Religious Conflict as a Threat to Nigeria's Internal Security

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Abstract: The last two decades have seen religion taking the centre stage in most violent conflicts globally, thus notoriously constituting major security threats confronting the world in the aftermath of the Cold War. In the context of Nigeria, conflicts based on religion were either inter or intra, that is, between two religions or within one religion, either way, their effects on internal security have been far-reaching. The objective of the paper was to examine how religious conflicts posed a threat to Nigeria's internal security. The paper employed secondary materials sourced from On-Line Journal Articles, Government and Agency Reports, Books, Theses and Dissertations, to achieve its objective. The paper defined the concepts of religion, conflict, religious conflict, security and internal security. Then it examined the dynamics of religious conflicts in Nigeria. It went on to discuss the threats religious conflict posed to the internal security of Nigeria. The analysis revealed that the trend of religious-based conflicts within the country have increased and at the same time caused serious threats to the corporate existence of Nigeria in terms of national unity, undermining the stability of the Nigerian State, undermining the security forces, mass killings and destruction of economic activities, and displacement of populations and creation of refugee problems.

Keywords: Nigeria, Religious Conflict, Internal Security.

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious conflict has become a recurring phenomenon that threatens the security of many countries around the world, including Nigeria. According to Aliyu (2009), in a study conducted to investigate the causes of most violent conflicts, religion was found to be a key factor. He added that the study revealed that "societies that are divided along religious lines are more prone to intense and prolonged conflict than countries where people have problems arising from political, territorial and ethnic divisions" (p.8). Such firmly held religious convictions by opposing religious groups, usually play out in times or moments of competition for scarce resources.

The threat to security by religious-based conflicts has been a concern for the global community especially since the end of the cold war between Russia and the United States of America. The trend is prevalent not only in countries where two or more religions obtain, but also in countries where the only religion is the State religion. For example, in India, there was conflict between Hindus and Muslims which resulted in the creation of two new nation states, Pakistan and Bangladesh; and in Northern Ireland, between Catholics and Anglicans; as well rivalries between the Sunni and Shiites in Iraq; Yemen and Saudi Arabia, all of which were catastrophic and jeopardized the internal security of those countries (Aliyu, 2009). The security situation being experienced in countries like Iraq, Syria, Yemen Libya, today, are caused majorly by religious differences and claims over resources and territories usually between adherents of the Muslim and Christian religions.

In the context of Nigeria, conflicts based on religion were not so much in terms of resource availability and allocation; rather, they have always been triggered by religious intolerance among different religions and sometimes within the same religion. As one scholar has discovered, religious conflicts in Nigeria could emanate from wrong religious perceptions, wrong religious orientations, illiteracy, etc. (Yahaya, 2011).

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Religion:

Like most social science concepts, religion has no single definition. It has been conceptualized differently by different scholars depending on the author's particular orientation and standpoint. For example, Egwu posited that religion is a difficult subject to investigate not to mention its definition and conceptualization, thus emphasizing its variant definitions among scholars (as cited in Fawole & Bello, 2011). However, Adeniyi opined that religion is a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being (as cited in Fawole & Bello, 2011). This implies that religion has certain codified norms and rules drawn from a Supreme Being – God, which the believers or adherents must abide by. Further, Ejizu viewed religion as man's intuition of the sacred and ultimate reality and his expression of that awareness in concrete life (as cited in Fawole and Bello 2011). Goody; and Horton, both agreed that there was a certain sense of sacredness which inspires a feeling of mystery and awe in religion (as cited in Fawole & Bello, 2011).

Thus, the nineteenth to twentieth century Sociologist, Emile Durkheim defined religion as "a unified systems of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them" (as cited in Openstax, 2013, p. 342). This implies that religion guides the way of life or culture of a particular group of people; it is intertwined with their culture and directs their daily conducts. For Hynes, and Egwu, religion can be understood in two ways: material and spiritual. In the material sense, religion refers to establishments such as institutions and officials, as well as to social groups and movements whose primary interests lie in religious concerns. The spiritual aspect deals with models of social and individual behavior that enables believers or adherents to organize their everyday lives (as cited in Fawole & Bello, 2011). This indicates that religion relates to the idea of transcendent, supernatural realities and the sacred; as a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy and the ultimate conditions of human existence (Fawole & Bello, 2011). All these definitions have seen religion as a positive and uniting force in society. Can religion also be a source of disunity and social disharmony? Can it be used by its believers or adherents to perpetrate violence or conflict thus, undermining the internal security of a country? These questions and others will be examined in this paper. But before then, let us consider the concept of conflict.

Conflict:

The concept of conflict is as old as humankind. It has been part and parcel of the human condition; it is a feature of all hitherto existing societies (see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*). However, the concept of conflict has assumed a new and challenging dimension especially since the end of the cold war. Today, conflict manifest at both intra and inter-personal levels; amongst in-groups and out-groups in all countries – developed and developing alike. As a concept, it has been understood variously by scholars. Karl Marx in particular, believes that conflict pertains to all societies regardless of religious beliefs or ideological orientations. He theorized that every society comprises of individuals who must compete for social, political, and material resources such as political power, leisure time, money, housing, and entertainment. He argued that social structures and organizations such as religious groups, governments, and corporations reflect this competition in their inherent inequalities (Opentax, 2013, p. 19).

Conflict is a derivative of the Latin word, "conflictus" translated as "struck together" (Opentax, 2013). Nwolis; and Joshua, have viewed conflict as clash, contention, confrontation, a battle or struggle, controversy or quarrel (as cited in Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). Holsti (1983) on his part viewed conflict as a particular relationship between states or opposing factions within a state which amounts to subjective hostilities or tension manifested in subjective economic or military hostilities. In light of this, conflict may or may not result in violence, in which lives and properties are destroyed and/or lost. However, if conflict degenerates into destroying lives and properties, then it becomes violent conflict, and difficult to curtail. This is what Omotosho underscored as potential form of conflict (as cited in Segun & Ebenezer, 2013). This, too, can be interpreted as violence being the manifest function of conflict, while conflict is itself the latent function. Events and experiences the world over, point to the fact that most conflicts are violent and destructive (Segun and Ebenezer, 2013). For Otite and Albert (1999):

Conflicts have their objective bases in the society. The concept is validated daily over access to a variety of limited resources which are created and distributed within defined establishment and location: Conflicts are real, and serve in the above circumstances in the achievement of goal or the maintenance of claims. (p. 4)

Magagula (2012) takes this position on the concept of conflict saying that "Conflict is a serious disagreement, struggle, and fight arising out of differences of opinions, wishes, needs, values, and interests between and among individuals or groups." In a similar vein, Okai averred that Corser viewed conflict as:

A struggle between and among individuals or groups over values and to scare resources, status symbols, and power bases. The objective of the individuals or groups engaged in conflict is to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals so that they can enjoy the scare resources, the status symbols, and power bases. (as cited in Nwaomah, 2011)

Commenting on the assertions made by the above scholars, Himes surmised that it does not come as a surprise that conflict necessarily involves intentional struggle among collective actors who resort to social power to subjugate or eliminate real or perceived opponents with intent to achieve status or control resources, or simply to impose their values on other social groups or out-groups (as cited in Nwaomah, 2011). This also implies that conflict is prevalent within in-groups and between out-groups such as ethnic groups, social institutions and organizations, religious groups, political parties and states, as well as in situations of incompatible goals or desires between social relations. Finally, Osita averred that "any engagement with conflict phenomenon in the present day Nigeria must as a matter of necessity grapple with the multiple impacts of the complex nexus among which are: history, economic, political, cultural, religious and psycho-social dimensions of conflict" (as cited in Segun & Ebenezer, 3013). These factors combine in a unique fashion to precipitate conflict often couched in religious garb.

Religious Conflict:

Religious conflict necessarily derives from the conceptualization of religion and conflict provided above. Be that as it may, religious conflict as a term is defined in various ways by scholars; mostly conveying the same meaning, that is, disagreement between two or more religious groups (Ushe, 2015). When and wherever, ideas, opinions, feelings and desires, differ between religious groups and adherents, there is bound to be religious conflict (Ushe, 2015). These differences in values and claims could be over physical and scarce resources such as land for place of worship, or non-physical needs such as status and power, in which opponents seek to outdo one another. The quest for or attempt by one party to possess or dominate a particular object of value at the expense of the opposing party results in conflict. Scholars have posited that these scenarios very much reflect the continuous conflict between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria (Otite and Olawale, 1999; Ushe, 2015). Kukah (2002) averred that religious conflict arises from a situation of serious disagreement or argument between adherents of one religion and another, over differences in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes. According to Gotan, religious conflict is further described from a traditional perspective as a situation in which multiple and opposing religious believers resort to the use of force to suppress and dominate their opponents (as cited in Ushe, 2015). Religious conflict is a global problematic that could degenerate into open and violent confrontation if left unchecked; it is not limited to any geo-political region of Nigeria or any part of the world (Turaki, 1993; Ayandele, 1996; Aliyu, 2009).

Security:

William held that security generally refers to the absence of threat to acquired values or freedom from danger (as cited in Schafer, 2013:5). Buzan posited that:

Security is taken to be about the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. The bottom line of security is survival. (as cited in Holl, 2011)

According to Holl (1991), the above definition or conception of security as enunciated by Buzan, emphasized two aspects of security, viz: 'identity' and 'integrity' that were absent in the traditional realist and neo-realist conception of security. He argued that the current approach to security recognizes the "feeling of the people or the society of being secure or insecure" (Holl, 1991). This assertion captures lucidly the objective of this study, which is to discuss the way and manner in which religious conflict threatens the people of Nigeria, thereby making them to feel insecure even within their own territory. The concept of security has also been defined from an African perspective as:

Security is increasingly viewed as an all-encompassing condition in which people and communities live in freedom, peace and safety, participate fully in the governance of their countries, enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to the resources and basic necessities of life, and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing. […] the security of people and the security of the state are mutually reinforcing. (Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjiru, 2004, p. 14)

By the above conceptualization of security, the security of people or what the UN has described as "human security" is inextricably tied to the security of the state, which is internal security.

Internal security:

According to Nkewede, internal security means for a country or nation to be free from such dangers or tendencies which could threaten its internal unity and survival, and be able to maintain its core institutions and values (as cited in Abdullahi, et al.,). Iweze (1990) on his part, argued that internal security encompasses everything that enables a country to achieve stability and discharge its responsibility without interference from external or internal forces (such as religious conflict); and should be able also to stabilize again if disturbed. Therefore, any threats to life and property from armed robbery, insurgency or terrorism, civil disturbances, kidnapping, religious crisis, indicate lack of internal security (Abdullahi, et al., 2016). Aliyu (2009) argued that internal security connotes a state's ability to protect its people and its national assets against internal and external threats. This means that the internal security of a nation may be undermined by internal factors such as religious conflict. When this occurs, all the indicies of human security which include, personal, economic, political, health, environmental, community and food, will be jeopardized. Hence, internal or national security concerns steps taken to secure or protect national territory or sovereignty and infrastructure as well as provide basic human needs and guaranty the good life of community members (Aliyu, 2009, p. 13).

III.   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This paper adopted the realist, and liberalist/social constructivist perspectives as basis for understanding religious conflict and the treat it posed to internal security in Nigeria.

Realist Perspective:

Realists hold the view that 'objective security' is achieved only when individuals, societal groups, the state or regional or global international organizations are able to avoid, prevent, manage, cope with, mitigate and adapt to the dangers posed by numerous threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks (Brauch, 2008). The realist perspective of security also derived from the traditional conception of security which is state centric. For the Realist, therefore, internal or external security has as its referent object, the state. Given that states exists in an anarchical realm, threats to state security come from external threats, namely other states. Realism is a theory about power. Power is defined in material (military terms). That being the case, if a state feels threatened from outside it will increase its power and this leads to security dilemma, wherein states compete for their own national interest from an internal perspective.

Based on this traditional security model is the concept of National Security which G. Kennan (1984) has defined as "the continued ability of the country to pursue the development of its internal life without serious interference, or threat of interference, from foreign powers" (IEEE Framework Document, No. 5, 2011). Furthermore, based on the assumptions of the realist theory or perspective on international relations – that security is the dominant concern for states, that force is the major instrument that governments apply to preserve their unity as they interact with one another – security is achieved once threats to security can be prevented or at least managed.

Liberalist/Social Constructivist Perspective:

Contrary to Realist perspective or theory, social constructivists perceive security as resulting from the interactions of various actors, with social values and identities shaping these relations. Security is accordingly inter-subjective; constituted by a process of interaction and negotiations. Thus, they argue that once the fear of one another is overcome, security is achieved (Uluso, as cited in Brauch, 2008). Thus, security cannot be achieved at the expense of others. Security can only be achieved by combined efforts (Both, as cited in Brauch, 2008); and by sharing commitments aimed at a common or international security. Palme (as cited in Brauch, 2008) stated that "International security must rest on a commitment to joint survival rather than on the threat of mutual destruction".

From the perspective of social constructionist approaches in international relations, 'security' is conceived as an outcome of a process of social and political interpretation where social values and norms, collective identities and cultural traditions are essential. That is to say security is at all times 'inter-subjective' or "security is what actors make of it" (Adler, 199; Risse, 2003; Wendt, 1992, 1999, 2002, as cited in Brauch, 2008).

In light of the above explanations, it stands to reason that the internal security of any country, Nigeria inclusive, is both a subjective and objective endeavour. This is judging from the backdrop of the role played by both individuals and communities or groups in promoting violent conflicts in their respective domains, thereby posing serious threat to their country's internal security.

IV. CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

The factors contributing to the upsurge of religious-based violence in Nigeria have been analyzed extensively by various scholars. Some scholars have argued that certain factors, as well as actions of the government such as deprivation, inequality and increasingly radical nature of Islam both locally and internationally; the military crackdown on Maitasine, a renowned Moslem sect leader, have all contributed to the spread of religious conflicts have occurred in the country since 1953 through to the present (Egbue, Uche & Alichie, 2015).

Other factors of religious conflicts have been identified by Achunike, and they include:

1. Wrong Perception of Other People's Religions or their Faith: This involved the attitude by non-adherents of one religion viewing the religious practices or activities of the other with disdain, which usually provoke conflict.

2. Wrong Religious Orientation: This is a misguided religious belief otherwise referred to as "religious indoctrination" that religious leaders conduct on their members, by which they become obsessed and proud which invariably lead to conflict.

3. Literacy Level of Religious Adherents: Illiteracy arising from poor educational background makes religious believers gullible to the sometimes wrong teachings or interpretations of their religious tenets by their leaders, unaware that they were being manipulated.

4. Selfishness on the Part of Religious Personalities: Some religious leaders have caused religious conflict by their unguarded utterances so they may gain political favours after being called upon for mediation by the government.

5. Too Much Freedom Given to Religious Leaders: Unregulated religious activities and pronouncements of religious preachers by the government could also precipitate religious conflict (as cited in Yahaya, 2011, pp.92-93).

The above clearly summarized the varied factors responsible for religious conflicts in the heterogeneous and secular Nigeria State. It pointed to the way in which the conduct and unguarded utterances of religious leaders and members, could lead to long and protracted conflict.

V. DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Most if not all religious conflicts in Nigeria have several dynamics ranging from social, political, economic and governance issues. These underlying factors have been found to actually precipitate religious conflict. The goals to be achieved in religious conflict could sometimes be blurred, but Gofwen (2004), reconed that political aims are key; that religious conflict constitute a specific form of conflict between groups upholding opposing ideology along religious lines within a heterogeneous environment with each competing for political space or recognition (Gofwen, as cited in Nwaomah, 2011).

Similarly, Takaya (as cited in Nwaomah, 2011) reiterated the political import of religions thus:

i. Religions are parochial and emotional socializers. They specialize in building one-faith exclusive brotherhood communities;

ii. Religion, at some point, is politics and is the most potent and long lasting political association. Moreover, religious creeds excite and extract the deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties from their adherents when in political competition with people of other faiths.

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Nwaomah (2011), noted that attitude of superiority that religious groups adopt in their dealings with other faiths perceived as adversaries, often drives religious conflicts, especially where the "political, social or economic factors" are unfavourable.

In the specific case of Nigeria, (Gofwen, 2004, Minchukpu, 2006 and Nwaomah, 2010), have documented numerous religious conflicts, between 1987 and 2011, that have claimed lives and destroyed lives and properties, including places of worship belonging to both Christians and Moslems. Two of such conflicts are the 2011 post-election conflicts, and the recent and on-going Boko Haram terrorist attacks in the North-East of the country, carried out by an Islamic group with possible links with some terrorist groups outside Nigeria's shores. As observed by Takaya (1992) and Nwaomah (2011), these conflicts even though religious in nature have other underlying causes such as socio-political, and economic. Further, Nwaomah (2011) argued that in Nigeria, every political programme or event is coloured by religion or religious intent (which political leaders would rather deny or ignore), but at the same time employ to achieve their selfish political gains. Nwaomah buttressed this point with a statement from one Binta Faruk Jalingo, a Muslim women leader, "I want the common man to know that their leaders want to use them for their selfish interests in the cover of religion. A lot of these leaders are only using religion to make money and to enrich themselves . . ." (Nwaomah, 2011).

Further, the argument thus far canvassed that the politicization of religion by leaders and followers in Nigeria, for political gains exacerbates or drives conflict, has been summarized into what Gofwen has identified as 'four reasons'. These are:

i.   The differing political philosophy of the major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity;

ii. The Mutual suspicion and fear of domination between the two religions;

iii. Mutual ignorance of the beliefs and teachings of each other's religion and sometimes even of one's own faith, and,

iv. Provocative acts of pronouncements which hurt the religious sensibilities of people of other faiths, whether they are intended or inadvertent (as cited in Nwaomah, 2011)

In addition to the above, it is common knowledge that conflicts have erupted from situations where certain actions or pronouncements by persons believed to be opposed to a particular faith or religious belief, were misinterpreted. In a world where religion or religious sentiment is employed to gain political advantage over others, one can expect a multiplying impact of religious conflict on nations' internal security including Nigeria.

VI.   RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AS THREAT TO NIGERIA'S INTERNAL SECURITY

The importance of security to the survival of any nation cannot be understated. It forms the bedrock of a country's peaceful co-existence and development. Many types of conflicts constitute internal security threats to Nigeria. Some of these include but not limited to: kidnapping, armed robbery, hired assassins, cross-border crimes, illegal immigration, corruption, religious intolerance, etc. However, none of these portend more danger to the country's internal security like religious conflict.

The increase in religious-based conflict has been recognized as a major threat to Nigeria's internal security. A former Nigeria's Minister of Defence, Alhaji Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso underscored this threat as:

The increasing manifestation of religious fanaticism as evidenced by the communal crises in Shagamu, Lagos, Aba and Kano, and the religious upheavals in Kaduna, Bauchi and Jos as well as avoidable intolerance constitute a serious threat to national security (as cited in Aliyu, 2009, p. 93).

Aliyu (2009, pp.93-95) has identified several components of Nigeria's national life which have been impacted by religious conflict or religious-based violence. They include:

i.   National Unity, which the incidence of religious conflicts has undermined by creating disharmony among Nigerians, polarizing the people into mutually hostile religious camps, thereby further undermining one of the core values of the Nigerian Nation.

ii. Undermining the stability of Nigerian State, as evidenced in the campaigns of various Islamic religious sects, intended to establish enclaves of Islamic rule or caliphate nationwide (like the Maitatsine and El-Zakzaky, or Taliban of Borno State had attempted in the 1980s to early 1990s, and 2004). A move calculated to overthrow the government of Nigeria.

iii. Undermining the Nigeria Police Force and other Security Agencies, with its fallouts, such as the killing of service personnel, destruction of vital facilities and looting of armories, which later end up the hands of unauthorized and fanatical elements in the society, who use the weapons to perpetrate crimes.

iv. Mass Killings and Destruction of Economic Activities, arising from religious conflicts since the 1980s have seen thousands of able bodied members of the population being murdered and properties destroyed, thereby impacting on economic activities and the general development of Nigeria.

v. Displacement of Populations and Creation of Refugee Problems brought about the activities of the groups engaged in religious conflicts. A phenomenon that has forced government to divert resources meant for strengthening economic security to be put into providing food and shelter for the displaced persons.

Nigeria has witnessed rise in sectarian crises since achieving nationhood, mostly based on religion. However, no group has inflicted more death and destruction in the country like the Boko Haram terrorist group. The activities of the group mainly in the North-East of Nigeria has claimed hundreds and thousands of lives, with over 200 school girls abducted in April in Chibock, Borno State. Thus, Boko Haram terrorist group has constituted a major threat to Nigeria's internal security. This situation is further compounded by insinuations by the PDP federal government that certain members of Jonathan's cabinet were sponsoring the Boko Haram terrorist group. This prompted some observers to opine that the same PDP government had failed to deal adequately with terrorism (Shola, 2015). This failure by the central government to properly address the phenomenon of religious conflict as particularly exemplified in Boko Haram terrorist attacks, has seriously compromised the security environment of Nigeria. Importantly, it has led to massive displacement and relocation of people from the affected areas to other parts of the country, a situation that has caused huge humanitarian crisis in the northeast.

Aside the Boko Haram religious crisis other religion-based conflicts such as the inter-communal conflicts over the introduction of Sharia criminal law in Kaduna State in 2000, violent clashes and sectarian killings in Jos, Plateau State, in 2001, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gomber, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Niger, Sokoto and Zamfara in the immediate aftermath of 2011 presidential election, have also hundreds of lives and displaced thousands of people (Goitom, 2014). However, following reports by Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has identified three emerging patterns of displacement resulting from the Boko Haram's terrorist attacks. First, is the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who fled to the South of the country as economic migrants. Secondly the people who fled from rural to urban centres within their states, and third is the secondary displacement of both IDPs and host communities who had to move because source of livelihood have been depleted. The NRC reiterated that the "level of destruction undermining physical security and livelihoods has instilled deep fears in the affected populations, significantly reducing the possibility of returns;" a situation that could very much lead to prolonged displacement and probable emigration if the IDPs were not successfully integrated in their host communities (Goitom, 2014).

Further to the above physical security threats were the challenges to food security. According to Goitom (2014), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in one of its assessments observed that IDPs' host communities in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, and Taraba States were overwhelmed and faced food shortages; because of the large number of IDPs. It was reported that there were 257,694 IDPs in Borno, 76,354 in Yobe, 102,580 in Adamawa, and 108,515 in Taraba. The movement of people from the rural to the urban areas, and the displacement of some from one local to another undoubtedly have posed a serious threat to human security in terms of economic, food, environmental, physical, health, community security, and political.

These scenarios could exacerbate the already fragile internal security complex witnessed across the country. As people continue to relocate to avoid threats to their human security, there is the likelihood of them constituting more security threats in their new locations because of competition for scarce resources between them and host communities; which could result in violence. Goitom (2014) has argued that apart from the violence emanating from clashes between IDPs and host communities, the attacks by Boko Haram would likely spread to the southern parts of the country; and that with reprisal attacks by Christians, the Muslim IDPs would be unable to relocate to the south, thus worsening the security situation and making it difficult for government to tackle. Consequently, it would be impossible to determine which parts of Nigeria would remain safe and conducive for the relocation of IDPs.

The overall impact of religious conflict on Nigeria's internal security could be better appreciated from viewing the following objectives of security as stated by Phenson, Ojie, Esin and Atai (2014, pp. 7-8):

i.   Security ensures the protection of lives and property of both citizens and that of government (personnel and property).

ii.   To provide a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere for individuals and groups to go about their lawful engagements.

iii.   To create measures and opportunities for assessment and prompt neutralization of threats and the exposure of agents of such threats to legal sanctions.

iv.   Security creates a barrier and builds the walls of defense (separation) around the state and its people.

v.   It builds confidence of safety, promotes peace and order and ensures safe working and residential environment.

vi.   It builds a foundation (bedrock) for socio-economic and political growth, development and stability.

vii.   Security minimizes panic and fear of attack.

viii. It solves societal problems, exposes criminals, their activities, hideouts, and enhances social justice.

ix.   It uncovers threats and deters aggression (Bassey, 2010, pp. 8-28).

x.   Security provides the enabling atmosphere for good social and political order to survive (Aja, 1999, p. 31).

xi.   Security prevents criminal activities in a society… (Sharma, 2004, p. 102).

It goes without saying, therefore, that the attainment of the above objectives can be hampered by certain intermingling factors (as discussed previously in this paper), chief among which is religious conflict. The impact of religious conflict on a country's internal security such as Nigeria cuts across all the human security dimensions comprising, food, economic, political, environmental, health, personal, and community, as identified by the United Nations in its 1994 development report on human security.

VII.   CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed religious conflict as a threat to Nigeria's internal security. It examined the factors that cause religious conflicts within the broader Nigerian society, and how they impact on its internal security landscape, particularly in terms of the security of the citizens otherwise referred to a "human security". They paper revealed that religious conflict actually posed a threat to the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians and to the country's socio-economic growth and development hence, the need to bring it to the front burner for critically analysis. The paper, therefore, called on the Federal Government of Nigeria to rise up to the occasion and make concerted and genuine efforts to stem the tide of religious conflicts rampant across the length and breadth of Nigeria, which have unarguably threatened the corporate existence of the country thereby hampering sustainable material and human development. The government should also ensure that the citizens irrespective of their religious orientations feel safe and secure within their beloved country – Nigeria, by putting in place effective regulations or guidelines (within the ambit of freedom of worship) which would guard against religious extremism or bigotry.

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