethnic overtones. A number of churches and three mosques reportedly were burned during the fighting.

On November 3 and 4, 2001, in Gwantu, Kaduna State, at least 10 persons reportedly were killed during fighting, which resulted from a long-standing
dispute between rival local leaders that degenerated into violence due to the introduction of a modified form of criminal Shari'a law.

In addition there were reports that in June 2002, extremist Islamic militants killed, injured, and displaced Christians in Jos, Berakin Ladi, Vom, and Miango. There also were reports that several churches were burned, shops and homes looted, and Christian property destroyed in Yelwa Shendam.

Also on November 23 2002, the "This Day" daily national newspaper published a controversial article. It suggested that if the Prophet Mohammed were alive today and had viewed the Miss World pageant, he would have probably chosen to marry one of the contestants. The newspaper later published a retraction and apology. However, the original article triggered three days of rioting, killing people and setting vehicles and properties ablaze. At least 100 people died and 500 were injured. Many Christian churches were burned to the ground.

2.4 RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

The country has a total land area of 356,700 square miles, and its population is estimated to be 120 million; however, there has not been an accurate census for more than 30 years, and many observers believe that the country's population exceedsthis figure. Approximately half of the country's population
practice Islam, approximately 40 percent practice Christianity, and approximately 10 percent practice exclusively traditional indigenous religions or no religion.

Many persons practice elements of Christianity or Islam and elements of a traditional indigenous religion. The predominant form of Islam in the country is Sunni. The Christian population includes Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and a growing number of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. Catholics constitute the largest Christian denomination.
CHAPTER THREE

IMPACT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Crises create enormous insecurity in the society with tremendous impact on individuals, social groups, communities and the nation in general. The impacts include:

2. The consequences of such religious disturbances cannot be dissociated from drastic toll on lives and properties. Nigerians have been rendered homeless with a large extent of the population in

3. Social dislocation and displacement

4. Disruption of family and communal life

5. General atmosphere of mistrust, fear, and frenzy

6. Till today, most ethnic and religious group cannot integrate themselves in the society because there is mistrust and fear. For instance, Christian find it difficult relocating to the North for fear of been caught in another religious crises.

7. Deepening of hunger and poverty in the society
8. There is no crisis which does not paralyse the economic system of a country and this includes Nigeria which already is a poverty-stricken Nation.

9. Atmosphere of political insecurity and instability including declining confidence in the political leadership and apprehension about the system.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The term paper has succeeded in breaking down religious intolerance in Nigeria and amidst it way it affects our national development. According to Bankole (2001), he opines that when religion is practiced under checks and balances or an authentic scripture or exemplary anti-material mentor or holy man/woman, it creates a cohesive force that is conducive for sustainable democracy and national development.

There is need for enlightened leadership. Therefore, religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence, sustainable democracy and national development would reign if followers emulate leaders with responsible character. A leader is the one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.

Efficiency and effectiveness are prerequisites of sustainable democracy and national development, O’Keefee (1995) asserts that efficiency is doing things right, and effectiveness is doing the right things.
4.2 SOLUTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for enlightened leadership. To be enlightened implies to be devoid of stinking track record or living a life devoid of vices. Nigeria needs religious leaders who know the way, goes the way, and shows the way

Government must as matter of urgency arrange for the gainful employment of school leavers so that they turn to social misfits. Parents, educators, political administrators religious adherents, should cultivate anti-material knowledge of the soul, self realization and have broad based knowledge of other scriptures with a view to actualizing proper respect, service, and care for all forms of life

When activities in mundane culture are transformed into God conscious oriented culture, sustainable democracy with all its benefits, and national development are evoked. Nigeria needs this cultural transformation to emancipate her from incessant religious crisis, economic woes and political instability.
REFERENCES


