Research Article

Politics and Religion vs. Law and Order in Nigeria: Implications for National and Regional Security.

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Abstract: Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has grappled with the ominous challenge of building a sustainable bridge between its ever increasing populations divided not only along distinct multi-ethnic groups but also between two major diametrically opposed faiths [*in content, structure, and tactics*]- Christianity and Islam. The study was exploratory in nature, which adopted descriptive adequacy in articulating and examining the underlying alternatives factors that propel national politics and religious violence in Nigeria, thus producing a more comprehensive and total picture of the dynamics of the phenomena under investigation- the understanding of religious violence in Nigeria with minimum distortion. Furthermore, the study adopted a survey method based on the perception of Government officials and Religious leaders regarding religious violence, with a corresponding sample size of 100. The study found that the seeming overwhelming implications of persistent religious violence for Nigeria are three folds; they include; sustained threat to national peace, unity, and security, undermines national political/economic development, as well as socio-cultural and religious harmony and cooperation. In addition, the study found that the present state of religious violence in Nigeria exacerbates bitterness, hatred, and mistrust among the federating units of Nigeria resulting to violent reactions and heightened intra-ethnic and religious clashes, with a volcanic potential to explode into secession by aggrieved groups, internecine civil war, pogroms and/or jihads. Finally, the study recommended that the Nigerian civil society must step up organized and peaceful agitations for fundamental changes in the structure and character of the Nigeria state through a Sovereign National Conference or credible constitution review effort. Also, the Nigerian government and the international community must seize the opportunity of current fragile peace in Nigeria, to implement a number of credible measures aimed at preventing a recurrence of widespread religious conflicts threatening to spill over to a civil war.

Key words: Religion, Violence, National, Regional, and Security.

Introduction

Nigeria seems to be at crossroads about the increasingly threatening and politically dangerous mass violence orchestrated by Muslim fundamentalist groups, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has had to grapple with the ominous challenge of building a sustainable bridge between its ever increasing populations divided not only along distinct multi-ethnic groups but also between two major diametrically opposed faith [*in content, structure, and tactics*]- Christianity and Islam. Geographically, Nigeria is divided into mostly Christian South and Muslim North, and the adherents of these two religions had lived together calmly throughout the colonial era and decades after independence (Ayandele, 1979 and Anadi, 2017). From 1987, when a major religious violence erupted in the northern city of Kaduna between Moslems and Christians, known as Maitasine Riots. According to Anadi (2017), Maitasine Riots quickly spread like wildfire to adjoining villages and towns. Meanwhile, the religious violence has not only persisted but significantly increased in magnitude and character.

Overwhelmingly, in Nigeria, Islam has become a practical pretext for savage intolerance, incomprehensible arson, torture, and mass murder, targeting mainly Christians and their

properties in several cities of northern and most recently central Nigeria. Oftentimes, the widespread carnage brought about by religious violence has elicited repeated calls from a cross-section of the Nigeria public demanding the severance of Nigeria into several independent states, as a way of averting the inevitable bloodshed that is sure to arise from these deadly disturbances. The causes of these massive violence in the name of "God" are as varied as the violence itself, ranging from pure religious militancy often orchestrated by itinerant Muslim preachers and sects [Islamic movements], ethnic cleansing, and frustrations arising from chronic poverty to suspected complicities of the northern political elite (Genevalunch.com, 2009; and Kano State Government, 2006).

According to US Department of State Bureau of Democracy (2008), in Nigeria, religion has become a catalyst for hostility used by politicians and others to foment discord. On several occasions, this vicious cycle of violence [mainly by Muslim fundamentalist groups] gravitate around radical Islamic rhetoric and extreme violence, that are naturally alarming to the Nigerian Christians and others, and increasingly taken by Christians, adherents of traditional observers/media as practical expressions of genuine revolutionary ambition.

However, the religious violence is rooted in an eccentric interpretation of the tenets of the particular religion involved in aggressive violence and often places great emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the act. This paper employs the interdisciplinary theories that best explain multi-layered and cross-sectional problems such as religious violence in Nigeria, with its attendant ethno-religious, economic, social-cultural and political undertones; and attempts to provide a historical examination of the chronology of religious violence in Nigeria, and a narrative insight into the question: why has religious violence persisted in Nigeria: what went wrong and why? What implications for national and regional security? This current study develops a clearer examination and understanding of the complex issue such as religious violence that demands an increasingly interdisciplinary approach that calls on multiple disciplines to increase information base and search for alternative causes, effects, and influences on religious violence.

Literature Review

Religious Violence vs. Law and Order in Nigeria: Remote and Immediate Causes

According to Appleby (2000), it may be "too simplistic to characterize any religion as being strictly violent or peaceful, since every religion capable of serving as the basis of a culture seem to recognize both the need for peace and the need for the use of force in certain circumstances. Yet, for a religion to serve as the basis of a culture, it must endeavor to preserve peace as well as willing to use force when necessary". He further underscored that all religions including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. tend to gravitate toward this mean.

Again, Appleby (2000), succinctly discerned "paradoxically, religions support both peace and the sword". In Nigeria, there are people who crave for peace and people who adore violence in all religions-there are violent Christians and there are peace-loving Muslims. However, changing historical circumstances (political, economic, social-cultural etc) tend to bring out tendencies toward violence among the followers of different religions in Nigeria, particularly Islam. First, the roots of Islamic violence in Nigeria can be genuinely traced to the very foundation of Islam as both a religious and a political ideology with no distinction between church and state, as well as the basic commands of the Islamic holy book to employ violence in the service of the religion and nation. In other words, Islam seems to be the only religion that is both a religious and a political force. Like in all other areas with large ethnoreligious, political and socio-economic diversity, these "basic commands" have produced a fundamentalist push in Nigeria to return to the sources of Islam.
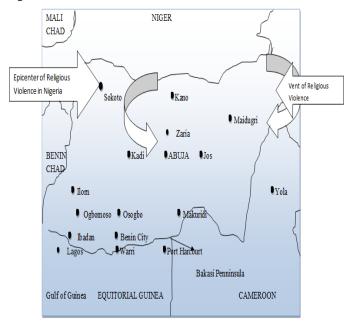
Second, earlier in this study, it was pointed out that the first massive Islamic fundamentalist push in Nigeria (by Usman dan Fodio) resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto sultanate, encompassing the whole of the northern and the middle belt regions of what is today Nigeria. Its expansion to the south was punctuated by colonialism and the subsequent introduction of Christianity and western education. Third, one

of the major consequences of the persistent Islamic fundamentalism in and around northern and central Nigeria is the emergence of Christian fundamentalist sect as a counter-reaction to the continuous threat to lives and properties posed by the violence of numerous Islamic sects. Fourth, the expansionist ambition could also explain the puzzle behind the massive and "gluttonic" looting of the national treasury (*hidden in distant foreign accounts*) mainly by the northern political elite, which has defied every reasonable explanation or imagination, without regard to the balanced development of neither their own region nor the nation.

Fifth, another important fact here is the logical connection between a part of "northernization" policy-non-engagement with western education- and the current levels of poverty and disease in the region. Sixth, the large pool of the unemployed, uneducated, unskilled, and unemployable youths in the north had consistently served as ready tools in the hands of fundamentalist Islamic preachers and practically ever ready to undertake aggressive violence and wanton destruction of lives and property in the region. Lastly, though there are significant socio-cultural differences in Nigeria, one must be careful in assigning undue weight to the effects of these socio-cultural differences in explaining the threats and extent of Islamic fundamentalist violence in Nigeria.

Location: Center and Outlets for Ethno-Religious Violence in Nigeria

Nigeria is located in the westernmost part of Africa bordering the Gulf of Guinea between the Republics Benin and Cameroon on the West and South, and Niger on the North. It lies between the equator and the tropics of Cancer, and experienced with essentially tropical climate all-year round and covers well over Nine hundred and twenty-three thousand, seven hundred and seventy square kilometers in total land area.

Figure 2.1: Center and Outlets for Religious Violence in Nigeria

Source: Author's own representation of the "hot spots" of

religious violence in Nigeria

According to UN Population Commission estimate, Nigeria's population is approximately one hundred and twenty million with over two hundred and forty ethnic groups.

Origin of Religious Violence in Nigeria

According to Anadi (2017), Nigeria today was first colonized by Britain until 1960 when it gained its political independence. For several decades, the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria were administered as separate colonial regions or entities until 1914, when both regions were merged to form what is today Nigeria. With the advent of colonialism and its western education and Christianity, the rudiments of modern social and economic system were established and later amplified by the discovery of oil. After the oil discovery, the economy becomes new and produced new forms of wealth, increased consumption and improved material well-being of a few section of the population especially in the South where western was totally embraced. Nonetheless, the North where Islam had firmly established itself as the dominant religion long before colonial rule, avoided early contacts with western education[*recently renewed*] for fear of being converted to Christianity.

The policy of non-engagement with western education in the north, soon inadvertently created a long-lasting gap in education and socio-economic development between the two regions to date. Meanwhile, the Southern region has gained tremendously from the benefits of western education and economically viable with the discovery of oil (*by Nigeria standard*), the north is one-half arid though fertile [can feed the whole of West Africa if present irrigation systems are expanded and properly managed], but bedeviled with poor management of irrigation systems and still largely remains excruciatingly poor thus, exacerbating personal and community frustrations, anger, hatred, and youth unemployment in the region. This appears to be more frustrating to the youths of the north in view of the fact that the northern political elite had controlled political power in the country for over three out of the four decades of independence. Consequently, the prevailing excruciating poverty, frustrations, and danger in the region soon found practical expression in the form of aggressive politico-ethno-religious violence.

National and State Government Response

Between 1987 and 2009, apart from the eight-year interregnum of the Obasanjo quasi-democratic regime- (1999-2008), political power in Nigeria was practically in the hands of two northern dictatorships- the Babangida and Abacha regimes. Throughout the northern dictatorships, there was no serious and coordinated government effort neither at the national or state levels to effectively curb the emergence, growth, and expansion of the multitude of fundamentalist Islamic sects that had sprung up in different states and cities of the north. Given the obvious advantage and near monopoly of credible security reports, the then national and states government in the north have the wherewithal to forestall and effectively cut off the roots of organized sectarian violence, or swiftly and decisively nip them in the bud when outbreaks do occur. Rather than curb religious violence in the north during the period under review, its accommodation and covert promotion seemed to have offered a cheap avenue for these regimes to obtain popular acceptance and cooperation from the mass of the illiterate and 'criminality' deprived northern populations and religious leaders.

From 1980 until recently, the Nigeria national governments' response to major religious disturbances had been uncoordinated, non-decisive and double-dealing often beginning with decisive action threats rhetoric, kangaroo commissions of inquiry, make-shift interdenominational meetings, and terminating with graveyard silence. The northern elites that had controlled political power at the national level for decades, lacked the psychological commitment to undertake any meaningful or decisive action aimed at cutting off the tentacles of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria. The result is that this unwholesome approach gave the Islamic sects scattered in different parts of the north, a wrong notion of the high possibility of Islamization in today's Nigeria and the needed time to build strong cleavages both within and outside the country. This long period of uninterrupted gestation and near maturity, explains the changing character and depth of the recent riots/violence in scope and tactics threatening the very institutions of government itself, to the chagrin of the entire nation.
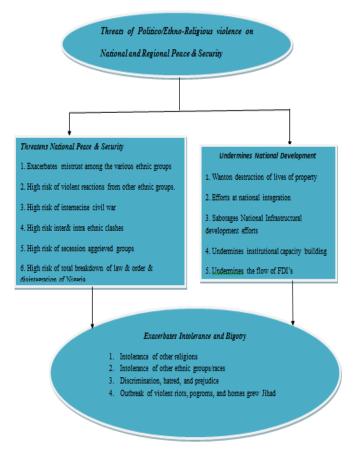
Threats To National and Regional Peace & Security

Religious violence in Nigeria proves to have important interwoven streams of national and regional security, economic, political and social implications that consistently create more than ever before a sense of urgency and need for a new generation of all-inclusive effort at practical reform in Nigeria. Thus, the urgency seems to present a picture of no better time than the present to bring the problem of religious violence with its attendant implications to the forefront of national discourse in Nigeria and beyond, and force a decision. A genuine national discourse is particularly needed in a highly volatile, crowded and ethnically jaundiced political environment such as Nigeria where there are many contending interests with a variety of "limited" viewpoints. Therefore, this paper will move ahead to examine critically these individual streams of implications that seems somewhat independent, but once coupled, provides a clearer picture of the widespread carnage that would result from Nigeria's break-up, while at the same time opening a reform window that allows or facilitates a deeper understanding of the magnitude of the problem and the urgent need for an all-inclusive national, regional and international effort at meaningful reform in Nigeria.

This urgency is further exacerbated by a strong and perhaps genuine notion that the current nature of the Nigeria state, is characterized by violent institutions and to a large extent serves as a crisis generating mechanism because the development of a nation-state founded on respect for human

rights, the rule of law and democratic institutions was not the priority of the colonial government in crafting the Nigeria State, and as such these significant internal contradictions beg for urgent reforms.

Figure 2.2: Implications of Religious violence on National and Regional Peace & Security

Source: Author's own representation of the devastating effects of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria

Figure 2.2 shows, the seeming overwhelming implications of persistent religious violence for Nigeria are three folds; they include; sustained threat to national peace, unity and security, undermining national economic development, and socio-cultural and religious harmony and cooperation. Interestingly, the concept of a state or nation hinges on the idea of sovereign peace and security upon which every other aspect of a state or nation such as development and cooperation are built. The present state of religious violence in Nigeria exacerbates bitterness, hatred, and mistrust among the federating units of Nigeria resulting to violent reactions and heightened intra-ethnic and religious clashes, with a volcanic potential to explode into secession by aggrieved groups, internecine civil war, pogroms and/or jihads. The ripple effect of a possible complete breakdown of law and order and eventual collapse and disintegration of Nigeria is better imagined.

Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature. The paper adopts descriptive adequacy in articulating and examining the underlying alternatives factors that propel religious violence in Nigeria, thus producing a more comprehensive and total picture of the dynamics of the phenomena under investigation- the understanding of religious violence in Nigeria with minimum distortion. Furthermore, the study adopted a survey method based on the perception of Government officials and Religious leaders regarding religious violence. In all, 150 questions were distributed randomly to respondents in Nigeria.

A Face-to-face survey technique was used to increase respondents towards the analysis of this critical need topic to the state. A stratified random sampling technique was for the data collection with a help of interview guide and questionnaires. A total of 100 questions were retrieved from the survey and used as the total sample size. The piloted survey instrument was on the perception of Government Official and Religious Leaders on the implication of religious violence on national and regional peace & security. The data collected was qualitative in nature. The data was coded and analyzed with the help of Excel and Minitab statistical software. Both Bar-Charts and Chi-square goodness of fit-test were used for the data presentation and discussion.

Conceptual Framework of Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Analysis

The Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test model is used to test for a single variance. In addition, the chi-square statistics is used to see whether a frequency distribution fits into a specific pattern. For example, to know the implication of religious violence on national and regional peace & security, the study wishes to see whether the religious violence cause a specific implication on national and regional peace & security, that is, from the perspective of the Threaten effects of National peace and unity; Undermining effects of National development; and Effects of exacerbating intolerance and bigotry, so that adequate driven policy can be enacted to curb the problem. Perhaps, since the study explores to test to see whether a frequency distribution fits a specific pattern, therefore, the chi-square goodness-of-fit test is used. Before computing the test value for Chi-square goodness of fit test, there is the need to state the hypothesis.

H_0: Religious violence cause no a specific implication on national and regional peace & security

H_1: Religious violence cause a specific implication on national and regional peace & security

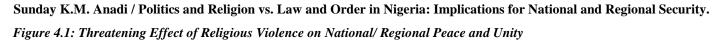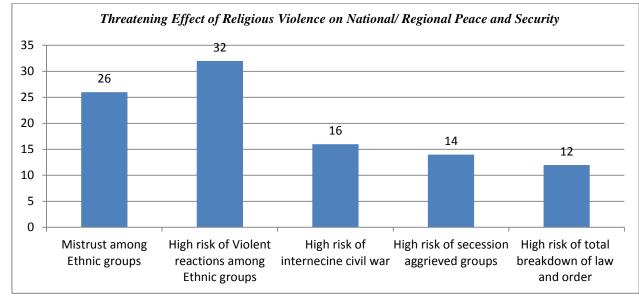### Formula for the Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$$

With degrees of freedom equal to the number of categories minus 1, and where

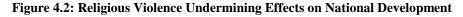O = observed frequency; and E = expected frequency

Note: Two assumptions are needed for the goodness-of-fit test. These assumptions are given as: (1) The data are obtained from a random sample, and (2) The expected frequency for each category must be 5 or more.
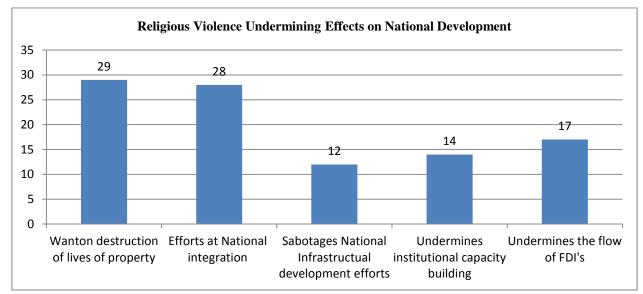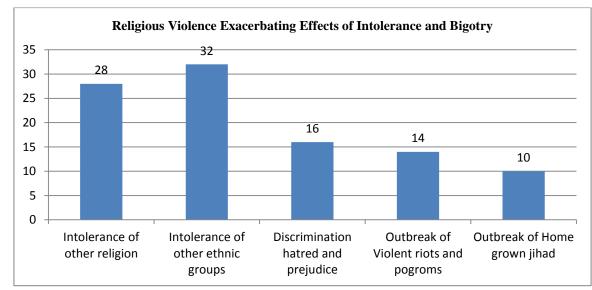
Data Presentation

Figure 4.1: Threatening Effect of Religious Violence on National/ Regional Peace and Unity

Threatening Effect of Religious Violence on National/ Regional Peace and Security

Source: Field Data August 2017

Figure 4.2: Religious Violence Undermining Effects on National Development

Religious Violence Undermining Effects on National Development

Source: Field Data August 2017

Figure 4.3: Religious Violence Exacerbating Effects of Intolerance and Bigotry

Religious Violence Exacerbating Effects of Intolerance and Bigotry

Source: Field Data August 2017

Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Estimation for Threatening Effect of Religious Violence on National/ Regional Peace and Unity – *Given the Chi-Square Critical Value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom (5 – 1 = 4) and α = 0.05.*

H_0: *Religious violence cause no specific threatening effect on national/ regional peace and unity*

H_1: *Religious violence cause a specific threatening effect on national/ regional peace and unity*

Frequency	Mistrust Among Ethnic Groups	High Risk of Violence Reaction of Ethnicity	High Risk of Internecine of Civil War	High Risk of Secession aggrieved Group	Risk of Total Breakdown of Law and Order
Observed	26	32	16	14	12
Expected	20	20	20	20	20
Chi-Square Estimation	$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$ $= \frac{(26-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(32-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(16-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(14-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(12-20)^2}{20}$ $= 14.8$				

Source: Field Data August 2017

Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Estimation for Religious Violence Undermining Effects on National Development - *Given the Chi-Square Critical Value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom (5 – 1 = 4) and α = 0.05.*

H_0: *Religious violence has no specific undermining implications on national development*

H_1: *Religious violence has specific undermining implications on national development*

Frequency	Wanton Destruction of Lives of Property	Efforts at National Integration	Sabotages National Infrastructural Development Efforts	Undermines Institutional Capacity uilding	Undermines the Flow of FDI's
Observed	29	28	12	14	17
Expected	20	20	20	20	20
Chi-Square Estimation	$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$ $= \frac{(32-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(28-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(10-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(14-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(16-20)^2}{20}$ $= 12.7$				

Source: Field Data August 2017

Chi-Square Goodness of Fit-Test Estimation for Religious Violence Exacerbating Effects of Intolerance and Bigotry –*Given the Chi-Square Critical Value of 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom (5 – 1 = 4) and α = 0.05.*

H_0: *Religious violence has no specific exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry*

H_1: *Religious violence has specific exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry*

Frequency	Intolerance of Other Religions	Intolerance of Other Ethnic Groups/Races	Discrimination, Hatred, and Prejudice	Outbreak of Violent Riot and Pogroms	Outbreak of Home Grown Jihad
Observed	28	32	16	14	10
Expected	20	20	20	20	20
Chi-Square Estimation	$X^2 = \sum \frac{(0-E)^2}{E}$ $= \frac{(28-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(32-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(16-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(14-20)^2}{20} + \frac{(10-20)^2}{20}$ $= 18.0$				

Source: Field Data August 2017

Discussion

Figure 4.1 discusses the threatening effects of religious violence on national and regional peace and unity using a sample size of 100 Government Officials and Religious

Leaders. About 58% of the respondents were of the view that the threatening effects of religious violence on national and regional peace and unity are dominated by the implications of mistrust among the various ethnic groups, and high risk of violent reactions among ethnic groups. However, about 42% of the respondents argued that high risk of internecine civil war, high risk of secession aggrieved groups, and high risk of total breakdown of law and order as well as the disintegration of Nigeria are other possible threatening effects of religious violence on national and regional peace and unity.

Figure 4.2 examines the religious violence undermining effects on national development from the perspective of Government Officials and Religious Leaders. About 57% of the respondents were of the notion that the religious violence undermining effects on national development are greatly influenced by the effects of wanton destruction of lives of property, and the efforts at national integration. However, about 43% of the respondents argued that sabotages national infrastructural development efforts, undermines institutional capacity building and undermines the flow of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI's) are other possible religious violence undermining effects on national development.

Figure 4.3 discusses the religious violence exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry from the viewpoints of Government Officials and Religious Leaders. About 60% of the sampling units were of the conception that the religious violence exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry are greatly influenced by the effects of intolerance of other religion, and the intolerance of other ethnic groups. However, about 40% of the sampling units argued that discrimination, hatred, and prejudices; the outbreak of violent riots, pogroms, and homes grew jihad are other possible religious violence exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry.

Regarding the Chi-square Goodness of fit-test estimation for the threatening effects of religious violence on national and regional peace and unity, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which claims that religious violence cause no specific threatening effect on national/ regional peace and unity since the Chi-square estimated value of 14.8 is greater than the Chi-square critical value of 9.488 at 5% significance level. This implies that the threatening effects of religious violence on national/ regional peace and unity fit into the implications pattern of mistrust among ethnic groups, and the high risk of violent reaction among the ethnic groups/races with a total percentage of 58% of the total respondents.

In relation to the chi-square goodness of fit-test estimation for the religious violence undermining effects on national development, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which claims that religious violence has no specific undermining implications on national development since the chi-square estimated value of 12.7 is bigger than the chi-square critical value of 9.488 at 5% significance level. This implies that religious violence undermining effects on national development fit into the implications pattern of wanton destruction of lives of property, and the efforts at national integration, corresponding to a total of 57% of the respondents.

Lastly, on the subject of the chi-square goodness of fit-test estimation for the religious violence exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry, there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which claims that violence has no specific exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry since the chi-square estimated value of 18.0 is larger than the chi-square critical value of 9.488 at 5% significance level. This implies that the religious violence exacerbating effects of intolerance and bigotry fit into the implications pattern of intolerance of other religion, and intolerance of other ethnic groups/races, corresponding to a total of 60% of the respondents.

Conclusions

The attainment of a strong, united and vibrant nation is predicated on the legitimacy of a state, which in turn linked to its capacity to present itself as a provider of necessary public goods and more importantly, a neutral arbiter that guarantees the security of all sections of society. Indeed, the structure of the Nigerian State is significantly lopsided and bedeviled with serious internal contradictions that must be straightened out through genuine national dialogue to ensure a fair and balanced structure without giving undue weight to any particular section of the country. The paper highly concluded that only under this anticipated genuine structure can democratic institutions survive and thrive or can cry of marginalization and counter-marginalization, bitterness, and hatred, as well as the resulting violence, subsides. Also, the paper observes that the current circumstances are steadily pointing to the fact that time seems to be running out on Nigeria to undertake peaceful reforms. Again, Nigeria's violent resistance to restructuring would only exacerbate widespread frustration and postpone the inevitable chaos that may soon engulf the nation, as those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. In the nutshell, only a peacefully negotiated structure can ensure lasting peace and progress in Nigeria, as victory attained by violence is tantamount to defeat, for it is momentary. These efforts if properly coordinated and genuinely implemented, will facilitate the peace and stability of Nigeria and indeed the region, and save the world the trouble of another Congo, Darfur, Rwanda or Somalia and its attendant consequences.

Policy Recommendation

Based on the findings, the study, therefore, recommends the following:

- The Nigerian civil society must step up organized and peaceful agitations for fundamental changes in the structure and character of the Nigeria state through a Sovereign National Conference or credible constitution review effort.
- The Nigerian government and the international community must seize the opportunity of current fragile peace in Nigeria, to implement a number of credible

measures aimed at preventing a recurrence of widespread religious conflicts.

- Nigerian authorities must be fair and should identify and prosecute those behind this religious violence as well as ensure rapid response by the security forces in all future incidents.
- A more inclusive approach in stemming religious violence in Nigeria should offer national, regional, and international policymakers an informed awareness of the magnitude and danger of expanding religious violence in Nigeria, and potential distribution of its burden.
- Lastly, there should be a broader consensus approach that would meaningfully clarify the accounted and unaccounted cost of the violence and raise the issue of the viability or not of a concerted effort at wiping out religious violence in Nigeria.

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