

**THE ETHNO- RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN SOUTHERN KADUNA OF NIGERIA:
CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Religious conflicts exist between groups which differ ideologically with each striving for political and religious relevance. This paper aims at ascertaining the causes of conflicts in southern Kaduna local government area. The situation in southern Kaduna has claimed thousands of lives, destroyed properties worth millions of naira, and led to an increase in the number of displaced persons. The interpretative, as well as the descriptive phenomenological methods of research, was used in this study. It was discovered that land, religious supremacy, hate speeches are some of the major causes of the southern Kaduna crisis. As part of recommendations, perpetrators of religious conflict in the region should be fished out and dealt with publicly and appropriately.

Keywords: *Conflict, Religion, National, Development, Crisis.*

Introductions

Just as religion as a concept is difficult to define, so it is that the dangers it poses to the society are usually difficult to estimate. Nigeria as a nation is made up of different religious, ethnic and tribal groups, hence, there is bound to be differences in tenets, doctrines and ways of approaching the supreme-being amongst the different religious adherents in Nigeria. When religious faithful fail to accommodate other religions' adherents it results in religious conflict. Religious conflicts according to Gofwen, Rotgak form a specific form of conflict between groups which differ ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting with each striving for political relevance (200). Religious conflicts occur when there is a struggle for supremacy among

religious groups. This supremacy might be political, economic, social or cultural in nature. This paper assesses the religious conflicts in southern Kaduna

Religious crises in southern Kaduna came to limelight with the Zango Kataf crisis of mid May 1992. According to Edward John in *the International Research Group for Transregional & Emerging Area Studies* a dusk-to-dawn curfew was imposed on Kaduna State on May 19, following two days of what reports described as religious clashes which claimed as many as 100 lives, caused by the fact that rioters rampaged through the streets, looting and burning at will, the general hospital overflowed with the wounded. This conflict divided Kaduna state along religious lines. There became distrust in the state amongst various religious adherents. There arose what became known as Muslim and Christian neighbourhoods in Kaduna. These conflicts have continued to reoccur and hundreds of lives have been lost and are still being lost to the southern Kaduna religious crises.

This paper aims at ascertaining the causes of conflicts in southern Kaduna local government area. It assesses how detrimental this crisis has been to the development of southern Kaduna. The interpretative, as well as the descriptive phenomenological method of research, were used in this study. This methodology was used because of the fact that it “...produces an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions and it recognizes that this is an interpretative endeavour as humans are sense-making organisms”(Smith and Osborn 41).

Conceptual Clarification

Religious conflict results when a group of people with a belief or dogma finds it difficult to accommodate the belief and dogma of another group of people. This often results in physical and vocal assaults or cold war. Religious conflicts are a more complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains, including power, personality, space or place, and group identity (Wendy). This portends that when two religious groups struggle for supremacy in power or to show their affinity in terms of their religious beliefs, religious conflicts occur. Religious conflict is a “struggle between and among individuals or groups over values and claims to scarce resources, status symbols, and power bases. The objective of the individuals or groups during

conflict is to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals so that they can enjoy the scarce resources, the status symbols, and power bases” (Okai 22)

In Nigeria, especially in northern Nigeria, religious conflicts was firmly rooted as a response to the colonial pattern of government employed and actualized by the Lord Lugard and his men. Gofwen Rotgak notes: “To convince the Northern emirs and the sultan of the commitment of the colonial government towards maintaining the socio-political status quo, it became a matter of colonial policy not to interfere with the functioning of the existing institutions, rather, they were strengthened on the condition that they were accountable and made subservient to the colonial government”(59). Nwaomah S., opines that:

In these circumstances, and depending on the degree of threat that the colonial government thought each religion posed to the colonial system in a locality, the colonial authorities evolved administrative patterns that served their purpose of strengthening the colonial system. However, it seems, by its policies, that the colonial system developed a system of non-interference on Islamic affairs and seemed to have inadvertently limited the spread of Christianity in Northern Nigeria. Certain policies seemed to point in this direction. (97)

Hence, religious conflicts, bigotry, tension have its roots in the process of struggle for political or ideological supremacy amongst the two major religions in southern Kaduna.

National development according to Bhawna Bawa is “a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and development of individuals. It includes full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education social, religious and cultural institutions”. Rico Alolor says it is “ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, etc. For Tolu Lawal and Abe Oluwatoyin (238) national development is the “the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation.” Religious conflicts have a lot contribution to the development of any community. When there is peace, infrastructural and intellectual development continues to be the order of the day. But, when there is war, rancour, and strive, it halts developmental plans. Furthermore, national development encompasses the transformation

of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions (OyeAdeniyi 52).

The Southern Kaduna Crises

Kauru, Kachia, Zango-Kataf, Kaura, Kagarko, Jaba, Jema'a, Sanga, are the local government areas that constitute southern Kaduna. It was known as southern Zaria before Nigeria got her independence from the Britain in 1960. Most crises in southern Kaduna starts with land disputes before it degenerates into a full-blown religious war. 1987 burning down of College of Education Kafanchan signalled the hatred between the Christians and Muslims in Kaduna. Zwahu Bonnat puts that Muslim Students Society attacked students of the College of Education hence the escalation of the crisis along religious lines. Ajunwa Patrick reports that the crisis at the college of education "spread to other parts of the state leading to the burning of places of worship, with many lives and properties worth millions of naira lost. Consequently, in 1992, the Zango Kataf Crisis catalysed the hike in killings in southern Kaduna. The Zangon Katab has the Atyap as the dominant ethnic group. The Zango Kataf crisis was bloody on February 6th and May 15th and 16th 1992.

Furthermore, in 1999, there was an ethno-religious assault and aggression against Southern Kaduna Christians. Edwards Johns reveals that residents of Jama'a emirate took the opportunity of the appointment of a new Emir of Jama'a to protest not only this appointment but the entire emirate system but unknown to them the protest turned into rioting between the Hausa minority and the non-Hausa majority resulting in the deaths of perhaps 30 persons and the injury of several others. Also, Zwahu Bonnat explains that Southern Kaduna people were killed, beaten, matcheted, and Human Right Watch describes it as the single worst outbreak of violence in Nigeria since the 1967-70 civil war. Consequently, according to the Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Kaduna State Religious Disturbances of February 2000,

The 2000 violence in Kaduna took place in two main waves—sometimes referred to as "Sharia 1" and "Sharia 2" — a first wave from February 21 to 25, with further killings in March, followed by a second wave from May 22 to 23. In reaction to the prospect of the introduction of Sharia into Kaduna Sate (sic), the Kaduna branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organized a public protest on February 21. Then the situation degenerated: Muslim youths clashed with the Christian protestors,

and fighting between Christians and Muslims spiraled (sic) out of control, with massive violence and destruction on both sides. An accurate, total death toll has never been ascertained, and as is typical in these situations, government and police officials were keen to play down the figures. A judicial commission of inquiry set up by the Kaduna state government reported that at least 1,295 people had been killed, while an unspecified additional number were buried unidentified, and others were declared missing.

Also, in 2002, in Birnin Gwari, a woman was killed, and they alleged that the killer was wearing a fez cap; one Kataf man who had been away at Zaria when the incident occurred, returned to Birnin Gwar and was killed, several other “Katafs” i.e Southern Kaduna people were killed, their houses and property burnt (Zwahu Bonnat). This 2002 crisis according to international observers like the human right watch erupted because the factors that led to the 2000 crisis were not addressed.

In 2011, September 2, Zwahu Bonnat explains that, a Sallah procession was allowed to take place under heavy police and military guard, and the celebrants-in-procession carried and waved different weapons, including machetes, knives, swords, cutlasses and other dangerous instruments of war and they drove their motorcycles wildly, knocked down and killed two Arna women. The youths put up strategies to defend their community but late in the evening of that day, the army JTF launched attacks on houses at Adauwan breaking down doors, dragging out youths, hammered them with gun butts, beat and brutalized them.

Very important to state, is the 2016 southern Kaduna massacre which some nongovernmental organizations have titled genocide against southern Kaduna indigenes. Uche Atuma narrates that The Catholic Archdiocese of Kafanchan has said the unrest in Southern Kaduna State has claimed 808 lives. Fifty three villages have so far been attacked and 57 people injured, the church said. However, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, the umbrella organization of herdsmen notes that the group said it has lost no fewer than 6,000 cows to the crisis in Southern Kaduna. The group faulted claims by independent bodies that the indigenes of southern Kaduna were the sole victims of the conflict going on there.

Causes of the Crises

The causes of the crises in southern Kaduna cannot be underestimated. One of the causes is the fight for supremacy over land. Luka Binniyat discovers from Musa Kaptain Solomon, president of Southern Kaduna Peoples Union, that the quest for Southern Kaduna land, through the creation of grazing reserves is the cause of the Southern Kaduna crisis. It could be deciphered that southern Kaduna has agriculture as the main stay of her economy, hence, the vegetative nature of her ecosystem. The herdsmen having no green vegetation to use to feed their cattle resort to taking their cattle into the farm lands of the indigenes or southern Kaduna. Consequently, fully armed as the herdsmen were any resistance from the indigenes would be met with a return of fire from the nozzle of a gun and the edge of a cutlass. Furthermore, Luka Binniyat explains that the first is expropriating lands belonging to indigenes of southern Kaduna and giving it to the Fulani. The second is that if they resist, they would be killed and chased out. The third is that southern Kaduna shall be kept under perpetual intimidation until they run away from their lands on their own.

Foreigners from mostly Niger, Mali and Chad have constituted themselves as tools to be used in the destruction of lands and properties in southern Kaduna. This is evident in the speech by the governor of Kaduna state, Mallam Rufai that the attackers were from Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and Senegal and that the attack in southern Kaduna was a reprisal attack to what southern Kaduna indigenes did to them after the 2011 elections. Sola Ojo reveals that the governor further noted how he went and pleaded for a stoppage to the incessant riots in southern Kaduna the herdsmen asked for monetary compensation and he as the governor paid them. For this statement, the governor has been able to prove that the perpetrators of these crises in southern Kaduna are mercenaries from neighbouring countries.

Hate Speeches, claims and counter claims are other contributory factors to the survival of religious conflicts in southern Kaduna. The exchange of war provoking statements from both the leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria and the Islam leaders have fuelled the reoccurrence of the war and cold war in southern Kaduna. For the Islam leaders, Luka Binniyat puts that, they said that the issue of grazing reserves is not related to this problem, because the grazing reserves have been there back to colonial days hence the right of the Fulani's to own the

land, that's why the herdsmen should not be held accountable for what they do. Also, the Minister of Interior, Abdulrahman Dambazau, said: "...there are people who are always looking for ways to further create division along religious or ethnic fault lines for their selfish interest, with the aim of creating instability in our internal security...True religious leaders do not fan the embers of hate, but ensure that communities live in peace and harmony". Dambazau was referring to leaders of the CAN and the Roman Catholic church. The Kaduna state Christian Association of Nigeria replied him, "Shut up if you have nothing to say... it would be an unfortunate thing for a Minister like Dambazau to say that the Christian leadership in the country was fanning the embers of hatred." This exchange of vocal war words has served to fuel the disputes between indigenes and non-indigenes in southern Kaduna which have degenerated into a religious conflict.

The hypocrisy of Security agencies has not helped matters, in the worsening situations in southern Kaduna. According to the report of the International Centre for investigative Justice, the killings in Southern Kaduna continue relentlessly, as the state and security agencies appear helpless in tackling the crisis and ICIJ reveals that Southern Kaduna has been attacked about 41 times between 2009 and May 1, 2016, with hundreds of deaths and thousands of property destroyed. The security agencies of Nigeria is made up of the Nigerian army, Nigerian police, and State Security Service, amongst others. Lamenting further, Luka Binniyat notes that the community members in some of the affected southern local government areas said that, "there is a large presence of police in Goska now. But as far as we are concerned, it means nothing to us. They have burnt the whole town and destroyed our possession. This morning...11 persons killed, about 15 injured."

Its Implication to National development

National development could be seen as the disposal with which a state is able to cater to the lives of her citizenry. National development could be political, religious, economic or social in structure. Southern Kaduna has for long being retarded from achieving her great potentials and thus contributing her quota to the national growth and development. The survival and sponsorship of these killings of both of Christians and Muslims have not yielded any gains to both sides. Consequently, the effects that this wanton destruction of lives and properties had

brought to people of southern Kaduna are innumerable. Many hectares of Farmlands, as well as its products, have been destroyed. Food produced such as yam and tomatoes were devastated as a result of the crises. The means of livelihood of the indigenes of southern Kaduna has been destroyed. These problems have not gone down well with the people of southern Kaduna. Hungry and starvation have been the place of survivors in southern Kaduna. .Other implications of the ethno-religious crises in southern Kaduna are:

First, the term Internally Displaced Persons otherwise known as IDPs refers to persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee their homes, as a result of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (United Nations). In Jema'a local government area alone, there are over 2234, 0000 IDPs currently. There are growing reports of food shortages in IDPs camps because these food items were stolen. Consequently, children are being smuggled and trafficked outside of the camp.

Second, the crises have led to unemployment. According to the International Labour Organization unemployment means when a person is "without work", that means he/ she was not in paid employment or self-employment during a particular reference period; "currently available for work", that means he/she was ready for a paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; "seeking work", that means he/she had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment." This is the situation in southern Kaduna currently. During the crises, so many shops and business centres were burnt to ashes. Many farm lands were destroyed. The losses that the survivor's recount cannot be overemphasized neither will it be underestimated. According to Luka Binniyat , a total of 19 shops were destroyed and market places which have served as a source of living were destroyed. The destruction of farmlands have forced the youths and other farmers to be jobless, hence, there is bound to be shortage of food.

Third, there has been a disruption of Education Programme. Formal and informal education has been disrupted since the beginning of the crises. Centers of academic learning especially primary and secondary schools were destroyed. For instance Luka Binniyat

reports that five students of the College of Education, Gidan Waya, Jema'a Local Government Area, Kaduna State, were, Sunday evening, reportedly shot dead close to Gidan Waya, when a commercial car taking them to school from Kafanchan was waylaid by herdsmen.

The effects that this wanton destruction of lives and properties has caused to the people of Southern Kaduna cannot be overemphasized. Many deaths have been recorded which has led to the downsizing of the population. Most elderly persons, as well as children, were killed. Hence, the ideas which the young ones would have gotten from the older once have been wiped out short, hence, there is bound to be knowledge drain, especially with the deaths of teachers and tutors.

Recommendations

First, the issue of land grazing should be appropriately addressed by the government. Both groups, the Christians and the Muslims in southern Kaduna should come to a consensus on which land, if any, should be given as a grazing reserve. Dialogue should be the watchword in achieving a level playing field for Muslims and Christians in southern Kaduna.

Second, the leaders of CAN and the Islamic community should as a matter of urgent attention control the use of hate speeches. For words which could overheat the polity should be avoided for the sake of peace. Religious leaders should avoid the use of the media to showcase their anger; instead, they should resort to action, such as assisting the affected communities in self-defence and provision of essential services. This is in a bid to avoid an escalation of the conflict. This is evident in the escalation of the conflict caused by the burning down, by Muslim youths, of the college of education Kafanchan. What religious leaders should do is to condemn the destruction of lives and properties just like the Sultan of Sokoto and president-general of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, rather than resorting to war mongering.

Third, the nation's security agencies like the Nigerian army and the police should desist from being partisan in a religious conflict. A situation where the nations security agencies, aid a

religious group with arms and ammunition to kill members of other groups does not portend well for the Nigerian nascent democratic challenges.

Fourth, Kaduna state is made up of Christian and Muslim religions' votaries. The person in the seat of power, in the person of the governor, should learn to play politics devoid of religious sentiments. Issues related to the loss of lives and properties should be dealt with as fast as possible without hesitation. Perpetrators of religious conflict in the region should be fished out and dealt with publicly and appropriately.

Fifth, religious freedom as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria should be followed and adhered to. The various ethnic groups in southern Kaduna and its environs should be made to accept and accommodate votaries or faithful of other religions. Government neglect and victimization, marginalization and nepotism foster religious fanaticism.

Sixth, educating the youth could go a long way in reorienting and changing the ideology of those that have been negatively indoctrinated. Education makes people civilized, well mannered, aware, well-skilled and responsible. With education, the ideology of the people will be restructured and it enlightens the mind against negative indoctrinations.

Conclusion

The southern Kaduna religious crisis is brought about by the inability of groups with different ideology to accommodate themselves. This is the situation in southern Kaduna. Many lives and properties have been destroyed as a result of the religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in southern Kaduna. The December 2016 Massacre of defenceless women, children and the elderly men in southern Kaduna demands condemnation from spirited individuals and the government. Dialogue should be used as a way of settling disputes rather than resorting to violence. The government should make sure that all those involved in any act of religious conflicts should be made to bear the full weight of the law.

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