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**National Question: Attack on Liberty and Faith in
Nigeria (2015 – 2023)**



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National Question: Attack on Liberty and Faith in Nigeria (2015 – 2023)

Dr. C. O. Okwelum

Delta State University of Science and Technology Ozoro, Nigeria

08075684274 okwelumchukwudi@gmail.com

ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4249-1624>

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Abstract

Purpose: The value of the citizens' liberty in Nigeria and their freedom of worship became greatly assaulted during the twin-light of the Jonathan administration by insurgency of the Boko Haram genre in the north east leading to the administration's defeat in the 2015 general election. But the attacks became accentuated and worse when the Buhari administration took over on the promise of using his military background to confront the crisis having done so previously during the Maitasene riot in 1983. But since 2015 countless lives have been lost in all fronts in the country with the administration and its security architecture being held responsible for colluding with the insurgents, bandits or terrorists.

Methodology: This paper which adopts the doctrinal method, surveyed, studied and examined the crisis of the breach of the constitutional and fundamental rights to personal liberty and freedom of worship during the Buhari administration and came to the conclusion that they degenerated to the lowest ebb, making the study necessary in order to highlight the failings of the administration and the exasperation of the citizens. The main sources of materials in this study are newspapers and other documentary reports.

Findings: It found that the life of an ordinary citizen no longer mattered and that his freedom of worship was so endangered (as exemplified in the bombing of the church in Owo by the terrorists) that the administration threw up its constitutional responsibility in abdication. Peaceful co-existence and the place of religion in the stability of the nation were called into question and the worthlessness of the liberty of the Nigerian citizen raised the issue of the National Question in an era of wanton extra-judicial killings.

Unique contributions to theory, practice and policy: The study recommends enhanced religious tolerance and bringing criminals to justice.

Key words: *National question, Right to Liberty, Freedom of Thought and Conscience, Boko Haram*

Introduction

Attacks on the right to freedom of religion in the second Buhari era (2015-2023) requires close study since Boko Haram took up the centre stage of security concern in Nigeria. The attacks have been mainly concentrated in the north and the middle belt. They have not only been in the form of physical elimination of Christians, particularly priests and infrastructure, but in legislation. Archbishop Oduemu (as cited in Ahon, 2021, p. 12) for instance, has opined that Government is not God and those who make laws against the church have always paid dearly for it. He cited how Nebuchadnezzar tried it and paid dearly for it. The Church is not an economic or is it a socio-political venture but a spiritual organization. The spate of attacks on churches and Christian worshippers across the country is barbaric and ungodly. Catholic Bishops were the most unequivocal about the attacks. They state without apologies that many security agents had become partial in their professional work, in that they shield and protect those whom they favour and abandon and expose to danger and death, those they dislike and hate (Ujumadu et al, 2021, p. 5).

The attacks mainly affect women and children and as the trend is going, the worse-case scenario predictable is that half of all young people will not have the relevant skills necessary for entry level employment reducing the nation's work force and moving the nation back into poverty. Out- of- school children are equally vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and are critically ill-equipped to positively contribute productively to the economy (Ujah, 2021, p. 8). Yet, it is these same soft targets that get recruited into the waiting arms of the insurgents in the north. Having been disoriented by lack of education, they are also the most vulnerable to be radicalized by the Boko haram sect; and having next to nothing in ideological orientation, they are also the most difficult to de-radicalize.

Statement of the problem

Since the coming to power of the Buhari administration in 2015 the tempo of attack on life and faith has increased. The life of the ordinary citizen has become precarious. Even the security agencies constitutionally instituted to protect life and property have come under virulent attacks from all shades of non-state actors across the country. Places of worship have also been attacked as are police stations, prisons and military barracks. While the administration continues to absolve itself from complicity, facts and evidence point to the contrary. While the ethnic stock of the President, the Fulani, continues to manifest its militant wings in Boko Haram, herdsmen banditry, Miyetti-Alah etc, the administration tries to distance itself from their atrocities but to no avail. This has called to the fore, the national question and the possibility of the continued mutual co-existence of the various ethnic and religious groups in the country.

Conceptual Clarification

Media framing and agenda setting:

Events with life and death consequences may have little impact on the public unless the media frame them high on their issue agenda according to Shipra (2014, pp. 46, 87 & 88). What characterizes agenda setting and makes a matter newsworthy depend essentially on deviation from the normal, sensationalism, conflict, controversy, interest and human security. Shipra submits that to grab the attention of the media is almost always the first-step towards changing public policy. Ethical issues are thus not of much significance except in times of crises. It is mainly in times of ‘great social disaffection and increasingly angry disillusionment’ amongst the public that issues of media ethics become paramount like during the Buhari administration in which the duty of the State to guarantee the rights of the citizens to life, personal liberty and conscience became host-aged and compromised.

Media ethics postulates that members of the society believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democratic governance. The goal of media accountability to Shipra therefore, is to improve the service of the media to the public, restore its prestige in the eyes of the population, protect freedom of speech and press, and retain autonomy and independence on its part in the expansion of democracy and the betterment of the life of the people. It is only when these minimal ethical standards are met that reliance on the information from the media can be relied upon in a serious research endeavour which this study intends to embark upon.

Terrorism in media coverage:

In *Exchanging Terrorism Oxygen for Media Airwaves*, Professor Mahmoud Eid (as cited by Ahmed, in Radio Now 95.3 FM) had argued that there is a corresponding ‘relationship between terrorists and media coverage’ in which acts of terrorism and media coverage are exchanged and fuelled by one another. Although Ahmed concedes that the state of insecurity in Nigeria can be attributed to the failings and the shortcomings of the Buhari administration, and that the administration must take absolute responsibility for the carnages. She forcefully goes ahead to argue correctly that excessive media presentation of the activities of the terrorists has the capacity of justifying their invincibility and iconize their illicit activities as they are ‘clearly neither sorry for their crime nor are they looking for anyway to stop anytime soon’. In a situation where criminals are involved in continued terrorist activities a balance ought to be sought between the right of the public to information which is sacrosanct and the avoidance of the provision of platform of oxygen of publicity for terrorists and the interest of the victims of crime themselves.

This is because, as canvassed by Neha (2014, p. 56) in *Journalism Ethics and Mass Management* when citizens are confronted with the atrocities of terrorism and are in the throes of grappling

with the tragedies, the least they expect to experience is microphones being slung into their eyes and faces for their comments on their experiences. The media must thus be held accountable for what it reports and how it reports it and must demonstrate or exhibit social responsibility and concern for those involved. It must seek the truth, report the truth independently and minimize the harm of the reportage to the average citizen who becomes the victim of terrorism. In reporting communal matters, the media must exercise proper restraint and caution against half-truths, half-stories that result from lax standards of reportorial research and back-grounding (Sanoj, 2017, p. 522). This ought to be so because the three cornerstones of national development are life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom (Denis, 2017, p. 54).

Theoretical framework

The historiography of the Fulani:

For Odumakin (2021, p. 6 & Falola et al, 2007, p. 156) the Fulani were the last set of people to arrive the current space called hausa-land in Nigeria from Futa Jalon Island. They deceived the Hausas in 1804 to pursue a jihad to kill their kings to accept ‘pure Islam’. But when the Fulani spread the newfangled faith to the Kanuri in Kanem Bornu Empire and presented them with the same cant, the Fulani could not prevail in convincing the Kanuri to kill their kings for a pure faith. The Kanuri were said to have told the Fulani that they were even purer Moslems under their Shehu before the Fulani found the faith.

It has even been suggested that the Boko Haram insurgency has its origin in the Fulani-Kanuri tango of purer faith debacle. More than 40,000 people have been killed and over two million displaced from their ancestral homes by the conflict which has spread to Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Mali and Central Africa Republic. Boko Haram previously known as Jamatu Alilis Sunna Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad was founded by Muhammed Yusuf. He was killed by Nigeria Police in 2009. Shekau took over the red tag army after the death of Yusuf and made international news and presence when his men kidnapped about 300 School girls in Chibok in 2014. Under Shekau, Boko Haram has turned large swathes of no-go-territory in the North-east into its area of influence proclaiming a Caliphate at Gwoza in 2014 (Omonobi, 2021, p. 4).

The conspiracy theory and war:

One of the strongest criticisms of the Buhari regime in terms of its allowance to bandits to attack Christians comes from the leader of IPOB (Mazi Nnamdi Kanu) who has been kidnapped from exile and thrown into detention by the regime arising from a breach of the previous conditions of bail that was granted to him that was secured by Senator Abaribe (also, a strong critic of the regime). In a *Letter to Biden* in May, 2021 Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (as cited in Vanguard, 2021, p. 13) canvassed before the US President that President Buhari administration has made Nigeria the most dangerous country for Christians. Hundreds of thousands are routinely plundered, tortured or killed with impunity by Fulani herdsmen. Transferred weapons to Nigeria from crises ridden

countries like Libya, Chad, Central African Republic, Niger and Mali are used to kill Christians instead of fighting Boko Haram. It has concocted treason charges against IPOB and Kanu to crush self-determination for Biafra which agitation is legal under Nigerian law. Therefore, the nationality activist argued that Nigeria should be listed as complicit in persecuting Christians under the Global Magnisky Human Rights Accountability Act and a United Nations supervised referendum should be conducted on Biafra independence to exit Nigeria.

But war or violence does not recognize religion or tribe. It is a consuming fire. It is not a respecter of anybody, the poor or the rich or the old or the young (Aliu, 2021, p. 36). It may well be that some people from some parts of Nigeria may feel cheated in the appointment of persons into high offices of the State; and that the country may collapse if incompetent persons are placed in power, but war is worse. People may only know the beginning of war but may not know how it is brought to end. Some of the agitators for Biafra and Oduduwa Republics may not even know what they mean and the consequences of the agitations and the repercussion of their failure. They may reverse the progress so far made in the country and throw back the hands of the clock far behind even a century (Dayo et al, 2021, p. 11).

Spatial distribution theory:

However, agitators are sometimes justifiably concerned. The United States of America has been credited, for instance, to have issued a statement to the effect that ISIS has infiltrated southern Nigeria through the sea and can be found in the coastal states of Lagos, Ondo, Ogun and Rivers.

A combination of Fulani terrorists, Boko Haram and ISIS have also occupied Niger State which is immediately north of Yoruba-land thereby, providing for themselves easy access through Kwara and Kogi States into Western region. It has been further alleged that when the Federal government announced the COVID 19 lockdown in March, 2020 it converted the instrument into a sinister purpose of trucking countless loads of Fulani terrorists into the south (Akinrefon & Badru, 2021, p. 10). According to Amechi (2021, p. 17), state institutions are increasingly being used as instruments for pursuing primordial interests. And the claim by CP Odumosu, the Commissioner of Police, Lagos State that intelligence report exist that IPOB has concluded plan to attack Lagos was part of the design of the instruments of State terror to cast aspersion on perceived non-state actors with a view to incriminating them before fringe elements resort to mayhem to bear out the allegation. Amechi buttressed his view with the claim of Chinua Achebe in *The Trouble with Nigeria* that Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo. But encouragement of ethnic militias to levy war on all parts of Nigeria is clearly an indication of the shape of things to come and of a nation that has abdicated its leviathan responsibility to protect lives and properties of citizens. It is clear that the Nigeria State has lost the initiative to preempt, curtail and mitigate bloodletting. It is also clear that from the national security policy and its present configuration, the citizens are unhinged from the nation. The inability of the double-faced security agencies to

arrest terrorists disguising as herdsmen shows that security agencies are providing cover for bandits (Nwabughogwu, 201, p. 5).

Complicity of the Nigerian State in the pervasive state of insecurity in the country can be gleaned from the hoisting of Boko Haram flags in Niger State. When Governor Abubakar Bello (as cited in Mosadomi, 2021, p. 14) contended that Sambisa forest was several kilometers away from Abuja but Kaure, where the sect had made its headquarters in Niger State, was just two kilometers from Abuja it was obvious that nobody was safe. He stated, ‘This is what I have been engaging the Federal government on but unfortunately it has now got to this level (hoisting of Boko Haram flags). If care is not taken Abuja will not be safe. I have made several efforts to bring the attacks by bandits to Federal government’s attention for action but to no avail. I am not waiting for anyone anymore. I am going to take more action.’ This demonstrates to a significant extent, the complicity of the Buhari administration and the exasperation of State Governors in the affected region.

Literature review

Issues in peaceful coexistence:

At the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council, Governor Lalong had in the quest for peace, appealed for the culture of inter-faith dialogue, understanding and tolerance calling for work with different faith communities to expand respect for religious pluralism, social cohesion and peace agenda. Rev. Pandang Yamsat (as cited in Nanlong, 2021, p. 14) had stated at the sessions that ‘Government and religion are on trial in Plateau State; they are on trial before the Plateau public court because government and its security outfits have been accused of being complicit in the growing security crises in Nigeria.’ The two religions that compose the Council are on trial before the same court because both have also been accused of being the source of the crises that have bedeviled the State since 2001. If the council members work to achieve the desired objective both government and religion will be acquitted by the Plateau public court. Yamsat implored members of the council to ensure a win-win deliberation on issues bordering on peace and peaceful coexistence and to identify the religious, political, ethnic, cultural and economic nature of the crisis. ‘If there is no peace, no one will be able to go to places of worship, carry out any economic activity and the general wellbeing of the people will be affected.’

But if the spirit of Islam and Christianity actually exists in Nigeria between members of the two faiths, there would not have been fighting, shedding of as much blood as was the situation. Muslims and Christians should learn to stay together and avoid religious acrimony. The issue of religious intolerance in the north began with the Maitatsene uprising in the 1980s. The crisis seems to have defied solutions since then. For instance, survivors of Boko Haram attack in Kwapre village, home of the Secretary to the Federal government, Boss Mustapha, in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State, live in fear and shock. No fewer than 11 persons were killed with 34 others yet to be found and over 5,000 persons displaced and taking refuge at

Central Primary School, Kwapre. The insurgents took the villagers by surprise, took their time to ransack houses, stores and farms and took all food items, provisions, animals before shooting and burning down houses and all their belongings. The operation lasted for about an hour (from house to house in search of what they wanted) before receding into the Sambisa forest - the base of the Boko Haram insurgents in the axis. The calamity led to the loss of three boys aged 15, 18 and 20 and a girl aged 26 to the attackers fathered by Kefas Duniya (Umar, 2021).

At the northwestern end, no fewer than 83 persons were feared dead following coordinated attacks by bandits in villages in Gusau, Maradun and Bakura Local Government Areas of Zamfara State. It left hundreds of others including women and children displaced with varying degrees of injuries and wounds. In Magami district, about 53 corpses were recovered. There were even fears that the bandits may return to disrupt the burial ceremonies of those that had been killed. The assailants were armed with sophisticated weapons and raided villages on motor cycles. The affected villages were Gobirawa, Gora, Rini and Maboti Dankule of Maradun and Bakura Local Government Areas of Zamfara State. In Magami district of Gusau Local Government Area, the affected villages included Yar Doka, Kango, Ruwan Dawa, Madaba, Arzikin da and Mairairai, the closest of which is seven kilometers from Gusau (Arewa, 2021, pp. 20-21).

In Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, the bandits worked with informants. According to a report by Mosadomi (2021, p. 6) the informants had described the three different houses of prominent businessmen to be raided to the bandits and immediately they arrived, they made straight to the houses of their targets and carried out the raids without any gunshot. 'When they got to the first house, they did not meet their main target and out of anger they abducted five children met at the home.' They 'went to the second house and abducted four persons. The bandits forced the gate open but did not also meet their target at home but kidnapped the wife and three of his children.' The bandits 'forced one of the doors of their third target open and abducted four children who were seated in the room playing.' It was the shooting at one of their targets who escaped that attracted the residents that bandits were in operation. They later demanded ransom of N100 million. In another report, the gunmen who came on motor-cycles had warned the residents, who tried to free the businessman who was their target, to stay away. The locals were adamant and determined to stop the bandits. But the gunmen had superior weapons and fire-power and they overpowered the locals killing many in the process. Ten houses, two motor-cycles and 50 bags of ginger were set ablaze during the attack (Hassan-wuyo, 2021, 6).

At the mercy of the underworld:

For the first time in 50 years, Nigerians have become citizens at the mercy of the men of the underworld. In the south east end, a factional leader of Ndigbo, Isiguzoro argues that from the manner of the attacks on the police, prisons and other State institutions, the gunmen may be

building up for a full scale banditry in the south-south and south-east and called on the Federal government to stem the trend as it may eventually result into attacking prominent individuals and politicians in the regions (Amaize et al, 2021, p. 8). In the north-east, Boko Haram had gone into desperation and to scare off residents from returning to their homes, they plant series of land mines on the roads which sometimes are detected and successfully detonated by Nigerian troops. Edward Kallon of the United Nations, for instance, had stated on the situation in the north-east, 'I am gravely preoccupied by reports of an ongoing violent attack by non-state armed groups in Dikwa, Bornu State during which several aid facilities were directly targeted... The violent attack will affect the support provided to nearly 100,000 people who are desperately in need of humanitarian assistance and protection' (Omonobi & Marama, 2021, p. 32).

The attacks were even taken to the IDP camp where no fewer than seven persons were killed in Abagena in Benue State – a camp with over 21,000 persons (Duru & Agbakwuru, 2021, p. 5). In the Damasak attack in Mobbar Local Government Area of Bornu State humanitarian hubs which were assisting in no small measure to improve the lives of traumatized citizens were targeted. Six persons were killed when a military air-strike assisting ground troops fired at a Boko Haram vehicle that rammed into a family where friends and relatives had gathered in a ceremony. Boko Haram insurgents thereafter went into the General Hospital in Damasak and carted away medical consumables with a brand new ambulance stationed at the facility (Omonobi et al, 2021, p. 5). On 21st April 2021 bandits attacked a military camp in Zazzaga community in Munya Local Government Area of Niger State setting military vehicle ablaze and making away with another. At the same period in Kaduna State, bandits attacked and killed a staff of Greenfield University along Kaduna – Abuja highway in Chikun Local Government Area, the second attack on a tertiary institution after the attack on the Federal College of Forestry and Mechanization, Afaka where 39 students were abducted on 12th March, 2021 (Omonobi et al, 2021, p. 5). The bandits in the Afaka 39 incident demanded ransom in the sum of 800 million.

The negative effects of these atrocities by these heartless monsters include total collapse of local economies, collapse of the educational system, famine due to collapse of agricultural activities, displacement due to desertion and depopulation due to wanton killings. A Senator in a helpless posture lamented, 'It seems the Federal government is handling this insecurity with kid gloves. People are dying every day and nothing is being done. No concrete situation on ground to confront these people. I don't know what else this Senate can do other than appeal to the government' (Umoru, 2021, p. 8)

But the Buhari administration in a show of desperation appealed to the United State Secretary of State, Antony Blinken to intervene and bring Africom headquarters from Germany to Africa to forestall spillovers of the crises into the sub-region (Duru & Agbakwuru, 2021, p. 5). But the Vanguard argued that the bulk of appointments into armed forces, security agencies and critical agencies of the Federal government had favoured northern Muslims which had chiefly been responsible for the general lack of faith in the unity and corporate existence of the nation. Yet it

was the same northern region that was worst hit by insurgency. In the southeast which was relatively peaceful before the coming of the Buhari administration, Police officers were no longer wearing their uniforms to work for fear of being attacked by ‘unknown gunmen.’ Chairman of the National Committee on Peace, General Abdulsalami Abubakar (as cited in Vanguard Comment, 2021, p. 18), who had been fingered for hiring his helicopter to deliver supplies and weapons and ammunitions to bandits, believes that over six million arms had been in circulation illegally and over 80,000 Nigerians had been killed in recent years although, supporters of the Buhari administration had been cautioned against the tendency of measuring the administration’s performance in securing life and property in terms of the number of Nigerians killed by so-called bandits and insurgents (Fasan, 2021, p. 17).

SBM Intelligence (as cited in Eze, 2021, p. 18) has reported that civilians are in possession of more arms than security officials in the country. An estimated 6,145,000 arms in circulation in Nigeria are in the hands of civilian non-state actors while the armed forces and law enforcement agencies put together possess 586,600 firearms. This proliferation of small arms was a major factor fuelling insecurity in the country. Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State (as cited in Eze, 2021, p. 18) has further canvassed that over 30,000 heavily armed bandits are roaming the bushes of the northwest and there are over 100 bandit camps across Kaduna, Zamfara, Kastina, Sokoto, Kebbi and Niger States with each having no fewer than 300 members, while there are less than 6,000 troops operating across northwestern States; and that the Federal government does not have adequate troops to fight the bandits in the region.

Personification of nepotism:

In fact, ‘We saw nepotism follow Buhari like a shadow from Head of State to Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF)’ according to Nnanna (2021, p. 16) before 2015. But ‘We did not see it in this alarming scale’ upon becoming a President. Extreme nepotism has weakened the fabric of the nation beyond repair. It is the primary reason that the armed forces and security agencies have lost heart in their job of defending the country. They know that it is no longer about Nigeria. It is now about an ethnic group’s expansionist agenda. ‘When you put almost all the nation’s economy, ministerial departments and agencies, military, Police and security control in the hands of one ethnic group out of 400 others, you create a massive sense of alienation.’

As long as members of the northern ruling elite who are predominantly Fulani Muslims operating with the hideous agenda of Fulanization and Islamization of the entire country retains their stranglehold on power Nigeria will continue to lurch from one ethno-religious and political crisis to another. In this connection, the major positive thing about Buhari’s failing Presidency is that his unprecedented negative triumphant nepotism has really opened people’s eyes by exposing the colonialist project of the Fulani military-civilian establishment. For this group, southern Nigeria must be subdued to pave way for the establishment of Nigeria as the homeland

for the Fulani in West Africa and the Sahel as explained by Governor Mohammed Bello of Bauchi State (Anele, 2021, p. 14).

Fulani colonization has gained momentum since Buhari's election in 2015. Extremely selfish and myopic politicians in the south are either unaware of the serious existential dangers posed by the Fulani colonialists agenda unfolding before their eyes or are actively helping Buhari and his foot soldiers to entrench it nationwide. Sadly the Fulani have no solid history of creating an egalitarian political system that could serve as solid foundation for its hegemony in Nigeria (Anele, 2021, p. 14). In the foregoing submissions, Anele has answered the national question put forward by Alozie (2021, p. 9) as follows: 'the question is: What do these people really want? As I said earlier, every militancy or war must have a reason. Even the 1st and the 2nd world war have reasons that led to hostilities'. Nigeria-Biafra war had reasons; every campaign has a reason. Anele has provided the reason which is to Fulanize and Islamize Nigeria. Governor Samuel Ortom (as cited in Duru & Agbakwuru, 2021, p. 26) also attempted the question when he stated, 'Mr. President must tell us where we are headed in this country...The body language, the action and inaction of Mr. President, show that he is only the President of the Fulani people.'

Conclusion

It has to be restated in this paper that freedom of religion and personal liberty are not public but private rights and issues. However it is in the utmost interest of the State to ensure that they are guaranteed; and even though they are not absolute rights, their breach must conform to the extant provisions of the law particularly, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). The language of the Nigerian Constitution is that the country shall not adopt any State religion but since independence, the negative role of religion in the promotion of national crisis, conflicts and insecurity has been un-remitting. This is due to the multi-religious composition of the people of the country; and this is what is often referred to as the mistake of 1914.

Although the Colonial State was able to contain the unhealthy religious rivalry through the principles of repugnancy, good conscience and individualization of religion, the cleavage blew up into the open as soon as independence was attained in 1960. And from 1960 to 1966, the unhealthy rivalry was partly responsible for the military takeover. The crisis of state religion could hardly be contained when it blew up into the open again during the Babangida administration leading partly to its overthrow when the regime introduced the country into the Organization of Islamic Countries.

Shortly after the re-introduction of the country into civil rule in 1999, the cleavage again, blew up into the open when Zamfara State government introduced Sharia law to the defiance of the Obasanjo's Federal Government. All the northern states were later to key into the adoption of Sharia law as state religion and ever since then the north, and to a large extent Nigeria, has never known peace. The country became set on a slippery slope. And, as far back as the 1980s, according to Olukoju Ayodeji (2012, pp. 32-33) in *Maritime Terrorism and Piracy, and United*

States interest in the Gulf of Guniea, the introduction of Sharia in northern Nigeria had posed the potential threat of affiliation with global Muslim anti-western sentiments. The affiliation became clearly manifested in May, 2004 in Jos in north-central Nigeria when a state of emergency was imposed. Ever since the 1980s northern cities such as Maiduguri, Kano, Kaduna, Yola-Jemita, Bauchi etc had witnessed bloody clashes between Muslims and Muslim sects, Muslims sects and non-Muslims and Muslims and southern Nigerian settlers in the north. These affiliations of the north with ‘pure’ Sharia can be seen as the culmination of the current extremism of Boko Haram, insurgency and banditry in the north and by extension, the entire country.

The law of the Nigerian constitution forbids the taking of life arbitrarily and so the law of all civilized nations. The right to liberty implies that no one shall be condemned expect through the due process. No one must be condemned unheard. And no one can be forced to follow any spiritual worship against his conscience and will. The sacking of whole villages and their peoples cannot be defended under the laws of nations. The denial of right of worship and the imposition of restrictions on same can also not acceptable under national and international legal regimes.

Recommendation

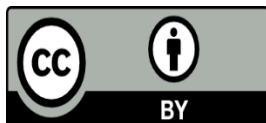
- Government should reverse the country from the slippery slope of violence to enhanced religious tolerance.
- Government should take concrete steps to bring criminals to justice.

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