Ethno-Religious Struggle and Human Insecurity in the Fledging Nigerian Democracy since 1999: The Political Nexus

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Research Note

Abstract

Religious and ethnic identity clashes laid the structure of the Nigerian state in 1914, which transmogrified into and characterized the struggle for control of power and distribution of national resources. This paper explores the nature and manifestation of these conflicts since 1999. It seeks to find out if ethno-religious struggles led to the emergence of major conflicts in Nigeria since 1999, their impact on human insecurity, and the influence of politics on the conflicts. This inquiry is designed in line with a one-shot case study, while literature survey and ex post facto methods were adopted as methods of data collection. Trend analysis is adopted for data analysis. Analysis reveals that ethno-religious struggles were the primary progenitor of conflicts in Nigeria since 1999, and have debilitating consequences while politics exacerbated ethno-religious conflicts. Upholding Nigeria's circular state and implementing the National Political Reforms Conference Report is the panacea for ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Keywords: Ethnic, Religion, Human insecurity, Politics, Conflict, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Prior to 1914, Nigeria existed as over 250 segregated independent nations with divergent cultures, political systems, and religions (Otite, 1990; Paden, 2008; Okpanachi, 2010). They were relating with each other through primitive diplomacy until two foreign but diametrically opposed systems penetrated by force through Jihad into Sokoto and Lagos in Yoruba through trade (Lewis, 2007). However, both used force of arms and religion i.e. Islam and Christianity as their primary weapons. While Othman da Fodio conquered, annexed, and imposed Islamic religion together with Koranic education and Sharia rule in the entire Sokoto caliphate i.e. Northern Nigeria, Britain gradually conquered, annexed, and introduced Christianity, western

education, and political systems on the entire Yoruba and Igbo nations together with other annexing minorities, which are now known as Southern Nigeria (Paden, 2007).

The two civilizations led to two different levels of development that orchestrated a gap between the North and South even after the amalgamation of 1914. The political structure that was established during the amalgamation exacerbated the gap and laid the background for unending contestations. Commenting on the structure, Harold Smith, a one-time British colonial administrator in Nigeria once said:

> *I am in my 80s now…but now I don't want to go to my grave without telling the truth about the atrocities perpetuated in Africa by the colonialists…Nigeria was my duty post, when we assessed Nigeria, this was what we found in the Southern region: strength, intelligence, determination to succeed, well-established history, complex but focused life style, great hope, and aspirations…the East was good in business and technology, the West was good in administration and commerce, law and medicine but it was a pity we planned our agenda to give power at all cost to the Northerners* (Okon, 2008, p.2).

Thus, Akpanika (2017, p. 69) noted, "It is obvious that the disparity between the North and the South and the continuous display of superiority and dominance of the north base on the colonial agenda is the root cause of resistance, violence and political instability in Nigeria today." The British colonization of the North and South and the adoption of 'divide and rule' policy (Ojo, 2007; Ostien, 2009) led to socio-economic and development disequilibrium among the various tribes/regions, stimulated identity awareness, and differentiation (Fearon & Laitin, 2003) that degenerated into contestations after the amalgamation. Almost every Nigerian introduces themselves as a member of an elemental ethnic and/or religious grouping (Lewis & Bratton, 2000). Ethno-religious formations became the "most persistent behavioral units in Nigeria" (Nsongola-Ntalaja, 2004, p.404). This advances British interest in Nigeria till date, which is resource appropriation and expatriation or expropriation.

The observed ambivalence in British colonial rule, the development gap between the North and South, and the identity contestations that led to the politicization of identities (Eriksen, 1996), laid a solid foundation for clashes, struggle for power, and domination at the center with consequential human insecurity. Accordingly, these are driven by specific historical and material forces and situations; molded by particular and unique circumstances, which are constructed to serve certain interests and 'ethnic power brokers' (Ake, 2000). Its products manifest not only in the forms of killings but also in the forms of food insecurity, health insecurity, environmental insecurity, economic insecurity, and political insecurity among others (see Werthes, Heaven, Vollnhals, 2011). Loss of lives, jobs, properties, and confidence in the state and security forces; kidnapping, militancy, armed robberies, communal clashes and agitation for secession; cattle rustling, banditry, farmers-herdsmen crisis, and terrorism prevail in Nigeria (Otolorin, 2017). These constitute different forms of human insecurity. By human insecurity, we mean the prevalence of threat to basic/core human values, the physical safety of

the individual and inheritances, and the protection of properties, basic liberties, economic needs, and interests (Alkire, 2002).

Therefore, tension among the ethnic nationalities subsists as individuals feel deprived, subordinated, and dominated, which leads to a struggle for the increase in their stake of power or wealth or to alter the central beliefs, values, norms, and philosophies driving governance in Nigeria. The various struggles transmogrified into contentious interactions in politics, ethnicity, and religions, which has resulted in an increased sense of belonging and militancy (Kura 2010:36). Major political issues are contested vigorously along ethno-religious and regional cleavages with a manifest winner-take-all syndrome (Anderson, 2010; Okpanachi, 2010). It becomes a matter of Muslims versus Christians; Northerners versus Southerners; Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo against each other, and so on (Adefemi, 2003; Lewis & Bratton, 2000). For instance, after the 1951 division of Nigeria into three regions by Governor Macpherson, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe – an Easterner and his party the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) won the Western Region to become the premier of the region. However, he was denied power by the west through a late mid-night cross carpeting of Yoruba NCNC parliamentarians to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group (AG) – a Westerner, an act that forced Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to return to the East and become the premier (Ifedayo, 2013; Nwankwo, 2015). According to the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, the NCNC would have produced the four central ministers due to the Western Region as well as its representatives in the Central Legislature. That would have given NCNC a majority position in the Central Legislature as well as eight possible indigenous ministers in the central Council of Ministers. Thus with Dr. Azikiwe as premier of the Eastern region under an NCNC government in the 1950s, the foundation of regional politics of North, East, and West was laid solidly. This extends to the struggle among centers of various religious affiliations and ethnic nationalities on who should wield governmental power (Sulaiman, 2009; Ntamu, Abia, Edinyang, & Eneji, 2014), and whoever does so tends to use the instrumentalities of power to advance the sectorial fortunes and goals.

Although Southwestern Nigeria has a complex religious mix, their various adherents tend to live in harmony because religion has little or no influence on who wields power – personality tussle among people of the same ethnic affiliation. The region's strong socio-cultural and political institutions that metamorphosed from the old pre-colonial empires and interests determine political outcomes. Further, the majority of the residents in the region are of the same tribe whose tribal interest stands supreme. This accounts for the nature of crises in the region that has to do with Northern interference and imposition of a political stooge to destabilize and subordinate the region to its own supremacy. This manifested in the Action Group crisis of 1962 that weakened the party and led to the declaration of the state of emergency in the region. The Northern-controlled federal government repeated this during the 1983 general elections in Oyo and Ondo states that led to the worst electoral crises in the history of Nigerian elections. Every other conflict in the region is characteristically reprisal in nature and involves the Yorubas and Hausa/Fulanis irrespective of religious affinity and politics (Ojo, 2014; Ibeanu & Momoh, 2008).

Indeed, ethno-religious groups and their activities tend to bolster or undermine political legitimacy or legitimize political regimes (Haynes, 1994; Juergensmeyer, 1995) depending on the affiliation of the regime in power and the group concerned. Fox (1997) and Fox & Sandier (2003) adequately observed that religion has the capability of shaping all forms of a group's political and social activities. It mobilizes the faithful both for protest and for rebellion against the status quo, and/or in support of their own members when they are in power (Fox & Sander, 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Fox, 1999). For instance, in Zamfara, the state governor Ahmed Sani Yerima established the Sharia penal code in its legal system as a fulfillment of his promises during his electioneering campaign, and this led to the popularization and victory of his party - the All People's Party (APP) in the state and neighborhoods in subsequent elections (Obadare, 2006). This was similar to Ibrahim Shekarau's experience in Kano state between 2003 and 2011(Wakili, 2009).

Further to this, political parties are formed along ethnic lines and political candidates are nominated or appointed along ethnic and religious lines. In the First Republic, the North/Hausa-Fulani formed the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Igbos formed the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) while the Yoruba formed the Action Group (AG) (Cohen, 1968). In the Second Republic, these parties were transformed into the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) respectively (Edoh, 2001). In the Third Republic, the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) along conventional lines to break the ethnicized political system, and the nomination of only Southerners who doubled as Yorubas as presidential candidates orchestrated the annulment of its elections of June 12, 1993.

This scenario with its winner-take-all syndrome occasioned civil strife, secession or breakaway attempts, minority nervousness, emergent social activists and groups, religious terrorist organizations and ethnic militias (such as the Maitatsine, the Isala movement, the Shiites, and Boko Haram, etc.), and violent clashes/conflicts (Nwankwo, 2015; Fayemi, 2011; Osaghae & Suberu 2005). Certainly, ethnic identity and mobilization, and the dynamics of ethno-religious contestations became primary sources of conflicts in Nigeria (Warner, 2012; Okpanachi, 2010) that reached its apogee in the Nigeria civil war of 1967 – 1970. Similar conflicts generated by ethno-religious identities are the Agbekoya revolt of 1968-1969, the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, the Kaduna Sharia riots of 2000, the Ondo post-Election violence 1983, the Zangon Kataf crisis of 1992, the Ugep-Idomi war of 1992, the TIV- Jukun conflicts of 1997, the Mangu-Bokkos conflict of 1995, and the Ife-Modakeke crisis of 1997. Others include the Reinhard Boonke riot of 1991, the 1995 Tafawa Belewa crisis in Bauchi state, the October 2000 Idi-Araba/Oko-Oba conflicts in Lagos and Kano, the Tiv – Junkun conflict of September 2001, and the Boko haram Islamic insurgency among others (Warner, 2012; Shehu, 2011; Kura, 2010; Enukora, 2005). Over two million people died during the civil war while more than 11,000 deaths resulted from over five hundred incidents of communal and religious conflicts between 1999 and 2013 alone. The number increased tremendously between 2015 and 2020. It is more objective to state that the human costs of these conflicts particularly in the Niger Delta, the Northeast, Southeast, and the middle-belt among others can only be estimated. Consequently,

religion and ethnicity are prevailing major issues and concepts in political discourse, policies, and actions in the Nigerian state (Ikelegbe 2001; Salawu 2010).

In addition to political massacre and the introduction of military combatant tactics of Operation Python Dance, Operation Crocodile Smile 1&2, Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Sharan Daji, Operation Awatse, Operation Shirin Harbi, Harbin Kunama 1&2, and Operation Dokaji, the federal government embarked on conscious political and policy efforts since 1999 to address their root causes or sources. Further, various political regimes set up and inaugurated different security outfits such as Peace Corps, Civil Defence, Joint Task Force (JTF), as well as granted amnesty and approved amnesty programs for agitators. These efforts are expected to promote national integration, peace, and foster good economic progress (Mu'asu 2011; Egharevba and Chiazor, 2013), yet the crisis of insecurity and ethno-religious contestations are exacerbating.

Consequently, this paper explores the impact of politics on the phenomenon of ethno-religious struggle and human insecurity in Nigeria since 1999 with the specific goal of finding answers to the following questions:

1. Have ethno-religious struggles contributed to the emergence of major conflicts in Nigeria since 1999?
2. Have the major conflicts in Nigeria since 1999 reduced human insecurity?
3. Has politics made a significant positive impact on ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria since 1999?

2. Materials and Methods

This paper adopts logical inquiry, a survey of the literature, and ex post facto methods of data gathering. Central to these methods, an extensive literature review was conducted to generate data because of the wealth of literature, debates, and criticisms available on politics, ethnic, and religious conflicts in Nigeria. This method used library documents (both private and public) wherein published materials such as books, journals, workshop and lecture papers, and government publications are preserved. The research equally explored available and relevant works and documents found online on the internet at different websites.

The data generated were analyzed using trend analysis wherein description and comparison of policies and behaviors and their outcomes using common sense took place. The method here was to determine the applicable variables, their empirical indices, and thereafter, the relationships and causative interactions among the indices of the variables within the period of study. The analysis specifically examined the role politics played in such relationships or interactions. Based on the findings thereof, inferences emerged.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Marxist Structural Conflict Theory as its framework for understanding and explaining the nexus between politics, ethno-religious contestation, and human insecurity in Nigeria. The primary proposition of the theory is that contestations or struggles and conflicts arise in a society when the authoritative distribution of commonly owned resources, power, and status is perceived to be uneven among the components of such society. It further holds that

such contestation and conflicts are instruments of social change, reconfiguration of the existing social structure, and total transformation of the social system (Marx, 1970).

Accordingly, Coser (1957) traced the cause of conflicts to efforts by aggrieved and frustrated groups/individuals to increase their share of gratification, status, and power acquisition in the prevailing order. Their demands usually encounter stiff resistance from dominant interests in the prevailing pattern of distribution of the ophelimity of life and power. The resistance is projected and maintained through centralized and highly personalized forms of governance, insufficient accountability of leaders, lack of regime transparency, inadequate checks and balances, and non-adherence to the rule of law. Others are absent democratic practices, lopsided political appointments and revenue allocation, absence of devolution of power, lack of minority rights, and absence of balance of power between the levels of government, marginalization, exclusion, and domination.

The prevalence of the above manifestations in Nigeria led to the emergence of insurgencies and agitations such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), Boko Haram Insurgency, etc. Empirically, the theory explains the current cases of revolts, agitations, separatist tendencies, and demands for autonomy, etc. that have engulfed the Nigerian state. Equally, it enables the inquiry to explain the reasons for and effects of different policies and reforms that evolved as political interventions to resolve the contestations. The theory is therefore germane for the study.

4. Results

4.1. Ethno-religious struggles and the emergence of major conflicts in Nigeria since 1999

Historically, the interacting forces i.e. the ethnic nationalities and religions that led to the evolution of Nigeria were never mutual and complementary but conflictual, while the nature of their interactions structured the character of the state and its organs of governance. Through jihad, Islamic religion came in through the Northern axis to confront members of the indigenous African Traditional Religion (ATR) with totalitarian philosophy and the dictum of be-a-Muslim-or-die. On the other hand, Christianity came in pragmatically through the Southern coastal areas of the Niger-Delta region in the 15th century with humanitarian philosophy and appeal to convert non-Christians (Fafunwa, 1968; Sanusi, 2003). However, members of the indigenous African Traditional Religion (ATR) resisted the two alien religions, their subordinate tendencies, and exploitations (Morrison, 1982; Dan-Fulani and Fuswak, 2002). This resulted in the struggle by the three religions to win people and increase their membership through conversion (Obadare, 2006; Nwankwo et al., 2009; Sodiq, 2009). Each sought to obliterate the teachings and belief system of the other and sway their members to their own organization.

Each of the three religions targeted the conversion of the kings and traditional rulers of various indigenous nationalities and their use as an instrument for the conversion and administration of their subjects (Ntamu, Abia, Edinyang, & Eneji, 2014). This strategy became efficient and effective because most of their subjects accepted whichever religion their kings and traditional

rulers endorsed (Sodiq, 2009). For instance, Ntamu, Abia, Edinyang, & Eneji (2014, p. 304) observed that;

> *… Islam was easily accepted by the Yoruba's because it had passed through the kings and chiefs who had desperately wanted sufficient answers to some of their various traditional and spiritual problems, these answers were also in tandem with some of the traditional Yoruba cultural practices which Christianity tended to abolish or discarded.*

It is therefore my considered opinion that for whatever purpose it serves, religion became an instrument in the hands of kings and leaders for resolving the challenges of their nationalities. In addition, religious organizations began to struggle for the conversion of political leaders to their faith and/or to enthrone their members as political leaders to serve their interests. Consequently, the contestations between the three religions extended from campaigning for membership to securing political positions and using such positions to actualize other goals. Ethnicity and religion became twin instruments of political cohesion and political mobilization (Okune, 2011). The three factors i.e. ethnic, religious, and political interests became sacrosanct after the 1914 amalgamation. Since then, ethno-religious rhetoric has leveraged claims to political representation and opportunities, and marginalization and exclusivity that lead to bitter political complaints, intense and lawless competition, and sectarian crises that often degenerate into fierce zero-sum conflicts and even civil war as experienced in 1967-1970 (Owuamanam, et al., 2009; Oyegbile & Abdulrafiu, 2009; Lancaster, 1991). Therefore, ethno-religious identities in Nigeria became harbingers of violence.

In all, religious contestation and animosity constructed ethnic struggles and has generated more violence and killings than any other institutional forces in Nigerian history (see Lefebure, 2000). Akpanika (2017, p. 1) noted, "In one conflict after another around the world, religious convictions and interpretations of revelation have been used and abused as justifications for violence [and war] … religion has been used and abused to promote wars, violence, and hatred among humans." Equally, Azumah (2008, p. 1) noted, "The deepest tragedy of the history of religions is that the very movements that should bring human beings closer to each other and to their ultimate source and goal have time again become forces of division." Nigeria's experience is on the contrary.

The establishment of the Sharia penal code in Zamfara state's legal system led to the spread of *Shariacracy* across the entire Northern states following its adoption by 11 other states after Zamfara. This provoked serious Christian agitation and opposition in the North (Imo, 2008) that culminated in mass protest and conflict in Kaduna by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in 2000 (Angerbradt, 2011; Yusufari, 2004). The literature has already and painstakingly established the nexus between religion and conflicts but Nigeria's experience points to political factors as an intervening variable in their relationship. The foregoing analysis explores the influence or impact of the variable on the temerity and expansion of such conflicts since 1999.

After the military handed over power to civilians headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo - a Southerner and a Christian, ethno-religious conflicts significantly and periodically erupted in different parts of Nigeria particularly the North. Four of these conflicts, that is, the Sharia riot in

Kaduna in 2000, the Jos conflict, the 2011 post-election violence in some northern states, and the Boko haram insurgency are hereafter explored in detail. The primary hypothesis here is that struggle for power and authority between and among the North and South is propelled by age-long religious contestation for dominance.

Typically, Kaduna state in northern Nigeria consists of Hausa-Fulani Muslims who occupy mainly the northern part and the Hausa Christians who are dominant occupants of the southern part with both claiming to have greater population and struggling to control the seat of authority and power in the state – governorship position. Christians have been in control of the state power for a long leading to tension among the various ethno-religious groups (Angerbrandt, 2011). However, the ascendency of a Muslim to power in 1999 paved the way to change the status quo. Among other policies, the state government introduced and began to implement the Sharia legal Code in the year 2000 against the Constitutional provision of a secular state. When the bill proposing the implementation of the Sharia legal code was introduced in the State House of Assembly in January 2000, Christians mobilized thousands of their members on February 21, 2000, against the bill while Muslims organized rallies in support of it. This degenerated into a severe bloody conflict between Muslims and Christians (Angerbrandt, 2011; Sanusi, 2009) that lasted for three days with human and material costs.

In addition to the Kaduna conflict, another erupted in September 2001 at Jos city in Plateau state. There was pre-existing acrimony between the non-Muslim communities of Berom, Anguata, Afizare, and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim communities over religious and political issues dating back to the 19th century Fulani jihad. The non-Muslims resisted the Jihadists, which led to the parallel existence of the two and their subsequent marriage of mutual suspicion as a state under British colonialism. Since then politics or leadership in the city particularly in Jos North local government became a matter of struggle between Hausa-Fulani Muslims and the Christian natives struggling to occupy the seat of power and authority. This has continued to generate perennial crises or conflicts in Jos (Onapajo, 2011).

Consequently, the wave of introducing Sharia legal code in most of the Northern states during 2000/2001 nurtured the fear in Jos that Muslims in the state were also facilitating the Islamization of Plateau state and therefrom dominate them. Thus, when Mallam Mukhtar Muhammed - a Hausa Muslim - was appointed director of the federal government poverty alleviation program for Jos North local government in September 2001, the native Christians opposed it vehemently. They perceived it as an instrument to empower and advance the political and economic interests of Muslims. This opposition eventually led to a bloody confrontation between the Hausa-Fulani Muslim and the Christian communities. Similarly, during the 2008 Jos North local government election wherein a Christian and a Muslim contested as the candidates of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) respectively, the Muslims had already started protesting against alleged massive rigging of the election by the state-controlled electoral body even before the results were declared (Ostien, 2009). This protest equally led to many deaths, displacements, and the destruction of cars and buildings.

Adjunct to previous conflicts, the 2011 post-electoral conflict that occurred mainly in Northern Nigeria, which started in Kaduna was unprecedented in Nigeria's electoral history both in character and dimensions. Following the doctrine of the rotational presidency, Alhaji Shehu Yara'Adua – a former governor of Kaduna state, a northerner, and a Muslim was elected as president in 2007 with Goodluck Jonathan – a Christian and southerner as vice under the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Unfortunately, Yara'Adua died after one year and his deputy took over power as stipulated by the constitution. The Muslim North protested unsuccessfully against Goodluck's take-over of power. This led to their resolve to ensure his failure during the 2011 general elections. In the April 16, 2011, presidential election, President Goodluck Jonathan of PDP – a southerner and Christian, and General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) – a northerner and Muslim were the main contenders to the throne. In the contestation, violence in the form of bombings, arson, and terror attacks characterized the campaign period. When the life collation and announcement of the results began to indicate that Jonathan had a clear lead in the South even before the announcement of the final results, the Muslim north went on a rampage in Kaduna alleging massive rigging in favor of PDP. The staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Youth Corps members serving as INEC ad-hoc staff, Christians, and northern elites perceived to have supported the PDP were attacked by Muslim youths. When Jonathan was finally declared winner, the violent protest in Kaduna spread rapidly to other parts of the North where the protesters even attacked some of their traditional rulers whom they perceived as Jonathan loyalists such as Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar (the Sultan of Sokoto); Alhaji Ado Bayero (the Emir of Kano); Alhaji Sheu Idris (the Emir of Zazzau), etc.

In addition to the above campaign against the victory of Goodluck, Boko Haram – an Islamic terrorist sect known originally as Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda' Wat, Wal Jihad emerged to oppose the western education, institutional prototype, and culture perceived as a threat to traditional Islamic values and beliefs. Although established in 1995 (Langmang, 2011; Uzodike & Maingwa, 2012), they actively began the campaign for the introduction of Sharia Penal Code all over the country, and if not, the establishment of a separate Islamic state (Ogege, 2013; Meehan and Spaier, 2011). The sect embarked on an unrestricted regional campaign and grew to establish functioning branches and camps in Yobe, Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Abuja – the Federal Capital, Bauchi and Gombe states (Ayodeji, Abimbola &Adenipekun, 2014; Fawole, 2013), and even dispatch their fighters to every part of Nigeria for covert operations (Abimbola & Adosote, 2012; Aloejewa 2012). The bombing of churches, mosques, markets, police stations, military bases and security checkpoints, schools/higher institutions and government-owned properties/interests as well as privately owned properties, kidnapping and slaughtering of individual victims (Olaide, 2013) characterized their activities.

It is my contention that it is not the cohabitation of ethnic diversities or campaign for membership expansion among the religious groups that orchestrated the conflicts in Nigeria since 1999 but the struggle for political power and the control of the authoritative allocation of values in a skewed federated Nigerian state among Muslims and Christians. Falola's (1998, p.50) earlier observation that "loyalty to religion is often more important than loyalty to [ethnic

affiliation and] the state among Nigerians" supports this position. This is because religion is a veritable instrument in the hands of political elites to wipe up sentiments and mobilize ethnic-oriented mass support for the actualization of their interests. This tends to generate arms twisting and clash/conflict between one religious group and the other using political platform to advance their expansion programs, which began as far back as 1804 via Jihad and later Christianisation.

4.2. The impact of major conflicts in Nigeria since 1999 on Human Insecurity

During the three days of conflict between the Muslims and Christians over the introduction of Sharia by the Kaduna state government, 609 people were killed, 123 churches and 55 mosques were burnt, while 1,944 houses and 746 vehicles were burnt and/or vandalized. In addition, 125,000 people were displaced (Angerbrandt, 2011). In addition to the Kaduna mayhem, the 2001 Jos conflict led to the death of 915 people and the destruction of several properties worth millions of Naira (Reuters, 23 January 2010). The human and material costs of the 2011 electoral conflict were grave and enormous. Many Youth Corps members serving as election ad-hoc staff were killed. 520 people including 6 police officers were killed in Kaduna and Niger states alone. 157 churches, 46 mosques, 1,435 houses, 437 vehicles, and 219 motorcycles were burnt. Human Rights Watch reports revealed that 800 were killed during the violence across Northern Nigeria (Tell, 27 April 2011; TheNews, 2 May 2011).

It is impossible to document fully the entire human and material casualties inflicted by Boko Haram on Nigerians because of the closed nature of society and Nigeria's level of technological development. However, table 1 below exhibits some cases of human and material costs of Boko Haram attacks for purposes of authenticating the position of this paper.

Table 1: Some of the Boko Haram Attacks between 2007 and 2015

N.	Date	Location	Nature of Attacks	Remarks
1	July 26, 2009	Bauchi	5 days uprising and attack on a police station that spread to Maiduguri, Borno, Yobe, and Kano	Over 800 people killed
2	July 27, 2009	Yobe	Attack on Potiskum, Yobe State Divisional Police Headquarters	3 Policemen and 1 fire service officer died.
3	March 13, 2010	Plateau	Churches and markets	300 people killed
4	June 8, 2010	Maiduguri	Bomb & gun attacked a Catholic church in Maiduguri	10 killed, 68 wounded, 23 people displaced & 3 buildings burnt
5	June 17, 2010	Abuja	Boko Haram Hit Police HQR in Abuja	2 killed, 20 wounded, 38 cars & 140 others items damaged
6	September 7, 2010	Bauchi	Attacked Prisons	killed 5 and freed over 700 inmates
7	October 1 2010	Abuja	Explosions near the Eagle Square	12 people killed &many injured.
8	October 11, 2010	Maiduguri	Bombing/gun attack on a police station	destroys the station and injures three
9	December 24 2010	Barkin Ladi, Jos	Bomb attack	Eight people killed
10	December 28, 2010	Jos	Christmas eve bomb attack on a church	38 people killed
11	December 31, 2010	Abuja	The group attack a Mammy market at Army Mogadishu Barracks	11 people killed

12	7 January 21, 2011	Maiduguri	Attack on politicians	8 persons killed including ANPP governorship candidate
13	Feb 17, 2010	Borno	Boko Haram/Military Bloody clash in Borno	3 people killed, 23 injured, 30 displaced & 25 houses burnt
14	March 2 2011	Kaduna State	The residence of the Mustapha Sandamu	2 policemen killed
15	March 30, 2011	Damaturu, Yobe	Bomb attack	injured a police officer
16	April 8, 2011	Niger State	Bombing of INEC office in Suleja	Killed 8 Corps members
17	April 9 2011	Unguwar Maiduguri	Bomb explosion @ a polling unit	Killed 17 people and many injured
18	April 22, 2010	Yola	Boko Haram frees prisoners in Yola	14 prisoners freed
19	April 29 2011	Bauchi state	Army Barracks in Bauchi bombed	No death
20	May 29, 2011	Bauchi State	Explosion at mammy market of Shandawanka barracks	claimed 18 lives and left many injured
21	May 30 2011	Maiduguri	Bombs exploded early morning on Baga road in	13 persons died and 40 injured
22	June 7, 2011	Maiduguri	Series of bomb blasts	claimed five lives and injured many others
23	June 16, 2011	Abuja	Bombing of Nigerian Police Headquarters	three killed and many vehicles damaged
24	June 16, 2011	Maiduguri	bomb blast at Damboa town	Four children killed
25	June 20, 2011	Katsina State	Attack on Kankara Police station	9 policemen killed
26	June 27, 2011	Borno	Blast/Explosion and Gun attacks	30 people killed, 66 wounded, 75 displaced & several Houses burnt
27	June 28, 2011	Borno	Bombed Custom House	3 people killed, 9 wounded, Several cars and 3 buildings burnt
28	July 9, 2011	Maiduguri	A clash between Boko Haram and the military	31 persons killed
29	July 11 2011	Kaduna State	Tragic explosion at a relaxation joint in Fokados street	Many people killed
30	July 12, 2011	Borno State	Bomb explosive device on a moving military patrol vehicle	5 persons killed
31	July 15, 2011	Borno State	Explosion in Maiduguri	Injured five people
32	July 23, 2011	Borno State	Explosion near the palace of the Shehu of Borno	Injured three soldiers
33	July 25, 2011	Maiduguri	Bomb explosion near the palace of the traditional ruler	Eight persons died
34	August 21, 2011	Abuja	UN Headquarters (Abuja)	Injured many workers
35	August 25, 2011	Maiduguri	Bank robbery	killed 12 people & removed an undisclosed sum of money
36	August 26, 2011	Abuja	Bombing @ UN building	25 persons killed and 60 injured
37	September 12, 2011	Bauchi State	Bomb attack on a police station in Misau	Seven people, including four policemen
38	September 13, 2011	Maiduguri	Armed attack on a military vehicle	injured four solders
39	October 3, 2011	Maiduguri	Attack on Baga Market	3 people killed

40	October 17, 2011	Gombe	Gombe Mobile Barracks Blast	4 people were killed, 11 wounded & 2 buildings damaged
41	November 4, 2011	Yobe state	Attacks of Damaturu villages	150 people killed, 108 wounded & 400 displaced
42	December 24, 2011	Jos	Bomb attack churches and markets	80 people killed
43	December 25, 2011	Niger State	Christmas Day bombing in Madalla	50 people died
44	December 30, 2011	Maiduguri	Bomb attacks	Seven people killed
45	January 5, 2012	Gombe state	Bomb attack in a church	Six people died
46	January 6, 2012	Yola	Bomb attack in a Christ Apostolic Church	17 people died while 20 Igbo people were also killed in Mubi
47	January 20, 2012	Kano State	Bomb attacks	250 people killed in multiple attacks
49	January 22, 2012	Bauchi State	Attacks in churches and the headquarters of Tafawa Balewa Local Govt Area	Two churches were destroyed, two military personnel, a DPO, and eight civilians killed
49	February 10, 2012	Kano	Attacked a Police Station in Shagari Quarters	Many injured
50	February 15, 2012	Kogi State	Caused Jail Break in Koton Karji Prisons	A warder killed and 199 prisoners released
51	April 26 2012	Abuja	Bombing of three media houses	killed 8 people & injured 13 people
52	April 29, 2012	Kano	Attack on Bayero University, Kano	Killed 14 Christian worshippers, & two Professors
53	April 30, 2012	Jalingo	Bomb explosion	11 persons killed & several others wounded
54	February 10, 2013	Potiskum in Yobe State	the kidnapping of the construction workers	three North Korean doctors were killed
55	February 16, 2013	Jama'are, Yobe	Attack and kidnapping	kidnapped seven foreign construction workers & killed a security employee
56	April 16, 2013	Bayero Univ. Kano	Bomb blast	16 people killed in two Sunday services
57	April 12, 2013	Kano	Attacks and JTF clash in Kano	21 people were killed
58	April 24, 2013	Borno state	Massacre at Baga Borno state	105 people killed, 210 injured, and over 150 displaced
59	April 26, 2013	Yobe	Terror attack	25 people killed, 38 people injured
60	May 7 2013	Borno State	Attacks in Bama	killing 55 persons, including 22 policemen and 14 prison officials
61	May 8 2013	barrack in Bama, Yobe	Terror attacked on Army Barracks	55 people killed, 45people injured
62	May 8 2013	Borno State	Abduction/Kidnapping	abducted women & Children, 55 people killed, 67 wounded
63	June 2013	Damaturu, Yobe state	Attack on public schools	13 people, including secondary school students and teachers
64	June 14, 2013	Jajeri suburb of the city of Maiduguri	Attack on public schools	nine students were killed in a private school
65	July 11, 2013	Yobe State	Attack on public schools	Killed 29 students and one

				teacher
66	August 17, 2013	Borno State	Attacks on a riot police base in Bamaand & the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) base in Malam Fatori	thirty-five people, including two soldiers and a policeman, were killed
67	August 21-24, 2013	Borno state	Attack on secondary schools	destroyed 882 classrooms
68	Sept 29, 2013	Gujba	Armed Attack on College of Agric. in Gujba	Killed 40 people
69	Jan 11, 2014	Konduga LGA, Borno	Attacks	85 people killed
70	Jan 14, 2014	Maiduguri	Bombing/Explosion	31 killed, 50 injured
71	Feb 11, 2014	Konduga LGA, Borno	Attacks and Bomb explosion	39 people killed, 1 mosque and more than 1,000 homes were razed to the ground
72	Feb 16, 2014	Izghe massacre	Attacks	105 killed
73	Feb 14, 2014	Yobe	Mass murder of College student in Yobe	43 people killed
74	Feb 14, 2014	Maiduguri	Bombing & raiding villages	74 people killed, 54 wounded, & over 200 displaced, 34 buildings burnt
75	Feb 25, 2014	Federal Govt College, Buni Yadi	Attacks	59 students & buildings burnt
76	March 2, 2014	Maiduguri	Bombing & raiding villages	300 people killed, 250 wounded, & over 200 people displaced, 45 buildings burnt
68	April 14, 2014	Bus stand, Abuja	Bomb blast	71 people killed
69	May 6, 2014	Gamboru, Borno	Villages were invaded in the night	Over 300 people killed
70	June 2, 2014	Gwoza, Borno	Attack and massacre of villagers	270 people killed
71	June 22, 2014	Kano state school of Hygiene	Bombing	230 people were killed
72	Jan 3-7, 2015	Baga, Borno state	Attacks and invasion	190 people killed, houses burnt & 2000 people missing
73	Feb 26, 2015	Biu and Jos.	Bomb blast	35 people killed
74	March 28, 2015	Dukku in Gombe	Gun men attack	15 voters killed

Sources: Review of Literature, 2020

A synthesis of the above terror attacks on Nigerians since 1999 reveals that there were raids and attacks of different forms, killings/deaths, disabilities, displacements, forced migrations, fear, hunger, kidnapping, arson, closure of schools, destruction of properties and infrastructure and stealing among others. Because these products of the conflicts are major aspects of human insecurity, it is therefore innocuous to infer that ethno-religious conflict is one of the primary roots of human insecurity in Nigeria.

4.3. The role of politics in the prevalence or mitigation of the conflicts

Due to the persistent, disruptive, and disintegrative nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, respective civilian governments and political parties since 1999 have taken some

political steps through policy innovations to remove the factors that generate marginalization, exclusion, fear, and tensions among the various ethnic nationalities and religious groups. They embarked on reforms to adjust rules, processes, and procedures in the political system. These are the introduction of the rotational presidency, the creation of six geopolitical zones, creation and empowerment of public institutions such as the Commission of the Economic and Financial crime (EFCC). Others include the introduction of Christian/Muslim tickets, zoning formula for all political appointments and projects implementation, the democratization of the electoral system to pave way for mass participation, a convocation of National Political Reforms Conferences, and the public services reforms among others.

However, as documented by Nkwede, Udu, & Oluwaseun (2019, pp. 36-39) and many other researchers, these political interventions to resolve the perennial ethno-religious driven political conflicts seem to be futile and ineffective. Even while the interventions were on course, there was resistance predominantly from the Northern Hausa-Fulani Muslims against any reform or change that is perceived as a threat to their continued dominance and exploitation of others. Some of these resistances translated into conflicts. We hereby present in table 2 below a summary of selected cases of these conflicts since 1999 and their roots.

Table 2: Trends of Religiously induced conflicts in Nigeria, 1999-2019

s/n	Date	State	Nature of the Conflict	Outcome
1	1/07/1999	Sagamu, Ogun State	Violent clashes between Yoruba traditional worshipers and Hausa groups because of the killing of a Hausa woman by the Oro Masqueraders for violating traditional rites.	The causality figure was not reported
2	22/7/1999	Kano	Reprisal to the Sagamu crisis of 1/7/1999	The causality figure was not reported
3	20/12/1999	Kwara	Muslim fundamentalists attacked and destroyed over 14 Christian churches in Ilorin	An unspecified number of deaths and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed
4	21/2/2000	Kaduna	Christian organized riots and resistance over the introduction of Sharia legal code by the state government	Over 3000 people were killed
5	28/2/2000	Aba and Umuahia in Abia state	Reprisal action to the Kaduna crisis of 21/2/2000	Over 450 people were killed
6	8/9/2000	Kaltungo - Gombe	Christian organized riots and resistance over the introduction of Sharia legal code by the state government	Total casualties not reported
7	12/10/2001	Kano	Protest over US invasion of Afghanistan over Osama bin Laden.	Over 150 persons were killed
8	7-17/9/2001	Jos	A religious riot between Muslims and Christians caused by the killing of a woman who attempted to cross a public high-way barricaded by Muslim worshipers on Friday	Over 300 people were killed while Mosques, churches, and several properties were destroyed
10	16/11/2001	Kaduna	Muslims attacked Christians in churches because of Isioma Daniel's article in This Day newspaper, alleging that Prophet Mohammed would have loved to have the girls	Over 250 people were killed and many churches destroyed
11	8/6/2004	Nuwan - Adamawa	The conflict between Christians and Muslims because the town's central Mosque located close to Bachama paramount ruler's palace	17 people were killed

12	18/12/2006	Maiduguri - Borno	Religious conflict between Christians and Muslims caused by the Danish cartoon on Prophet Mohammed that was published in the Jyllands-Posten newspaper	Over 50 persons were killed, 30 churches burnt, over 200 shops, 50 houses, and 100 vehicles vandalized
13	28/11/2008	Jos - Plateau	Religions violence between Muslims and Christians caused by the Muslims rejection of the results of a local election	Over 700 people were killed and thousands displaced from their homes
14	21/2/2009	Makama New Extension - Bauchi	Ethno-religious conflict	Over 11 people were killed, more than 400 houses burnt, and over 1,600 families displaced
15	26/7/2009	Bauchi Borno, Kano, Yobe	Boko Haram mayhem on Christians	Over 700 persons were killed, 3,500 displaced, and several properties destroyed
16	29/12/2009	Bauchi	Religious violence unleashed by the Kala-Kato sect on Christians	Over 38 persons were killed, and over 1000 displaced
17	17/1/2009	Jos - Plateau	Resurgence of religious crisis	Over 550 people were killed and Over 40,000 persons displaced
18	7/3/2010	Dogo Nahawa, Shen, and Fan in Jos	Fulani Muslims attack on Christian dominated villages	Over 500 people were killed
19	29/8/2011	Rukuba road and Farin Gada in Jos	Clashes between Muslims and Christians during the Ramadan prayers	Over 20 persons were killed, 50 injured, over 50 motor vehicles and 100 motorcycles were destroyed
20	26/8/2011	UN House, Abuja	Suicide bombing by Boko Haram Islamists	23 persons were killed
21	5/11/2011	Potiskum, Damaturu and Maiduguri	Coordinated attacks on churches and police stations by suspected Boko Haram Islamists	Over 90 persons were killed, several churches and police stations destroyed
22	25/12/2011	Madala, Niger State	Bombing	Over 45 persons were killed, over 80 others sustained injuries
23	5/1/2012	Mubi - Adamawa State	Boko Haram militants stormed a gathering of Igbo Christians and started shooting sporadically for their refusal to leave the North	Over 22 people were killed and a dozen others were injured
24	4/5/2013	Taraba	Fight between Christian and Muslim groups during the funeral procession	Over 39 people were killed
25	12/12/2015	Zarai Kaduna state	Clash between Nigerian Army and the Shiite minority	Over 700 people were killed and injured
26	August 2016	Onitsha Anambra State	Clash between Nigerian security operatives and Biafran protesters agitating for the secession of the Eastern region from Nigeria	Over 80 protesters were killed, over 400 others arrested, detained or imprisoned
27	19/10/2018	Kaduna State	Christian Adaras and Muslim Hausa youths clashed	55 persons were killed and many properties damaged
28	25/1/2019	St. Ignatius Catholic Church Mbalom, Benue State	Fulani-Muslim attack on worshipers	19 people were killed including 2 priests

29	14/4/2019	Kochum-Numa, Andaha villages in Akwanga L.G.A. Benue	Invasion by Fulbe speaking Fulani Muslims	17 people were killed and many others injured
30	17/3/2010	Adara chiefdom Southern Kaduna	Attack by the Fulani militia on Christian communities	120 people were killed, hundreds injured, and many houses burnt

Source: Survey of Literature

5. Discussion

Anecdotal evidence in the literature shows that the cohabitation of ethnic diversities in Nigeria did not orchestrate conflicts but the contestations generated by two alien religions – Islam and Christianity over membership expansion and acquisition of political power in skewed federated Nigeria is the primary root of such conflicts. Religion became an instrument for acquiring power by ethnic hegemons for the propagation of their bloc interests and becomes an infinitesimal force when such interest is threatened. This explains why the ethno-religious conflict has often been between the core Muslim North and the rest of the country, and not within the other regions like the Southwest that have indigenous Muslim populations and other religious affiliations. The southern Muslims are not only in the minority but have similar ethnic agenda with their non-Muslim counterparts, a phenomenon that renders ethno-religious crisis infinitesimal among them. Chief Moshood Abiola, though a Muslim was denied presidential power because he was not a northerner and this led to a monumental crisis in 1992 sponsored by all Yorubas and other Southerners mainly irrespective of religion. To curtail the emerging violence associated with it, Chief Ernest Shonekan from the same tribe and state was appointed interim president only to be removed three months after by the Northern Muslim military oligarchy.

Therefore, politics is an intervening variable in the ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. This observation corroborates Afolabi's (2015, p. 42) view that "these religions are intertwined with political activities in the country. The political office holders are misusing religion as a tool to get to power while religious leaders are mishandling it to get personal gain from those who hold public office." Scholars like Omoregbe (2003), Enwerem (1995), Kukah (2003), and Atubi (2007) earlier maintained that religious doctrines, interests, and expansion are major sources of conflict in Nigeria. However, these earlier findings did not establish or investigate the influence of politics on this relationship. The implication of this finding for peace and stability in Nigeria is that government implementation of the letters and spirit of the constitution, which made the country a secular state, in its interventions in religious matters and relationship with religious institutions is an essential factor.

Further, this paper observes that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigerians since 1999 have aggravated the problem of insecurity due to continual raids and attacks of different forms by terror groups. This has resulted in killings/death, disabilities, displacement, forced migration,

fear, hunger, kidnapping, arson, closure of schools, and stealing among others. This finding is synonymous with the popular position in the literature, which holds that ethno-religious conflict is a major source of human insecurity across the globe. Political interventions to resolve the roots causes of the conflict are controversial and prone to resistance because they are perceived as either instruments or methods of perpetuating dominant Hausa/Fulani Muslim interests or challenging such interests because of unhidden and unguarded ethno-religious cleavages exhibited by political officeholders. This explains the intractability of ethno-religious and political conflicts in Nigeria since 1999. This finding collaborates earlier findings made by researchers like Adetoye & Omilusi (2015). It subsists, therefore, that lack of political will to implement policies generated to correct systemic and structural imbalance established during the colonial period and the sabotage of the various National Political Reforms conferences are the fundamental forces sustaining ethno-religious conflicts and their consequences. Thus, the implementation of the 2014 Report of the National Political Reforms Conference that sought to create a fair and equitable political structure is the only panacea for tensions, struggles, and conflicts between ethno-religious nationalities and groups.

6. Conclusions

The entrance of two alien religions – Islam and Christianity generated two levels of civilizations whose struggle for membership/expansion led to phobic political contestation for power and dominance since the amalgamation of albeit independent nationalities in 1914. Consequently, religion and not ethnicity as the primary cause of conflict in Nigeria has a strong correlation with politics and governance. Thus, politics in Nigeria has a symbiotic relationship with religion and ethnicity in generating complex and unending conflicts. The panacea to ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria remains with effective and absolute secularization of the Nigerian state and the dismantling of skewed and defective systemic and structural provisions for alienation, dominance, and exploitation of any of the ethnic nationalities by the other. On this, the implementation of the Report of the National Political reforms Conference is highly recommended.

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