Politics and Religion in Violence

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Abstract

The overt manifestation of violence and the idea of promoting conflict to exploit the contradictions in a system, with the belief that a better system will emerge as a result, has been with man from time immemorial and part of Nigeria's chequered history. This work studies violence rooted in politics and religion in Nigeria. The study seeks to interrogate how the actions and inactions of state and non- state actors is a critical factor in the rise and expansion of violence; whether or not the rationalization of the specific factors of politics and religion in Nigeria is implicated in the preponderance of violent behaviour in Nigeria as well as its peculiar implications for the corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state. The study draws its foundation from the Dialectical strand of Marx's Political Economy theory. Ex-post-facto research design, secondary sources of data collection and qualitative descriptive analysis were used. The study employs context techniques and logical evidence to argue that: the goal-directed actions of individuals to bring about desirable changes in an existing structure or to prevent undesirable ones are directly implicated in the rise and expansion of violent behaviour; the rationalization of specific factors of politics and religion helped to ensure the preponderance of violent behaviour in Nigeria and this have had serious implications for the corporate existence and development of Nigeria as a sovereign state.

Keywords

Politics, Religion, Dialectics, Violence, Political Economy

Introduction

Silence never won rights. They are not handed from above; they are forced by pressures from below
-R.N Baldwin (1184-1981).

The idea of promoting conflict to exploit the contradictions in a system, with the belief that a better system will emerge as a result, has been with man from time immemorial. As such, human society and history are replete with violent behaviours among humans in a complex web of social interaction at different political epochs across states worldwide. This violent behaviour comes in different shades and brands depending on what necessitates it and what goals it seeks to achieve, and Nigeria as a political entity has had its sufficient dosage. As Odozi and Oyelere (2019) rightly noted, a conflict that can snowball into violent demonstrations, outright disorder or even wars if not properly managed by the state has been part of Nigeria's chequered history. The civil war in the 60s, which claimed thousands of lives and has evolved to new threats in different regions and communities in Nigeria is a case in point. Before this period, Nigeria was on a steady path to economic wellbeing that could have positive impacts in other aspects of national life but this was trapped by the pockets of violent disorders which transformed into violent conflicts at different times (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005).

As reported by World Bank data cited by Odozi and Oyelere (2019), Nigeria was one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Between 1960-70, GDP grew at 3.1% annually but grew at 6.2% annually between 1970 and 1978. In the early 1980s, the growth rate was negative but increased to 4% from 1997

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to 1998 and between 2006 and 2014. The heterogeneity in growth has continued in the twenty first century with high rates of 6.9%, 7.8%, 4.9%, 6.2% and 2.7% in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014 and 2015 respectively (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005, Chete, Adeoti, Adeyinka, and Ogundele, 2016, National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). With this progressive, positive growth in the economy of Nigeria at this period, one would ordinarily expect a drastic cut in the triggers of violence and improvement in the overall living condition of all ethnic nationalities in Nigeria in the years ahead but this was not to be. The opposite trend has continued on a nosedive showing that Nigeria is blessed with an abundance of contradictions and ironies built into its political and religious beliefs and practices (Ezekwesili, 2013). Thus, the failure of the state to translate her wealth into wellbeing of its citizens is a factor in the rise of varying degrees of violent behaviours typical of most African Post –colonial states. As violence prevailed in the Nigerian state, part of the consequence is the diversion of development efforts and attention from the things that count to those of security and safety of lives and property as shown by successive budgetary allocation to defence and security matters (www.premiumtimesng.com).

Many factors can impede the development process in a state further worsening civil relations in the state. Violence caused by political and religious factors can cause a lack of development, and lack of development, can also trigger violent behaviours. Old and Recent literature suggest that violence can negatively affect various aspects of national life-economic, health and labour related outcomes. In Nigeria, violence is viewed as a critical variable impeding the development process, but empirical estimates of the political and religious factors that drive it are scant. Scholars have made various attempts at diagnosing the remote and immediate causes or the factors that predispose Nigeria to the chains of violence it has suffered over the years, and their study claimed that the fundamental problems that have challenged Nigerian progress throughout its history remain simmering.

These problems have been ascribed to many complex causes, including its colonial legacy, international intrigue, poverty, political economy, corruption, ethnic tapestry, marginalization, relative deprivation, and cultural and religious conflicts, that leave Nigeria sometimes tottering at the edge of instability and liable to fracturing ((Bouchat, 2013, Adaenyi, 2019, Odozi and Oyelere, 2019). Bouchat, for example, argues that because the political economy of a state is so fundamental to the well-being of humans, the distribution of power and economic gains may be the most volatile of intrastate problems. Thus, there are several cross -country studies suggesting that violence, especially those that have assumed overwhelming dimensions does no good for any state. It has negative effects on investment, savings and economic growth and can derail a state from pursuing and achieving the goals it seeks to achieve as a cooperate entity and the Nigerian state presents no peculiar exception (Alesina and Perotti, 1996, Barro, 1991; Mauro, 1995, Venieris and Gupta, 1986; cited in Odozi and Oyelere, 2019).

The Nigerian news space is covered with various degrees of social unrest, some of which have snowballed into violent behaviours resulting in the wanton destruction of life and property in the state, thereby making Nigeria incapable of competing with other states similarly organized. With more recent deadly surges in various parts of the country leading to various predictions tilting toward the disintegration of the Nigerian state, one wonders if nothing can be done to properly explain and to effectively combat or at least manage this hydra-headed phenomenon that appears to be part of our national life.

No doubt, a lot of theoretical investments have been made to explain the prevalence of violence in Nigeria and perhaps solutions to its current tide. Some of these researches have leaned towards primordial interest, regional sentimentalism, the weak structure of the Nigerian state, colonial legacies and the ungodly unification of various regions that now make up Nigeria, class antagonism syndrome, ethnicity, corruption, poverty, bad leadership, imperialism, the curse of nature etc. The above notwithstanding, the specific problem or worry of this work is that despite the obvious record set by Nigeria and its strategic position in the comity of nations, especially within the African region and West Africa in particular in

driving the African transition to the core, there is a dearth in extant literature that properly links violent behaviour amongst its component units to the nature and character of its politics and religion. It is these two hydra- headed phenomena that constitute the mainstay of this work. Thus, the present study is an attempt to locate political and religious factors in the prevalence of violence and its implication in the ability of Nigeria to exist as a united, indivisibles whole.

The Dialectics of Violence in Nigeria: A Theoretical Explanation

Dialectical materialism, as expanded by Marx and Engels, (1959), provides a comprehensive analysis of society by linking the economy and polity to other structures and institutions in the state (Bouchat, 2013, Eze and Onwo, 2013, Osaghae and Suberu, 2005, Eze, 2002). As such, the core domain of dialectics as a scientific methodology is that, change is the only constant phenomenon in human existence on Earth. Thus, social action remains the most veritable instrument for bringing this change to bear. The theory was however moved from its embryonic state to where it is today by other scholars who share the same or similar radical orientation like Lenin (1984), Andre (1967), Offiong (1976), Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1993), Wallerstein (1974), Chumpeter (1919), Ibeanu (1998), Eze (2002), Nnoli (2003). Being a strand of the political economy model of analysis, its principal propostions include: (1) there is a strong connection between the political and economic structures of society; (2) that the political and economic structures of society give shape to its general norms, values, culture, religion and pattern of governance; (3) that a more comprehensive analysis of society can only be made by understanding the linkages between the economy and polity as well as their dialectical connections to other structures and social institutions and the reverse influence one exercises on the other (Ibeanu, 1998, Osaghae and Suberu, 2005, Bouchat, 2013, Eze and Onwo, 2013).

The study draws attention to the dialectical relations- a form of reverse influence which the superstructure (Politics) exercises on the economic structure and its effect on the members of the state. For Marx, "it is not this consciousness of men that determine their being, but conversely, their being determines their consciousness" hence the adoption of dialectical materialism as it Scientific Method. At the heart of dialectical materialism is the axiom that "everything is in constant state of change" which can only take place through contradictions. Thus, the movement of society is a function of struggle between opposites. Its major strands are:

a.   The interrelatedness of things
b.   The dynamic character of social reality
c.   The primacy of material condition (Ake, 1981:1-4).

The doctrine of dialectical materialism as the theory adopted explains the dialectics of violence in Nigeria. The application of this theory to the understanding of politics and religion in violence suggests that the problem of violence and extremism, order and disorder, law and lawlessness, conflict and peace are to be understood as reflections, perceptions or product of the way society organizes its politics especially the dominant interest that drive it and how it is used (Eze and Onwo, 2013:57). Since the state is thus seen as the most powerful coercive mechanism for the control of these dominant interests as well as the control of all things in Nigeria, the move to capture state power (Politics) would naturally take dominance over the economy itself so that politics become tantamount to good life and wellbeing or otherwise of the people.

Based on the preceding, it seems right to view the position of Osaghae and Suberu, (2005) in this light. According to them, 'the post-colonial era in Nigeria has witnessed two contradictory tendencies. The first trend is the continuation aggravation and proliferation of colonial conflict legacies, leading to at least two waves of violent identity conflicts in Nigeria during 1960-70 and since the early eighties, respectively by the way and manner its politics is managed. The second tendency in post-colonial Nigeria involves a more or less concerted attempt to manage identity conflicts caused by religion and politics through

innovative political and religious federalist practices. Surely, the colonial legacies of economic contradictions, religious polarization and political segmentation of Nigeria through its politics remains at the root of violence in Nigeria. It was heavily implicated in the first wave of violent ethno-political discontent and unrest in the post-colonial era, as evidenced in the Tiv riots of 1962 and 1964, and the secessionist campaign of Isaac Boro and his Ijaw collaborators in 1966, all of which underscored the continuing economic disenchantment and inequitable political incorporation into the one religion-dominated politics of Nigeria which has caused untold friction and violence among the people.

Suffice it to note that poverty manifests a state's socio- economic, religious and political condition. Poverty invariably leads to violence among those that suffer the most. It is the reactive product of the observed gap between those that have and those that do not. Thus, where there is poverty, there is usually an unabated attempt to close up the gap by those who feel far removed from the resources and wealth that should ordinarily be evenly distributed through political instrument. Thus, poverty is directly linked to politics and politics is directly linked to violence in any human society. While the poor, individually or collectively, fight to correct the economic injustices in the political system, the rich devise more subtle means to continually widen the gap or maintain it with the paraphernalia of state apparatuses. Thus, the state becomes the instrument to perpetuate class violence (overt and covert), and keep the various classes within bounds so that they do not consume themselves or destroy the entire political system in the process of this class violence.

Behind violent behaviour in Nigeria are issues related to the struggle to seize, consolidate and use state power to appropriate economic gains of the political system (Nnoli, 2001). A section of the state that feels unwittingly bridled and cheated in the political equation in a state may choose to boycott an election, adopt outright violence to deter participation or even scuttle the entire electoral process. Thus, non-participation or apathetic behaviour to politics manifests political violence. For example, the Indigenous People of Biafra did threaten that the 2021 gubernatorial elections not hold in Anambra state to drive home the need to grant it a separate state. This agitation which later translated to shades of violent behaviours was not just a child of circumstance but a form of protest against the Nigerian state and its politics for the long term marginalization of the region on issues related to the seizure, consolidation and use of state power to better the economic lot of the people.

The Dynamics of Violence in Nigeria
Today, Nigeria has been described as a serious geographic drama acted out by the colonialist who 'united' its diverse people that have proven 'ununitable and 'irreligious' in practice, at least judging by the essence of the later'. In an article entitled: 'the intriguing geography of Nigeria, Olanegan (2022), argued that, the geography and people of Nigeria are loaded with intrigues… made up of three major ethnic nationalities and multiple other minor groups; these major ethnic groups are still very much divided among and within itself and locked in all-time antagonistic relations albeit under the pretense of the 'one Nigeria' mantra'. This antagonistic relationship is aided by the nature and character of politics and religion built into the structure of the Nigerian state.

For example, the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group is divided between the Hausas, Baro and Fulanis. The Yoruba nations are confused about the size and geography of their population. This confusion cut across geographic territory, language, culture and even religion. While the Igbos are traditionally called easterners occupying the eastern belt, their population and religion are poor; defined. The same applies to all other ethnic nationalities that comprise the Nigerian state.

Interestingly, these people are contiguous to northern states and Hausa/ Fulani migrants from Cameroun and the Niger Republic. They have learnt their culture and can now live peacefully/violently with such states as Benue and Taraba. The Niger Delta region is also part of Nigeria, with almost the same level of ambiguity as the Nigerian state. It is believed that certain violent activities in Nigeria carried out by the

Eastern, Western or Northern parts, herders, banditry, eastern kidnapping, rape, and ritualistic activities etc, cannot take place in such places like Warri, Ughelli, Yenagoa or Port Harcourt except the ones permitted and perpetuated by people in the region as a social action against the Nigerian state. The reason(s) for this remains a million dollar question to other parts of the country.

Yorubas erroneously call the Edo people Ibos and believe that Igbos and Christians occupy places like Auchi and Ebonyi, but amazingly, they are occupied largely by Igbos that have turned Muslims (Olanegan, 2022). Places like Akwa Ibom and Cross River are erroneously considered Igbo land by both the north and the Yorubas. It is also believed that their way of life, ideological inclinations, actions, interest and goals align with the Igbo nation. Startlingly, they are not. Places like Kaduna and Maiduguri, found within the northern belt, which has become the epic centre for Boko Haram activities in Nigeria, are home to the most uncommon aesthetic institutions and house more Catholic churches and Christians than thought. Out of the 19 states politically zoned to the north, only states like Sokoto, Zamfara, Bauchi, Jigawa, Kano, and Kastina can completely be called Islamic states, yet the constitution that the Nigerian state operates makes no room for other religions except Islam.

In this same state called Nigeria, the citizen of Nigeria from the north sees Islam as a way of life to govern his marriage, death and burial and his loyalty to the Nigerian state and its dominant class is governed by the dictates of the Quran and Hadiths of the Prophet while existing under a civil/federal constitution. Thus, his relationship with the state cannot be subjected to the dictates of the constitution but that of his religion. Thus, the Nigerian state is brought under two supreme laws- one for the core north and the other for all other parts and peoples in Nigeria.

From this premise, Sharia law and its court would no longer be seen as a favour to that part of Nigeria but a necessity since the 1999 constitution recognizes it. One problem with this is the obvious difficulty in justifying or criminalizing certain actions in Nigeria and the difficulty in justifying the political and religious neutrality of the state in certain actions and decisions. In the case of the former, one act of violence is considered sacrilegious and deviant behaviour against the state, and another is justified as being in tandem with the culture and lifestyle, including religion and the overall pursuit of the people. It is, therefore, difficult, if not impossible, to properly define certain political actions in Nigeria in terms of rightness or otherwise, effect and consequences and most importantly, goals judging from the overall objective for which the Nigerian state exists as a cooperate union… consequent on the above, the actions of the state concerning its members and ethnic nationalities are many times misinterpreted.

While the Hausa/Fulani nation believes in the centrality of decisions arising from collective discussions in their religious places headed by the emir or his surrogate, the Igbos do not believe in such centrality. Naturally, they are described as mercantile and competitive. They do not live in cities or urbanized political socialization like the Yorubas or Hausa/Fulanis. They are generally acephalous and individualistic units devoid of concentrated authority that stirs thought, philosophy or even political or religious decisions. To this extent, it is usually the individual's or commune's interest that matters most and not that of the generality of the Igbo nation: thus, their social action takes this colouration at all times. This explains, in part (though not sufficiently dealt with in the literature), why movements like IPOB cannot be firmly controlled and the violent actions resulting from difficult to manage. Its leadership is not answerable to any central political or religious leadership in Igbo land compared to the west or north that can be summoned, rebuked or stopped should it go counter to the acceptable modus operandi or political or religious objective for which such an ethnic nationality exists in the larger union called Nigeria.

Suffice it to say that this has been the character of the Nigerian state since independence, but this state of affairs appears much more pronounced in recent times with an obvious dearth of extant literature explaining the phenomenon. It thus, seems that the Nigerian state is on an all-time pursuit of parallel

goals and interests which are at the very foundation of violence in the state. This, partly explains why Nigeria has since struggled to transcend the enclaves of a developing state and has, across several Western media, been described as a failed state.

The demand for Nigeria to take her rightful place in global socio-economic and political configuration has grown geometrically in recent times, and this has heightened the need for a better coordinated and better prepared Nigerian ethnic nationalities that support the transition of Nigeria and bye and large Africa to a better place in the international community. Achieving this has been brought under alarming threat and obfuscation judging from the recent nefarious trend in violent behaviours in Nigeria.

Suffice it to note that violence, rooted in political and religious actions is not alien to Nigeria. Its polarizing effects were more or less directly expressed in several other political tribulations that assailed Nigeria in the sixties and beyond. It includes but is not limited to: the 1962 declaration of a state of emergency in the Western region; the bitter ethnic-regional dispute over the 1962-63 census; the 1964 federal election crisis; the 1965 Western election debacle; the eventual overthrow of the First Nigerian Democratic Republic in 1966 following a bloody ethnic-military coup; the fragmentation and politicization of the military establishment along ethno-regional lines; the attempted secession of the Eastern region, and, the eventual outbreak of the 30-month civil war, which claimed an estimated one million lives, mainly in ill-fated Biafra (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Of course, practical steps were taken after the Nigerian civil war to reduce the volume of civil violence that could occur in Nigeria. These steps included:

1. The decisive federal victory in the civil war, which promoted a revitalized sense of Nigerian nationhood
2. The dissolution of the four regions into twelve and nineteen states, in 1967 and 1976, respectively, transformed the federation into a more horizontally balanced union
3. Expanding oil revenues to soften inter-group resource conflicts through various ethnic-distributive measures, including providing infrastructures in newly created state capitals and expanding the general distributable pool account (DPA) under the revenue allocation system.
4. The crafting of innovative statutory mechanisms of ethnic conflict accommodation, including the federal character principle and the inter-regional distribution requirement for the president's election-embodied in the 1979 Constitution for the Second Republic, which ended the first phase of military rule in Nigeria.
5. Immediate steps to rebuild and reconstruct endangered structures and facilities in Nigeria irrespective of the regions where they were located. These steps are captured thus:
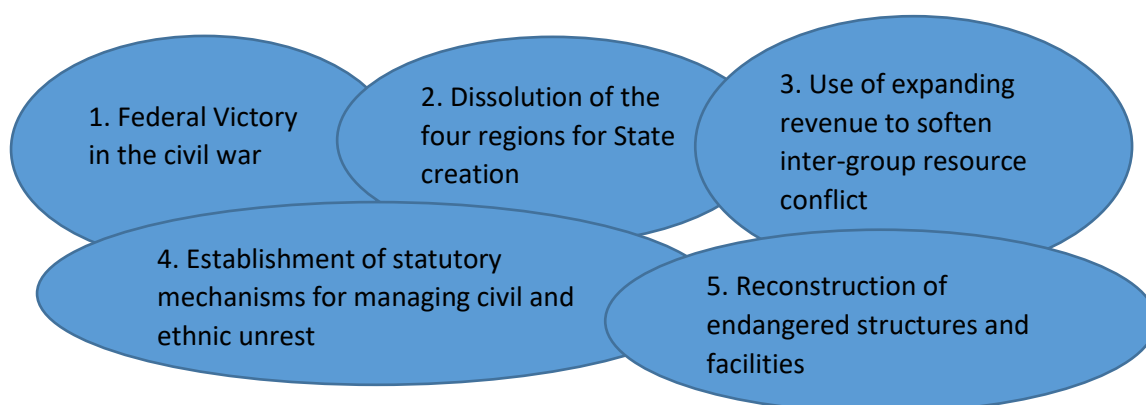

Fig.1 Post-Civil War Measures to curtail ethnic violence in Nigeria. **Source:** Author's compilation

The chart above shows government efforts at ending the 1967-1970 civil war that engulfed the Nigerian state. First was to declare a federal victory with no victor and no vanquished; the second was the dissolution of the four regions to pave way for the creation of 12 states; the third was the use of state

resources to cushion the effects of the war in affected regions; the next was the establishment of statutory bodies or mechanisms for managing ethnic marginalization and the reconstruction of critical structures across the Nigerian state. It was believed that these measures would foster peace and togetherness in Nigeria but it appears they have reverse influence today because of political and religious factors considered in this study.

Surely, the seventies were not entirely free from sectional tensions. The same can be said of the eighties, nineties, and even two thousand as there are clear manifestations of violence and religiously triggered violence across Nigeria length and breadth. Yet, compared to the sixties and the period since the eighties, the seventies stand out as an era of relative tranquillity in Nigeria (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Indeed, the factors underpinning the post-civil war peace, have begun to evaporate markedly since 2015. The general import of this is a deep seated discomfort, economic hardship and psychological display of aggression across all parts of Nigeria. Nigerians now sit at the keg of gun powder, waiting for the slightest provocation (politically or religiously) to explode. The creative federalism of the 1979 Constitution has virtually disappeared since 2015 by the way the APC government have opted for hyper-centralized ethno-military, economic, religious, social and political administrations. This invariably is the basis for the covert and furtive violence in Nigeria. However, Nigeria (after 1970), needs to be commended for its efforts at managing this violence and not allowing it to snowball into large scale nations-wide wars that have convulsed such states like Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan, Russia, Ukraine, Syria etc. we shall now turn to the political and religious factors of violence in Nigeria.

Political and Religious Factors of Violence in Nigeria
This work is not a thesis on the sociology of the Nigerian state but a keen concentration on the dialectics of politics and religion as critical factors that expose Nigeria to the erosive phenomenon of violence. We shall now pay specific attention to these factors.

Political Factors
The nature and character of politics in a state can predispose the state to violence. Thus, any act of violence linked to class interest is termed political violence and it is caused by such political factors like electoral laws, electoral processes, political institutions, actions of state actors and non-state actors, propaganda, party politics etc. which have become veritable instruments for violence. According to Anifowose (1982), such political factors that cause violence tend to modify or change the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement. They could be pre-electoral or post-electoral especially if it involves the use of threat or physical act carried out by individual(s) within a political system against another individual or groups and property with the intent to cause injury or death to persons, damage or destruction to property. Its objective, choice of target or victims, surrounding or implementation, and effect have political significance, that tends to modify or change the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement for the political system.

From the foregoing, Kukah (1999:37) and Uwakwe in Oloidi (2011:2) averred that violence in Nigeria cannot be fully understood and appreciated without due recourse to the nature of the Nigerian state and its experiences before, during and after colonial rule and the character of politics instituted in it. This, of course, has been an issue of serious intellectual contestation within academia. Generally, scholars like Rodney, Ake, Mazrui, Osaghae, Omo, Iyan, Jinadu, Jega, Nnoli, Nnabugwu, Eze, Nwankwo, Obikeze, Okolie etc. agree that the states and politics in Africa are the products of arbitrary colonial arrangements. This largely accounts for the endless debates, conflicts and bloodshed which has become the major manifestations of violence in Nigeria and Africa. Thus, no meaningful attempt to explain violence in Nigeria can steer clear of this fundamental contradictions (Kukah, 199:38).

The colonial state, we were told, was important to the colonizing power only to the extent that it served the economic interest of the metropole (Kukah, 1999). The colonialists created and exploited the loopholes in the African state to foist on it the policy of divide and rule, and this heightened the effect of ethnicity and the activities of the petty bourgeois. This was dangerous for national progress and survival. Thus, for the colonialist, its ethnic policies were to pave the way for divide and rule, while the indigenous petty bourgeois used the same ethnic platform for divide and loot. This looting has equally severely affected Nigeria's various groups and regions (Nnoli, 2022).

The reason for this is not far-fetched. Those with constant access to state power and its accessories have more chances of looting and cry less about the consequences of their act and the state of the nation generally. In contrast, individuals, sub-groups, groups and regions with limited or no access to the state power have fewer chances of looting and enjoying the proceeds of the state and hence cry more because of the consequences of looting and the country's overall state. Under this situation, issues of neglect and marginalization becomes rife in such a political setting. This is the politically instituted conflict-prone foundation upon which the Nigerian state was constructed. Accordingly, Kukah (1999) noted that 'the Nigerian state, like other colonial contraptions in Africa, was conceived, nurtured and sustained in violence. So, civil disturbances are its glorious manifestation.

Ake, cited in Kukah (1999:40), observed thus:

> Development changes the way people live and work. By sheer ubiquity and intensity of the changes which development brings about, it tends to cause orientational upheaval, widespread anomalies and insecurity, especially among those who see themselves as losers, by its discontinuities, distortion and ruptures…frantic identity affirmations render people edgy, aggressive and available for mobilization into extremist social movements.

The crafting of States in Africa meant the amalgamation of communities that had no previous experiences of revenue generation to sustain the interest of the bourgeois class beyond their immediate subsistence needs (Ake, 1981). Hence, since they have become revenue generators to the class that appropriates the proceeds of their labour, the tendency for unrest is ubiquitous. Herein lies the major cause of violence in the Nigerian state.

Religious Factors
No doubt, the nature and character of religion in a state can predispose the state to violence. Thus, any act of violence linked to religious practices is termed religious violence and is caused by religious factors like one's faith, wrong religious orientation/indoctrination, religious laws and institutions, low literacy level of religious adherents, selfishness on the part of religious personalities, pervasive poverty that adopts a religion as a way to better life, government involvement in religious matters, external religious movements and influences, radicalization of religious movements etc. have become veritable instruments for violence in Nigeria. This is traceable to the external influences (http://www.scielo.org.za).

After the project of the construction of the Nigerian state had been put in place, the colonialists went a step further to modernize the Nigerian state and position its religious frontiers for conflict and violence. This was intentional and targeted at keeping Africa where it is today. According to Kukah (1999), the colonialists systematically destroyed the religion of the African State. The colonialists were careful to distort, destroy, and, in some cases eliminate the African religious universe by such universal religions as Christianity and Islam. Thus, the new identities they created would rather and always have explosive consequences… to this end, today, religion in Nigeria remains severely fractured and disoriented. So that rather than being a tool for unity and progress, it has become the most veritable tool for violence and the

disintegration of the Nigerian state, and almost all issues and actions of the state are interpreted along this line.

As it were today, one cannot properly analyse violence and social unrest in Nigeria without due recourse to religion as a fundamental phenomenon. Religion, with all of its contradictions, has been as volatile in Nigeria as its geopolitics. Arguably, both have produced almost equal numbers of violent and non-violent episodes (Uwakwe in Oloidi, 2010). Underneath the broad Christian-Muslim divide are several sub-cleavages that have at one time or the other been politically salient or have the potential to be, and have generated intra-group conflicts. Among Christians, there are several denominations, including: the Protestants (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Lutheran), the Catholics, the Evangelical Church of West Africa, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a host of 'home-grown', 'white garment' (Aladura and Celestial) and Pentecostal churches (Udoidem 1997 in Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Pentecostal churches like Assemblies of God, Living Faith, Redeem, Deeper Life, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, etc., which by some accounts represent the fundamentalist segment of Christianity in the country and are positioned to adopt some radical and, perhaps, 'conflict-trigger teachings' of Christ to confront any form of attack to their faith and way of life. As such, the politicization of Christianity has been largely because of the moves made by Muslims and interventions by the state. This has been a basis for violence in Nigeria.

On the other hand, Muslims belong to different sects, including the Ahmadiyya, Sanusiyya, Tijanniyya and Quadriyya, among which there have been conflicts. There are also some umbrella organizations which aim to propagate Islam. One of these is the Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI), founded by the Sardauna of Sokoto in 1961. Following the Iranian Islamic revolution of the 1970s, radical and fundamentalist activities emerged, especially among Muslim youths. This was the context within which some fundamentalist Muslim sects, notably the Maitatsine, Izala movement, the Muslim Brothers or Shiites, and most recently the Talibans, emerged to demand, amongst others: purist Islam based on Sharia law; the eradication of heretical innovations; and, the establishment of an Islamic state or theocracy (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). The activities of these sects were a major precipitant of the religious conflicts that proliferated the Northern political landscape in the 1980s and 1990s and much more since 2015.

The north-south geopolitical divide is re-enacted in a predominantly Christian south and Muslim north divide, and politicians have always used this subtly in the pursuit of the interest of the dominant class. From the postulations of Uwakwe, it is clear that religion as a major cause of violence in Nigeria has evolved alongside Nigeria's political development. For example, in the 1959 federal elections, Chief Awolowo's helicopter-assisted campaign in the north was considered offensive to the Muslims, with the Premier of the region, Sir, Ahmadu Bello, constantly reminding the northerners that Awolowo was contemptuous of Islam and would ban it if he came to power. In the south, the north's leadership and purported ownership of Nigeria was considered as the political expression of Jihad as conceived by Othman Dan Fodio and the Islamic movement in the West African sub-region.

To reduce religious conflicts on the political front, a modus vivendi to achieve 'religious balancing' between the two major religions was adopted in the second republic. Accordingly:

> …The 1975-1979 debate ended with a petty-bourgeois on a package known as federal character policy. Aspects of it were codified in the 1979 constitution. Others were left as a convention. All were expected to lead to increased national cohesion. Its central operating rationale was to give everyone in Nigeria's diverse society a sense of belonging to establish order in the primordial factional struggles of the class for advantages in the sharing of the national cake. (Nnoli, 2022).

Thus, the federal character principle introduced to douse religious tensions in Nigeria was diffused into various programmes introduced by the federal government. For example, at least each state was to produce a minister; balance of primordial factors in appointments to posts in federal establishments, quota

admissions into federal government colleges and the establishment of the Federal Character Commission to pursue and achieve this goal effectively.

In a follow-up to the debate of the All Progressives Congress Muslim/Muslim ticket for the 2023 general elections, Nigerians of diverse persuasions argued that; the same religion ticket would rubbish religious tolerance successes achieved by various administrations before the Buhari administration came on board and this would once again exacerbate the already heated polity caused mainly by religious intolerance which the Nigerian state seems to be coming out from. This whole debate seems to have fallen on deaf ears and Nigerians are watching with everyone with his arsenal of violence, eagerly awaiting the slightest provocation for violence or war should it become inevitable. This shows that Nigeria's supposed religious harmony and accommodation are only relative to the extent that provocation is kept at bay.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we see that human society and history are replete with violent behaviour among humans in a complex web of social interaction at different political epochs across states worldwide. This violent behaviour comes in different shades and brands depending on what necessitates it and what goals it seeks to achieve, and Nigeria as a political entity has had its sufficient dosage. From the study, we see that the crafting of the Nigerian state like other States in Africa, meant the amalgamation of communities that had no previous experiences of revenue generation to sustain the interest of the bourgeois class. Hence, since these communities have become revenue generators to the class that appropriates the proceeds of their labour, the tendency for unrest becomes ubiquitous. Herein lies the major cause of the countless violent behaviours that have convulsed the Nigerian historical space and made life so cheap that it seems that every day when the news of religious or political violence does not unfold across Nigeria seems to be a bonanza of a sort. This being the case, the study argued that violence in Nigeria cannot be fully understood and appreciated without due recourse to the nature of the Nigerian state and its experiences before, during and after colonial rule and the character of politics instituted in it. Based on the analysis of the research work, we conclude that the nature and character of politics in a state can predispose the state to violence. Thus, any act of violence linked to class interest and caused by such political factors like electoral laws, electoral processes, political institutions, actions of state actors and non-state actors, propaganda, party politics etc. can become veritable instruments for violence in Nigeria. If attention is merely paid to the former (symptoms), it will merely provide the most superficial and temporary relief as the root cause of violence will still be left unaddressed.

From the study, we noted that the Colonialists systematically destroyed the religion of the African State. They were careful to distort, destroy, and, in some cases, rightly eliminate the African religious universe by such universal religions as Christianity and Islam. Thus, the new identities they created have always had explosive consequences… to this end, today, religion in Nigeria remains severely fractured and disoriented. So that, rather than being a tool for unity and progress, it has become the most veritable tool for violence and the disintegration of the Nigerian state, and almost all issues and actions of the state are interpreted and vigorously pursued along this line. Based on the proofs from the study, we hypothesize that behind most violent manifestations in the Nigerian state are issues rooted in politics and religion. The view is arrived at by a close examination and comparison of the Nigerian State before and after the involvement of the colonialists in the setting up of the political and religious foundations of Nigeria.

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