

Cataract in the Eye: The Effect of Religious Practitioners on the Socio-Economic and Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Market Places in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines the ethno religious conflict effects on the local market of Lagos State, Nigeria with a view toward determining its role the two major religion (Christianity and Islam) in the lives of marketer and people in the market and the community. The paper relies on both primary and secondary sources including a structure research questionnaire, books, journals and magazines that deal with religious conflicts and crises in Nigeria. Intractable conflict and political economy theories are blended in our analysis. We argue that inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria defy resolutions and seem unending because they are intractable conflicts, which are sustained largely because they serve the economic interest of certain religious leaders who conceal the economic matrix behind their support. This work recommends that increased awareness should be created to enlighten people on the dangers of these crises in the market place. We suggest government strive to provide laws to protect all citizens against ethno-religious crises. Finally, religious leaders should preach and teach to increase national unity, purity, tolerance, morality, love and honesty to reduce conflicts among religious groups, thereby uniting through dialogue for national development.

1. Introduction

The character of the Nigerian State is responsible for the country's deepening ethno-religious contradictions. This plural nature originates a constant feeling of distrust between the component units and the fear of one ethnic or religious group dominating the other is rife. A pattern of largely discernible ethnic suspicion and intrigues that had existed within the market settings. On the other hand,

if it evolved on the platform of consensus and fair play, there is the tendency for it to have a serene domestic politics. The Nigerian situation is such that boycotted the due course of legitimization at formation and this posits serious consequences for its stability at the present moment within the market settings. This posture is compounded by the intense use of market authority to cover up this malaise, which has in the final analysis impacted on the various segments of society, creating the psychological basis for arbitrariness of citizens and tendency to affront the dignity and rights of fellow citizens. Therefore, the following problems will be look into are:

2. Ethnic Problems

It is apposite to state that the current wave of violent crises in Nigeria is a by-product of an accumulated deprivation, destruction, marginalisation, anger and frustration of the past. to David Barber (1988:3) was characterized by 'sudden and drastic overturning of the existing structure of institutional power in favour of a particular group', already created some bottled agitations and anger that became easily expressed under democracy. In combination with poverty and shortage of resources this has sharpened ethnic divisions. As a result, ethnic sectarianism has left a trail of destructive violence and even threatened the territorial integrity of Nigeria (IDEA,2001:89).

3. Religious Problems

Adebayo (2003) identified some factors responsible for using religion as instrument of polarization, among which is leadership tussle, which also culminated in the proliferation of many

denominations in the country. Also, sectarian jingoism, as well as excessive patriotism to one's religious sect, which consequently transformed to fanaticism, is another major factor contributing to this social menace. Generally speaking, communal and religious clashes which now occur at frequent interval in Nigeria. There were empirical instances like burning of Jos ultra modern market (2002), cattle market in Onitsha (2006), and bombing of several churches and offices at Abuja, Yobe, Plateau, Kano, Kaduna etc which claimed many lives

The causes of frustration and dissatisfaction among men in the society are not only limited to the denials which political and economic opportunities bring, but also to religious issues. Occurrence of cheat and aggressive behaviour on the part of individuals or groups that leads to the frustration of others may cause conflict. It is a disagreement that results from the allocation of scarce values or clashes regarding incompatibility of goals. It can also be regarded as disagreement that generates from distributive injustice. From the foregoing analysis of manifestation of ethnic crises in Lagos and Nigeria, it can be seen that this crises resulted from overzealous this militant group. As a result of these stated problems above, this study is base on the socio-economic effect of religion conflict in mile 12 local market of Lagos, Nigeria

4. Literature Review

Literatures were reviewed to familiarize the study with the opinion of other scholars. On topics like:

4.1 The Causes of Ethno-Religion Conflict in Lagos State

The causes of conflict in societies where it has occurred and where it may potentially take place is similar, for example, is tied to the struggle for economic resources, boundary disputes environmental degradation, and struggle for political power between or among ethnic groups, religious sentiments. The causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are embedded in the basic foundations of the Nation-State. These contradictions has proved incurable especially as efforts to obliterate them have always been truncated aggressively by the custodians of power. Thus, the basic causes of crises that arises as a result of persistent conflict of interest will be discussed from two fronts, ethnic and religious dimension. The notion of Nigeria as a mere geographic expression (Awolowo,1990:35) was engendered by the forceful packaging by colonial authoritarian fiat of unwilling communities of diverse

origin and culture under the same polity. Consequently, relations and political behavior of the peoples are characterized by mutual suspicion and invidious hatred since they are strange bed-fellows, who were only coerced into the Nation-State via amalgamation. Until 1960, Nigeria was a British colony; like most colonies, it was not constructed for internal coherence, but rather for the administrative convenience of the British (Shively,1997:39).Over 250 different languages and dialects are spoken within its borders, and there is also an important religious split, as the north is primarily Muslim and the south is predominantly Christian. Attendantly, ethnocentric politics, sectional solidarity and primordial interests became prominent features in the nation's political practice. Sectional and individual virtues and interest rather than collective virtues and national unity are advanced and exalted. Thus, communal orientation precluded any attachment to the State and the syndrome of the 'son of the soil' took preference over merit and competence in the choice of policies and leaders. Nweke aptly expressed this ethnic problem as follows:

One of the most striking characteristics of Nigeria is its singular ethnic diversity, a demographic tapestry woven of more than 200 different ethnic groups, where except for the effect of migration are often geographically homogenous and often coincide with linguistic, cultural and religious groupings. (Nweke,1994:3).

Besides the heterogeneous ethnic composition, about 400 languages are also spoken, thus making Nigeria the linguistic crossroads of Africa.(Tordoff,1990:2).Although as Obasanjo and Mabogunje aptly observed, colonialism provided scaffolding of holding the different communities together, not much change was achieved in altering communal mentality and predilection(Obasanjo and Mabogunje,1992:4).Nonetheless, the persistent military incursion into government and politics did much harm for the body polity as national issues was mostly tribalized and primordial virtues extolled. These regimes had primordial outlook and sub-national mentality under which the Northern part of the country was favoured brazenly, on one hand, and the southern part was deliberately dealt with in terms of appointments, contracts, location of government parastatals, political oppression and repression as well as provision of social services and infrastructures. The persistent ethnic chauvinism exhibited by these regimes had grave effect on the psyche of the various ethnic nationalities to an extent that those groups that even benefited now lay claim to marginalization at every attempt to reverse the status quo. This is nonetheless the cause of the

plethora of violent conflicts at the communal level in virtually all the regions of the country, cries of ethnic nationalism and calls for national conference. A new dimension to the issue is the increasing recruitment of ethnic militia with reckless abandon. From the Odua Peoples Congress in Yoruba land to Arewa Peoples Congress in The North; the Bakassi boys in the East and the Egbesu in the South-South, agitations are rife and it is obvious that the nation state will face dire consequences if cogent steps are not taken to checkmate these contending interests. Both the colonial powers and the elites that succeeded them have used ethnicity for their own ends. In combination with poverty and shortage of resources this has sharpened ethnic divisions. As a result, ethnic sectarianism has left a trail of destructive violence and even threatened the territorial integrity of Nigeria (IDEA,2001:89).

However, ethnic identity can give social and other benefits. The challenge for Nigeria is to boost its positive potentials while minimizing the negative, to harness the similarities among the various ethnic groups for national unity, to manage their differences so as to ensure harmony and foster co-operation among them in order to accomplish national integration. Although attempts have been made along this frame by past regimes as such strategies were never put together and executed in the interest of the country but of policy formulators and executors, who often smile to the bank after each moment of discourse on 'the way forward'.

It is apposite to state that the current wave of violent crises in Nigeria is a bye product of an accumulated deprivation, destruction, marginalisation, anger and frustration of the past. Thus, there is need for government and extra-governmental efforts to lessen the spate of violent attacks between ethnic groups in Nigeria.

As espoused by Ola Makino, the Methodist archbishop of Abuja 'we have offended one another in Nigeria. The implication of these persistent ethnic conflicts and rivalry is the insecurity of lives and properties which will continue to hinder foreign economic relations to jumpstart the economy. The above position was canvassed by the Vice President Atiku Abubakar at a press conference on Tuesday, November 9,1999 (on the spate of ethnic violence across the polity). He stated among other things that : Our nation is at the threshold. Of rebuilding its image as well As its economic and social foundation. Confidence of both the citizens and the international community is fast returning (Atiku,1999: 19).

4.2 The Consequences of Religion conflict on Socio-economic progress in the Lagos State

There is a socio-economic dimension to religious crisis in Nigeria which the people in the southern part of the country seem not to understand. While the average southerner is industrious and depends on his enterprise as means of sustenance, the average northerner depends on government patronage for his existence. In the North, the average Northerners needs government to function. Therefore, political power is viewed from both an economic and religious perspective. If the political power is "lost", the economic well being of the northern Northerners is evidently threatened and religion becomes the channel of protest and a bargaining tool.

The growing incidence of ethno-religious crisis in Nigeria is sufficiently worrisome to assert that the government that statutorily has responsibility for crisis management is not doing enough. Apparently, the government itself is generating crises directly by failing to appreciate the people's aspirations. While some people crave for autonomy, resource control, some wants the Sharia legal system while others want a review of the) revenue derivation principle, and so on. When individuals and groups turn to violence to solve problems, conflict takes a second dimension; security and survival. Conflict resolution becomes multifaceted as conflict itself; solutions must look to satisfy the hunger of individuals for justice. At every point of reflecting on the cause(s) of the Nigerian phenomenon, one discovers that the elites are insincere towards the need for genuine national integration. Although, democracy asserts, as against monarchy or aristocracy, that the mere fact of free birth is sufficient to constitute a claim to a share in political power, the elites more than ever before utilizes the present opportunity to pursue selfish agendas. Also, the unfavourable state of the economy gives room for the affluent in the society to influence the downtrodden for personal purposes. This nonetheless creates opportunity for Nigerians to be sponsored for conflictual purposes at the slightest provocation. Apart from the above, the several years of military rule which according to David Barber (1988:3) was characterized by 'sudden and drastic overturning of the existing structure of institutional power in favour of a particular group', already created some bottled agitations and anger that became easily expressed under democracy.

Democracy is about freedom, but it is not freedom to be irresponsible. It is freedom within certain understandable limits but events in the Nigerian fourth republic has shown that the freedom allowed

by democracy is being mis-utilised. Although the constitution guarantees freedom to form and hold an opinion, the Nigerian situation is such that the competitors for power have taken control of an issue that is definitely well beyond their sphere of competence, and they are making personal profits out of it at the expense of the corporate existence, economic revival and integration of the nation-state. Thus, concrete efforts must be made to tackle the wave of clashes across the country, since political and ethnic affiliations are human attributes and conflict is inevitable.

The activities of some of these sects has in recent times led to the loss of lives and properties as they move about destroying government facilities which they see as legacies or replica of western cultures in their various communities. This religious campaign has seen an increase in gun battles between the members of these sects and security forces with loss of lives witnessed on both sides. Although direct conflicts between Christians and Muslims were rare, tensions did flare between the two groups as each group radicalised.

4.3 Impact of Conflict in the Society

The religious contradictions that Nigeria faces is daunting. The country is essentially an heterogeneous society, with the two monotheistic religions-Islam and Christianity-enjoying the loyalty of most Nigerians. A sizeable fraction of the population still prides itself as being pure religious traditionalists, meaning adherence to one or the other of the many traditional religions. The origin of the employment of religion as an instrument of politics in Nigeria can be traced to the colonial era. Although the British colonialists claimed to have Nigerians on the imperative of secularity in a multi-religious society, available evidence suggests that the colonial administration consciously employed religion as an instrument of pacification. As Adigun Agbaje has correctly established, the colonial administration 'underwrote Islam in the Northern part of colonial Nigeria, and used it as the basis of political authority in local administration (Agbaje,1990:288).It not only kept Christian missionaries from the North, so as to preserve the assumed Islamic homogeneity of the region, it also adopted the emirate system of political administration with its strong religious content. In spite of this early trend, the issue of religion did not come to the front burner as a critical issue dividing Nigerians until 1986. The major event that opened the floodgate of religious antagonism was the decision of the government to secretly upgrade Nigeria's membership in the Organization of Islamic

Countries, OIC, from that of an observer to a substantive one(Mimiko,1995:261). This move was seen by Christians as a ploy to turn Nigeria into an Islamic State against the spirit and the letter of the constitution. This singular action of the Babangida regime as at that moment marked the epoch of intractable intra (in the case of Islam) and inter-religious violence in Nigeria. This pattern continued even after the Babangida regime due to inability to distinguish categorically the place of politics as the modus operandi of the distribution of national wealth and religion as the spiritual aspect of human being guarded by God (Oduola,2000:12).Adigun Agbaje's 1990 optimistic thesis that 'Nigeria under a democratic dispensation would likely witness a lessening of tension over religion and politics'(Agbaje, op.cit.) is been negated by the plethora of religious crises erupting across the polity. The nascent democracy is witnessing increasing religionisation of politics and politicization of religion due to the resolve of some Northern State's governor's to adopt the Islamic legal code---Sharia, as the penal and criminal codes in their states. With Zamfara State blazing the trail, eleven other Northern States have followed suit.

The pro-sharia argument is that for many years, Moslems have undergone humiliations of their faith being relegated to the background in public matters whereas antagonists view the Sharia issue as a grand design to undermine the present government and cause confusion. The series of violent confrontation being witnessed at present is a demonstration of the fundamental problem of religion that has created acute insecurity in the land. Generally speaking, communal and religious clashes which now occur at frequent interval in Nigeria, especially during this democratic regime is not novel, it is only that National Integration that was hoped on democracy is being further pushed back. An attempt is made below to showcase these occurrences.

4.4 Measure to Reduce Conflict

The implication of these persistent ethnic conflicts and rivalry is the insecurity of lives and properties which will continue to hinder foreign economic relations to jumpstart the economy. The above position was canvassed by the Vice President Atiku Abubakar at a press conference on Tuesday, November 9,1999 (on the spate of ethnic violence across the polity). He stated among other things that : Our nation is at the threshold. Of rebuilding its image as well As its economic and social foundation. Confidence of both the citizens and the international community is fast returning (Atiku,1999:19). Thus,

all hands must be on deck to stop the wave of these ethnic violence.

To begin with, developing African models of conflict resolution and applying it in Nigeria may not be a bad idea, after all, before the advent of colonialism and the introduction of Western models of conflict management; Africa had an efficient cultural mechanism by which conflicts between groups, communities or even kingdoms were settled within the shortest possible time proximate to the occurrence of the event.

According to Braimah (1998:161), traditional methods of conflict resolution are institutionalized social relationship that is familiar and well established. These includes strategies such as :Citizen diplomacy, which is done by elders in the community and friendly relationship, whereby strict rules are applied to forestall salient feelings between groups to manifest into overt conflict thereby permanently resolving conflicts which lie undercurrent. The main objective of the traditional mechanism is not to punish the offender or to recompense the injured party, but to restore good relations and re-established a disrupted social order and this is the exact ingredient needed to foster national integration in Nigeria.

Apart from the above, there is need to shift grounds on spontaneous military approach to solving disputes to real focus on evolving basic amicable framework of co-existence between groups in a society. Emphasis should shift from the distribution of the national cake to the production of the cake; and from an emphasis on distribution of the cake along ethnic lines to its distribution along lines of the contribution to its production.

Ethnic militias should be prevented from determining inter ethnic relations and the place of the minorities should be enhanced. Also, the agitations on better revenue sharing formula should be acceded to and a culture of tolerance, trust and dialogue in inter-ethnic and inter-religious issues must be built. The mass media, both the electronics and the prints have a great role to play at this moment. The press will do the nation-state more harm than good if it could carry out objective journalism. Sensitive issues should be treated with utmost caution and their interest should not just be their expected sales.

5. Methodology

The research study location was mile 12 local market in Lagos State Nigeria. Mile 12 International Market, a popular foodstuff market in Lagos. On a daily basis,

about 80 trucks laden with foodstuffs, vegetables, and other agricultural produce from northern Nigeria arrive Mile 12 International Market, one of the biggest foodstuffs market in Lagos and other elsewhere in the country. This is a major foodstuff selling market in Lagos State. The research populations for this study are all market sellers of mile 12 markets in Lagos State, Nigeria. Out of which our sample size of 100 was drawn. The population comprises of those market sellers in the Onions, Pepper, Yam and Fruit zone respectively.

5.1 Sampling design and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is taking out a portion out of a population or universe. The purpose of any sampling is to select a small segment of the whole population so that we can make inference about that population. The sampling of this project is therefore restricted to all market sellers within the study area of mile 12 market in Kosofe Local Government area of Lagos state. Stratified and simple random sampling technique was used. Stratified sampling techniques was used to stratified the stratum, while the Simple random sampling technique was used to allow every market sellers of mile 12 market to have equal chance of being selected or choosing for the study. Hence, the market was divided into four (4) zones, each zone with twenty (25) respondents. This means that in all the four (4) zones, one hundred (100) respondents was selected for our sample size and 100 questionnaires was used. The zones are; Onions, Pepper, Yam and Fruit zone respectively.

5.2 Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument of data collection was structural questionnaire method which was structure by the researcher herself and given to the lecturer or expert supervisor to validate before it is reliable to be administer to the respondents within the study area. The questions inside the questionnaire were divided into main parts. The first part deal with socio-demography status of respondents, while the second part deal with questions related to the current study on socio-economic effects of religious conflicts

The Procedure for data collection was both primary and secondary data. The primary data were first hand data or raw data that the researcher generated through the use of structure question for the purpose of this research study. The secondary data were the contributions of both past and present scholars and researchers in related to the current study on socio-economic effects of religious conflicts in mile 12 local market

COMPRESSED ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

	Do you believed that there is a possible way in which ethno-religious crises can be reduced in the market			Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	
Mutual trust between ethno-religious affiliated and market management is a weapon for industrial harmony in my organization	13	9	11	33
Total	41	22	0	63
Total	54	31	11	96

	Value	Difrences	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.932 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	26.590	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21.899	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	96		

6. Summary of Findings

The findings of this research study shows clearly that ethno-religious crises can be eradicated in the society generally, if adequate knowledge and education were given to the people generally to the danger of ethno-religion crises in the society. Ethno-religion is considered as an integral part of society, Ethno-religion can not be separated from society, and likewise society can not be separated from ethno-religion. This means that the two as to go side by side, to shape the society. This depends on which direction every leaders of this ethno-religion directed their members. To the hypotheses in chapter four, it shows that there is significant relationship between causes ethno-religious crises and it problem in mile 12 market, correlate with 41.0% and 33.0% of respondents strongly agree and agree that dominant of one ethnic background over others causes crises in the market and 11.0% uncertain and 11.0% disagree, 50.0% and 46.0% strongly agree and agree that ethnic conflicts and rivalry affect the security of lives and properties of people involved.

Also in hypotheses two, there is a significant relationship between ethno-religious crisis and economic well being of the people in mile 12, correlate with 50.0% and 46.0% of respondents strongly agree and agree that conflicts always affect sales of market productivity when it occur, 33.0% and 63.0% of respondents strongly agree and agree that ethnic conflicts and rivalry affect the security of lives and properties of people involved

Hypotheses three, there is a significant relationship between reduction method and ethno-religious crisis in mile 12 correlate with 54.0% and 31.0% of the respondents strongly agree and agree that there is a possible way in which ethno-religious crises can be reduced in the market, 63.0% and 33.0% strongly

agree and agree of respondents that mutual trust between ethno-religious affiliated and market management is a weapon for industrial harmony in my organization

7. Conclusions

If conflicts between Muslims and Christians remains the same then definitely its effect will continue not only lives of people but also on the economic growth, country's reputation at international level, political, social and economic instability. which will lead Nigeria to more decline and more we bear each other and show some responsibility towards their country and they system must also be changed which also create more instability among the lives of people. Inter-religious conflicts in Nigerian market and society defy resolutions and seem unending because they are intractable conflicts. These conflicts are sustained largely because they serve the economic interest of certain religious leaders who conceal the economic matrix behind their support for fanatic religious values. Behind these seeming passion and love for religious values and dogma shown by religious leaders lies the domination of religious values by religious leader's selfish economic benefits. If this, is not check it will affect the life, property and also the economic wellbeing of market seller and society generally.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research work, the following are the suggested recommendations:

- This study recommends that the Christian/Muslim beliefs, teachings and dogmas should be reviewed to accommodate Nigeria's development objectives through a

Sovereign National Religious Conference with emphasis on nationality, purity, morality, love and honesty as the basis for peaceful co-existence.

- Proper educating of people on danger of ethno-religious crises would also enable the masses appreciate and identify the voice of a fanatic religious elite who seek to advance his economic interest through religious mask at the expense of masses.
- The Federal Government should also strive to provide the foundation upon which this conference would take place through judicious policy implementations to avoid the feeling of domination among Nigerian religious groups.
- Adequate public enlightenment should be done to increase the knowledge of people on the danger of ethno-religion crises in the market and society generally.
- Adherent of every religion should be enlighten to tolerate, love and leave together for as one for peaceful co-existence in the market and the society.
- Disagreement among different ethnic group should be reported to the market leaders in times before it aggravated to ethno-religious crises.

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