



COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN THE NIGERIAN
STATES OF KANO AND KADUNA: AN
ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE
NIGERIAN SUPREME COUNCIL FOR ISLAMIC
AFFAIRS AND THE CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF
NIGERIA

BY

SHITTU ABDULAZEEZ BALOGUN

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Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
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International Islamic University
Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Killing and maiming of innocent souls, as well as destruction of public and private properties 'in the name of religion' have become a common phenomenon in Kano and Kaduna States, and, indeed, some other parts of Nigeria. The conflicts have virtually defied all efforts by the stakeholders to find a lasting solution to the fracas. The inability of the Muslim and Christian communities to live peacefully with their neighbours in some parts of the country has earned the nation a bad reputation the world over. This study examines, inter alia, immediate and remote factors responsible for the perennial communal violence in the two states, and by extension the Nigerian society as a whole between 1980 and 2010. It scrutinises the role of the umbrella bodies of the two religious communities, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in mediating between the warring parties, and offers practical suggestions on the way forward. In addition to the do-or-die politics and religious bigotry being perpetuated by unscrupulous politicians and 'half-baked' religious personnel, the study believes that the breakdown in family structure and inconsistency in educational policies of the authorities are highly instrumental in the breeding of *yandaba* or 'area boys', who serve as foot soldiers during communal unrest. Being a prime factor in religious affairs in the country, the study suggests greater participation of the NSCIA and CAN in future measures to contain communal violence. It also sees the two organisations as an appropriate avenue for the rebuilding of God fearing families and suitable groups to advice the authorities on better reforms in all-round educational system that is envisaged to keep the youths busy and at the end of their studies make them gainfully engaged, hence free them from the cloak of unprincipled-politicians and fanatical leaders who use politics and religion as a camouflage to destabilise the country.

خلاصة البحث

لقد أصبح قتل الأبرياء وتشويههم وتدمير الممتلكات العامة والخاصة باسم الدين ظاهرة عادية في جميع أرجاء نيجيريا، خاصة في ولايتي كانو وكادونا مما أدى إلى ضياع جهود المعنيين بالأمر سدى؛ إذ لم يتم عمليا التوصل إلى حل دائم لهذا الصراع المتجدد. لقد أدى غياب التعايش السلمي بين المسلمين والنصارى إلى إلحاق الأذى بنيجيريا وتشويه سمعتها في العالم قاطبة. تتناول هذه الدراسة، فضلا عن أشياء أخرى، العوامل المختلفة الدانية والآنية التي تتسبب في هذا الصراع المتواصل في هاتين الولايتين وبالتالي في المجتمع النيجيري ككل من 1980م إلى 2010م. تدقق الدراسة في الدور الذي تلعبه منظمتان دينيتان، هما: المجلس النيجيري الأعلى للشؤون الإسلامية (NSCIA)، واتحاد نصارى نيجيريا (CAN) ومساهمتهما في التوسط بين الأطراف المتحاربة. وتقدم الدراسة مقترحات عملية من شأنها أن تُسهم في دفع القضية إلى الأمام. ومن الأسباب الأساس لهذا العنف المتصاعد السياسة المتخبطة والتعصب الديني الذي يقف وراءه السياسيون منعدمو الضمير والمسؤولون المتعصبون في الكيانات الدينية. أما السبب الثاني الأساس فهو ضعف البنية الأسرية وانحيارها تماما فضلا عن التضارب والتناقض في السياسات الحكومية التعليمية، مما أدى بدوره إلى ظهور ما يُعرف بـ "أولاد الشارع" أو "جنود المشاة". وهم الذين يقدهون زناد هذا الاضطراب المجتمعي الذي لم ينتج عنه سوى الهلاك والخراب والتناحر العرقي والديني في نيجيريا. وهاتان المنظمتان تبرزان ككيان مناسب لإدخال روح مهابة الله في الأسر النيجيرية وتقديم النصح للسلطات المختصة حتى يتم بلورة نظام تعليمي متكامل يستوعب أوقات فراغ الشباب حتى إذا أنخوا دراساتهم كانوا فاعلين في مجتمعهم ومستعصين على التطويع والاستغلال من قبل القادة والسياسيين الذين يتدثرون بأثواب السياسة والدين من أجل خلخلة الاستقرار في البلاد.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Shittu Abdulazeez Balogun has been approved by the following:

Muhammad Mumtaz Ali
Supervisor

Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim
Co-Supervisor

Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu
Internal Examiner

Sulaiman Muhammad Jamiu
External Examiner

Abdi Omar Shuriye
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at the IIUM or other institutions.

Shittu Abdulazeez Balogun

Signature:

Date:

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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Affirmed by Shittu Abdulazeez Balogun

.....
Signature

.....
Date

*To my parents, my family and
all those who are sincerely working towards realisation of peaceful co-existence
among various religious groups in Nigeria and other parts of the world*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ACE | Alliance for Credible Elections |
| ACN | Aid the Church in Need |
| ANPP | All Nigeria People's Party |
| APMU | AIDS Programme for Muslim Ummah |
| a.s. | <i>ÑAlayhi al-SalÉm</i> |
| BUK | Bayero University Kano |
| CAN | Christian Association of Nigeria |
| CBN | Central Bank of Nigeria |
| CCN | Christian Council of Nigeria |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CMO | Council of the Muslim Organisations |
| CPFN | Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria |
| CPRC | Conflict Prevention and Reconciliation Committee |
| CSN | Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DMO | Debt Management Office |
| ECCN | Evangelical Church of Christ of Nigeria |
| ECWA | Evangelical Church of West Africa |
| EU | European Union |
| FCT | Federal Capital Territory |
| FOIB | Freedom of Information Bill |
| GRA | Government Reserved Area |
| HRW | Human Right Watch |
| IDB | Islamic Development Bank |
| IIUM | International Islamic University Malaysia |
| INEC | Independent National Electoral Commission |
| <i>IzÉlah</i> | <i>JamÉÑatu IzÉlati al-BidÑah WaiqÉmati al-Sunnah</i> |
| JDBF | Joint Donor Basket Fund |
| JNI | <i>JamÉÑatu NaÎr al-Islam</i> |
| MSSN | Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria |

| | |
|----------|---|
| MPC | Muslim Progressive Council |
| NACA | National Agency for the Control of AIDS |
| NAHCON | National Hajj Commission of Nigeria |
| NAJOMO | <i>NajÉÍ</i> Joint Muslim Organisation |
| NEC | National Executive Committee |
| NECO | National Examinations Council |
| NEMA | National Emergency Management Agency |
| NERDC | Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council |
| NIREC | Nigeria Inter-Religious Council |
| NMC | Nigerian Muslim Council |
| NPC | National Population Commission |
| NPC | Northern Peoples' Congress |
| NPN | National Party of Nigeria |
| NRC | National Republican Convention |
| NUC | National Universities Commission |
| OAIC | Organisation of African Instituted Churches |
| OIC | Organisation of Islamic Conference |
| PFN | Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria |
| PRI | Population Research Institute |
| PROCMURA | Programme on Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa |
| r.a. | <i>RaġiyallÉh Ñanhu</i> |
| s.a.w. | <i>ØalallÉh Ñalyhi wasallam</i> |
| s.w.t. | <i>SubhÉnahu wa taÑÉIÉ</i> |
| UMC | United Muslim Council |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WARC | World Alliance of Reformed Churches |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |
| WEA | World Evangelical Alliance |
| WESJOMO | Western Joint Muslim Organization |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WOWICAN | Women's Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria |

YOWICAN Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

Transliteration Table: Consonants

| Arabic | Roman | Arabic | Roman |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| ب | b | ط | ṭ |
| ت | t | ظ | ḏ |
| ث | th | ع | Ṣ |
| ج | j | غ | gh |
| ح | Ḥ | ف | f |
| خ | kh | ق | q |
| د | d | ك | k |
| ذ | dh | ل | l |
| ر | r | م | m |
| ز | z | ن | n |
| س | s | ه | h |
| ش | sh | و | w |
| ص | Ṣ | ء | ' |
| ض | ḏ | ي | y |

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

| Arabic | Roman | Arabic | Roman |
|---------------|-------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| اَ | a | اَ، اِيَّ | an |
| اُ | u | اُو | un |
| اِ | i | اِيَّ | in |
| اَ، اِيَّ، اِ | É | اَو | aw |
| اُو | È | اِيَّ | ay |
| اِيَّ | Ê | اُو | uww, È (in final position) |
| | | اِيَّ | iiy, Ê (in final position) |

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa,¹ has constantly been struggling to cope with the escalating communal conflicts. Turbulent atmosphere and series of bloodbath in the ‘name of religion’ have become part and parcel of societal routine in the West African nation in general, and Kano and Kaduna States in particular. Besides Kano and Kaduna States, the powerful ‘tornados’ of insecurity blowing around the country, such as the ethno-religious *melée* in Plateau State, the *Boko ×arÉm* (western education is forbidden) group insurgencies in Bauchi, Borno and other Northern States, as well as the political assassinations in different parts of the country have left indelible marks in the mind of many families. Consequently, loss of numerous innocent lives and property worth millions of Naira has always been recorded in the aftermath of every episode of these crises. Despite all efforts by the stakeholders to curb the menace, the persistence of sectarian violence and retaliatory riots continues to generate more questions than answers.

Communal conflicts usually occur as a result of many factors. Some do occur within the confine of a particular faith, which are regarded as intra-religious conflicts, while several others are occasioned by wrangling between two different faiths, hence identified as inter-religious crises. Yet others are found to have ethnic or political undertones. However, regardless of whatever shape a crisis takes at its outset and

¹ With a population of over 140 million that accounts for half of the West Africa’s people, and over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria is the most diverse nation on the continent. (National Population Commission’s 2006 Census Figures. Also see Ime A. John et al., “Gun Violence in Nigeria: A Focus on Ethno-Religious Conflict in Kano”, *Journal of Public Health Policy*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2007): 420–431.

location of its eruption, within a short period of time, it usually explodes and engulfs some regions of the country. It is also necessary to point out here that the ‘blanket’ Muslim-Christian identity the colonial masters gave Northern and Southern Nigeria has its own impacts on the communal disturbances in the country. In other words, the British’s creation of the artificial geographical and religious identity for the country has some shortcomings, which manifest from time to time. As a result of that, there is the assumption that whoever comes from Northern Nigeria is a Muslim, and anyone who hails from the Southern part of the country must be a Christian. This hypothesis also affects the way outsiders relate to Nigeria and Nigerians. This erroneous understanding may not be unconnected with a statement credited to the former Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, that Nigeria should be split between the Muslim and Christian communities as a measure to curb perennial religious rancour in the country.² The Nigerian history, and, indeed, religious composition of the country show that there is a significant number of Christians in Southern Kaduna and in Plateau State. In the same vein, Muslims are estimated to be the majority in the South-Western part of the country, while a significant number of Muslims are also found in the middle belt.³

Some people believe that religion has a public role to play, while others feel that it should be a private affair. For some, it provides the basis for political governance and ideological orientation, while others consider it to have been hijacked by a political agenda. Hence, they think that ‘de-politicisation’ of religion and ‘de-religionisation’ of politics is imperative. Another opinion maintains that there should

² *Sahara Reporters*, “Nigeria recalls Libya ambassador in Gaddafi row-BBC,” <<http://www.saharareporters.com/news-page/nigeria-recalls-libya-ambassador-gaddafi-row-bbc>> (accessed 14 December, 2010). Also see *Nigerian Tribune*, April 7, 2010.

³ Abd al-RaġmĒn Doi, *Islam in a Multi-Religious Society: Nigeria A Case Study* (Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen, 1992), 107-118. The areas of Nigeria which are generally referred to as belonging to the Middle Belt are: Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Adamawa and Taraba States.

be no line of demarcation between religion, nation and state. As a result of these opposing perceptions, religion has become a source of conflict in the Nigerian society. The actual implications of these contradictory images of religion manifest in many areas of the public life in the country.⁴

Some people perceive and interpret sectarian crises in different ways. To some, they are civilian equivalent of the military coup. Such a description is due to the degree of destructions caused by those crises equivalence of which can only be recorded in a military *coup d'état*. This kind of insinuation was attributed to the then Military President of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida,⁵ on his comment on religious unrest in 1987 in Kafanchan, Kaduna State.⁶ There are as well those who describe religious crises as a manipulation by a group of people to pursue ethno-political grievances.⁷ As for the underlying factors, numerous causes have been attributed to the incessant communal conflicts in the two states and the entire country as a whole. Nevertheless, communally constructed struggle between social groups that define themselves in terms of shared identities, which is embedded in 'native' and 'settler' syndrome, also plays significant role in the escalation of the turmoil.

It may not be a hyperbole to say that religion, one of the numerous bounties Almighty AllÉh has bestowed on Nigeria that makes her one of the envied nations on earth, is threatening her peace, unity and stability, as a result of misinterpretation, misapplication and egoism. The situation has assumed such an appalling magnitude that people often wonder whether religion is a blessing or a curse to Nigeria.

⁴ I. Aram, "Living as a community with Islam: concerns, challenges and promises," World Council of Churches, <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/home.html>> (accessed 4 January, 2011).

⁵ Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, popularly known as IBB, was born on 17th August, 1941. He was the military ruler of Nigeria following a 'palace coup' against General Muhammadu Buhari in August 1985 until he stepped down due to heavy pressure in 1993 after his annulment of elections held that year.

⁶ *This Week*, March 30, 1987, Vol. 4, No. 1, 16. Also see Yahya O. Imam, *Religious Crises and Social Disruption in North-Eastern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Loud Books Publishers, 2004), 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*

According to observers, the problem facing the country emanated, on the one hand, from insincerity, intolerance and ignorance on the part of some adherents of religions, while on the other hand, selfishness, self-centeredness and lack of patriotism are the hitches among the political juggernauts.⁸ In other words, sectarian crises in the country in general, and Kano and Kaduna States in particular, could be mainly traced to two quarters, namely religious and political quarters. In the religious camps, some scholars, who play to the gallery through sensational preaching and unwholesome *fatÉwÉ* (legal rulings), always hold the nation to ransom for cheap popularity. Some observers have also opined that Christian evangelism, laced with anti-Muslim sentiments on the one hand, and *DaÑwah* activities, which are devoid of wisdom on the other, are responsible for such unwholesome activities. In the political arena, the so-called ‘godfathers’ and ‘kingmakers’ usually use their ill-gotten wealth to terrorise the nation by inciting violence on the brink of losing their fame or position at the expense of the entire country. They capitalise on the fragile relationship among the religious groups by branding whatever misunderstanding they may be having with their rivals as religiously based, in order to cajole people into supporting them. Furthermore, unfavourable economic conditions, despite the abundance of human and material resources in the country, as a result of unbroken chains of bad leadership, constitute another factor that provides a fertile land for trouble minded persons or group of persons to sow the seeds of mischief.

Aside the aforementioned camps, other constituents, whose involvement in religious tension cannot be swept under the carpet, are the media and security agents. The media personnel, who are expected to feed the public with accurate and balanced information, are sometimes found wanting in their obligations. Public media houses

⁸ Matthew H. Kukah, & Toyin Falola, *Religious Militancy and Self-Assertion* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1996), 99-128.

tend to play down religious tension and give them less coverage. The private ones, on the other hand, blow them out of proportion, thus exacerbating the effects. The security agents' responses to crises have not been without lapses. This organ of government, which is expected to be unbiased in its mediation between the warring parties, is also often found to be taking sides. They do not respond promptly when tension is just gathering momentum until it gets out of hand. In isolated cases that they seem to be prompt, there were allegations of arming members of their religious or tribal inclinations.⁹ This claim may not be out of point because there were instances where automatic rifles with official identities were found or recovered from rioters.¹⁰ In the same vein, there were accusations of excessive use of force against unarmed and innocent civilians as well as extrajudicial killings and jungle justice. Typical examples of these claims were the atrocities committed by some security agents during the *Boko ×arÉm* uprising in July, 2009 that swept across some Northern States of Nigeria.

In trying to curtail the above state of affairs, different measures have been adopted by the authorities on various occasions, such as dispatching of security personnel to 'war zones', resettlement and compensation of victims, setting up commissions of inquiry, among others. Unfortunately, despite all these measures, the problem still persists and religious groups in many parts of the country live like cats and dogs, spying on each other's activities, anxiously waiting for any opportunity to avenge what they apparently termed as their 'poor outing' at a previous episode of religious unrest. It is against the backdrop of all these complications associated with communal conflicts that this study proposes the full involvement of the umbrella

⁹ Such allegations were levelled against some security agents during Kafanchan riot of 1987 and ethno-religious unrest in Jos, Plateau State in 2010. See *The Sun* and *Leadership* newspapers, July 30, 2009.

¹⁰ Imam, *Religious Crises and Social Disruption*, 11.