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THESIS

**HOW VULNERABLE IS NIGERIA TO ISLAM
EXTREMISM?**

by

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June 2011

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the conditions under which a society endorses or is compliant with extremist ideology. Using social movement theory and literature on drivers of violent extremism, the thesis focuses specifically on the potential for religious extremism in Nigeria. Nigeria is particularly important because it is the most populated country in sub-Saharan Africa and it is where both Christianity and Islam, the world's two largest religions, converge. Nigeria also illustrates one of the clearest examples of religion being used politically and the potential for extremism that this presents. Examining Nigeria will test the specific conditions that make a state vulnerable to extremist ideology and offer insights into reducing the expansion of extremist religious groups within similar societies.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Alliance for Democracy
AG	Action Group
ANPP	All Nigeria Peoples Party
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CMS	Christian Missionary Society
DVE	Drivers of Violent Extremism
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MKO	Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (President Abiola's first and middle name)
NCNC	National Convention of Nigerian Citizens
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NNDC	National Nigerian Democratic Party
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NRC	National Republican Convention
NSCIA	National Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SPD	Social Democratic Party
UN	United Nations
UPGA	United Progressive Grand Alliance

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1993, Samuel Huntington argued that in the post Cold War world, international relations would be driven by a “clash of civilizations,” where civilizations are defined by religious differences. Many societies have devolved from moderate and secular belief systems to extremist, religious ideologies, seeming to support Huntington’s hypothesis. Religious extremism and radicalism are equated with a deep-felt desire for fundamental changes to government and/or society. Such a desire for far-reaching reforms can be a constructive catalyst for development and progress in any society, such as the land reforms in India and democratic transitions in Eastern Europe. However, violent extremism and radicalism is the catalyst for change in a society driven by ideologies that promote intolerance, hatred, and violence.¹ The factors that determine why people resort to religious extremism vary from one nation to another. Nowadays, the desire to return to a stricter or fundamental application of religion seems to be prevalent. In this case, those who resort to extremism argue that their religion is being corrupted either by secular governments or corrupt religious leaders. In any case, in order to reverse such a dramatic trend, one should first understand the existing social and political dynamics. The solution applicable to one nation is not necessarily the same as it is to another.

This thesis looks specifically at the rise of extremism in Nigeria. As a key player in the Muslim world, Nigeria, with an estimated 150 million people, is approximately half Muslim and half Christian. Since the nineteenth century, the Sokoto caliphate, the institution that remains the backbone of Nigerian Islam today, has dominated the northern regions of Nigeria.² After the Sokoto Jihad of the late eighteenth century, the Sokoto Caliphate was established as a social and political power to challenge the existing political orders and often succeeded in overthrowing or significantly transforming

¹ “Countering Radicalization Through Development Assistance – A Country Assessment Tool.” (Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2007), 7.

² Stephanie Schwartz, “Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Extremism?” United States Institute of *Peace* *Peacebrief* 27 (2010): 3.

existing political systems. The Sokoto Caliphate is distinct among the other political communities in Nigeria because its only requirement for full citizenship is to be Muslim, without any regard for heritage tribe, or race.³ Although the majority of West African Islam has been influenced by Sufism, the Sokoto Caliphate has maintained a decidedly West African version of Islam, less dependent on outside influences in the Arab World. However, there has been a revival of the Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria in the twentieth century in part due to links in Senegal.⁴ With Nigeria's vast division in ethnicity and religion, Nigeria has experienced years of violence linked to coups, state repression, and intra-ethnic and religious clashes.⁵

Nigeria continues to experience exponential growth in the number, size, and socio-political importance of religious movements within its Christian and Islamic societies.⁶ The northern Nigerian states have become more fundamentalist Islamic with the reintroduction of Sharia law in 1999–2000, codified within the state constitutional law of 12 of Nigeria's 36 states.⁷

Additionally, Christianity and Islam continue to merge and clash within the Middle Belt of Nigeria, where the largest numbers of minority ethnic groups reside, most of whom are Christians and members of traditional African religions, with few Muslim converts. The Middle Belt of Nigeria lacks physical borders but designates the longitudinal, geographic region of central Nigeria, populated largely by minority ethnic groups, and constitutes the ethno-linguistic barrier in the country, drawing a separation between the principally Islamic North and the more secular Christian South. Since the religious and social division in the North and the South, the North has developed—

³ Yusufu Bala Usman, "The Sokoto Caliphate and Nation-Building" (Text of a Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference on the Sokoto Caliphate and its Legacies, Abuja, Nigeria, Monday, June 14, 2004).

⁴ Schwartz, "Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Extremism?" 3.

⁵ Siri Aas Rustad, "Power-sharing Agreements, Negotiations and Peace Processes: Power-sharing, negotiations and Peace Processes," (Oslo: Center for the Study of Civil War International Peace Research Institute, 2008), 8.

⁶ Jonathan C. H. Hill, "Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for Counter-Radicalization?" (Carlyle: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2010), 2–3.

⁷ Schwartz, "Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Extremism?" 3.

socially and politically—at a slower pace than the South. The South has experienced greater development and modernization in education, per capita income, urbanization, commerce and industrialization. “This uneven development has existed in Nigeria since its independence in 1960.”⁸

Nigeria’s post-independence era has been marked by constant instability. In the First and Second Republic, ethnic and religious tensions existed with each region trying to control political power. These tensions continued in the Third and Fourth Republics with a growing trend towards religiously motivated violence.

Most recently, in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, the country has experienced a remarkable increase in the amount of religiously related violence. In 1999, fundamentalist Muslims struck in Kwaya state, destroying more than 14 churches. In February 2000, riots broke in Kaduna and Abia over Sharia law. With the rise of fundamentalist Muslims, violence has also extended to Oyo and Osun. Particularly in Osun, riots were caused by Alfa Mofoye, an Islamic preacher who is said to have taken the town of Saki by surprise with his fiery brand of Islam. The preacher resorted to using unprintable words to describe Jesus Christ and engaged in acts that infuriated Christian groups in the town. Then, in May 2000, religious conflict renewed in Kaduna, resulting in 300 lives lost in less than 24 hours. In November, fanatic Muslims destroyed the ancient Moreni shrine in Offa Kwara state, resulting in several wounded. The year 2000 was one of the most violent years in Nigeria, and religious violence has continued almost every year since then. The increasing number of casualties in various places has made the Fourth Republic one of the bloodiest in years.⁹

To investigate the rise of extremism in Nigeria, this thesis utilizes two theories—Social Movement Theory and Drivers of Violent Extremism—to fully measure the specific dynamics of political and social tensions in Nigeria and the process in which a society and its social organizations are vulnerable to religious extremist ideology, and the passive acceptance of religious extremist organizations. Social movement theory will

⁸ Rustad, *Power-Sharing and Conflict in Nigeria*: Centre for the Study of Civil War, 2008.

⁹ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?* 3.

help determine the grievances raised by each discriminatory group and society within Nigeria, and the mobilizing structures and political opportunities used to engage in violence. The Drivers of Violent Extremism will identify the vulnerable groups within Nigeria and the shared dedication to a particular vision or ideology that collectively brings violent extremists together to change how society ought to be organized, as well as a strong questioning of the foundation upon which their society is presently organized.¹⁰ Furthermore, Drivers of Violent Extremism will identify the motivational factors and triggers inducing each antagonist group to engage in religious violence.

The analysis of Nigeria will determine the underlying causes that induced the growing trend towards religious-motivated conflict in Nigeria. Furthermore, understanding the case of Nigeria and its findings will test the hypotheses formulating the specific circumstances and conditions that make individuals vulnerable to religious extremism, and determine the conditions under which a society will endorse or comply with religious extremist ideology or society's inability to defend itself from the coercion of religious extremism.

This thesis will explore the grievances, motivation, and triggers of violent extremism in Nigeria, paying particular attention to the role of religion in Nigerian politics. First, the thesis will introduce the historical context of Nigeria and the introduction of Islam and Christianity in the country, and also its relations with Europe during the colonial era and afterwards. The chapter will also examine the role that religion played in the political arena of Nigeria in each of the four Republics.

Then this thesis will utilize two theories, Social Movement Theory and Drivers of Violent Extremism, to fully measure the specific dynamics of political and social tensions in Nigeria and the process in which a society and its social organizations are vulnerable to religious extremist ideology. In the analysis, variables drawn from the theories will be used to understand extremism in Nigeria. The concluding chapter will summarize the findings and look at the potential for a rise or decline of extremism in Nigeria.

¹⁰ Guilian Denoeux and Lynn Carter, "USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism," (Washington: USAID, 2009), 12.

II. CONTEXT

To understand tensions in Nigeria and their potential for Islamic extremism, it is necessary to understand the historical, cultural, and political dynamics in the one of the largest and the most populous countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter outlines the historical, social, and economic environment of this country, paying particular attention to the history of ethno-religious tensions in Nigeria.

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the British introduction of Christianity, Nigeria had experienced over 500 years of Islam.¹¹ In general, Islam in West Africa followed the ancient trading routes that linked Egypt to the West African empire of Ghana, which flourished from the eighth century onwards.¹² Muslim traders and scholars thus became the early transmitters of Islamic culture and faith to the region.¹³

Alongside the spread of Islam, another major dynamic that emerged in the region was the kingdom of Songhay, which in the fifteenth century was ruled by Sonni Ali.¹⁴ After the death of Sonni Ali, the empire was ruled by Askiyya Muhammad who extended his rule through a jihad to the Hausa region (today northern Nigeria).¹⁵ Islam further spread in Nigeria through trading routes by land and water. The regions of Kanem and Bornu had been in contact with Muslims in North Africa since the ninth century.¹⁶ Major conversions of the population occurred gradually over the next 400 years. Muslim dynasties were established in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and Sufi communities were well known in the region during that time. The most important Sufi communities

¹¹ Azim A. Nanji, "Islam in West Africa," in *The Muslim Almanac* (Gale Research Inc.), 47.

¹² Niels Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

¹³ Nanji, "Islam in West Africa," in *The Muslim Almanac* (Gale Research Inc.).

¹⁴ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

¹⁵ Nanji, "Islam in West Africa," in *The Muslim Almanac* (Gale Research Inc.).

¹⁶ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

established in West Africa were the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya who, to this day, remain the largest Sufi communities in the region.¹⁷ The trade in gold also caused migration and contacts with Muslims from parts of Hausaland to present-day Nigeria, and the Hausa language and culture became an important medium for the expression of Muslim culture and learning in the region.¹⁸ Eventually, the combination of Islam and language made Hausa the lingua franca of a very large population in West Africa.

In addition to being influenced by the spread of Islam, the Nigerian political environment has also been strongly affected by its long-term relations with Europe. The first contacts between Nigeria and Europeans occurred in the fifteenth century with the Portuguese trading along the coast of Africa. Following this initial contact, many African countries, including Nigeria, provided the labor force for plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas. The slave trade became all the more intense as the demand for labor on various plantations increased; Africans thus became an alternative source of labor.¹⁹ In the eighteenth century, with the rise and domination of the British Empire, Nigeria became a British colony. This period lasted more than a century, from 1850 until 1960. British colonial rule was marked essentially by three phases: the capture of the colony, the taming of the colony and the aftermath of colonialism and the independence era.²⁰

The formation of Nigeria as a colony was not easy for the British. The population's reaction to the occupation was mixed. Some Nigerians actively collaborated and helped the British, while others were passive and defiant. Another fringe of the population resisted the cultural and political invasion of the British and military power was used to subdue the riots and demonstrations. Britain also fought against religious and

¹⁷ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*.

¹⁸ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

¹⁹ John Hatch, *Nigeria: The Seeds of Disaster*, ed. Henry Regnery Company, 1970), 98.

²⁰ Nnamdi Ihuegbu, *Colonialism and Independence: Nigeria as a Case Study* [2002]), <http://www.southernct.edu/organizations/hcr/2002/nonfiction/colonialism.htm> (accessed February 2011), 1.

ethnic groups, particularly when they tried to conquer the Yoruba in the west and Muslim Hausa in the north.²¹ Other confrontations arose in the Igbo states of the Delta region with their rich natural resources.²²

The British used education as a tool to further dominate the Nigerian people and shape their ways of thinking. Specifically, the British used Christian missionary schools to not only educate the population, but convert it to Christianity.²³ During the nineteenth century, the Church Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society were the first British organizations to set up schools in Nigeria. Their work was mostly conducted in the southern half of Nigeria, which was safer than the Muslim North. Some of their achievements included the translation of the Bible into local languages, such as Yoruba and Ibo, the introduction of vocational education, the use of English as the vernacular, and the establishment of a proper code of conduct for the people.²⁴ Civilization for the British meant making Nigeria into what they called “Christian Black Europe,” by isolating them from the evil influences of their pagan past and present.²⁵ A good citizen in Nigeria was equated to one who was African in blood, Christian by religion, and British in culture and intellect.²⁶ The introduction of Christianity in Muslim areas also led to religion-based skirmishes between the local Muslims and the British Christians. An example of these tensions was the formation of a number of Muslim radical movements, such as the Mahdists, whose goal was to cleanse the land of the British.²⁷

Contrary to popular belief, in the early years of Nigerian independence in the 1960s, the country was still under British control. British colonialism made Nigeria and other colonies join diverse superficial political entities, such as the Commonwealth,

²¹ Niels Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

²² Nnamdi Ihuegbu, *Colonialism and Independence: Nigeria as a Case Study* [2002], <http://www.southernct.edu/organizations/hcr/2002/nonfiction/colonialism.htm> (accessed February 2011), 1.

²³ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

²⁴ Ihuegbu, *Colonialism and Independence: Nigeria as a Case Study*, 1.

²⁵ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

²⁶ Ihuegbu, *Colonialism and Independence: Nigeria as a Case Study*, 1.

²⁷ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

which inherently kept them under the British monarchy. In this period, many problems emerged from the newly independent country concerning the struggle amongst the different ethnic groups to share the nation's wealth.

Creating a national identity in the newly independent country was a challenge as increasing political participation and representation reinforced the sub-identities of different groups.²⁸ The various ethnic groups, in other words, could not always surmount their separate group identities in favor of a national interest. The failure, in the early years, of Nigeria's democracy to survive its ethnic conflicts, resulted in endless coup d'états and decades of military rule. In February 2000, Nigeria elected President Olusegun Obasanjo as the first democratically elected president in more than two decades.²⁹ Nigeria is now a federation of thirty-six states with its capital as Abuja, and is currently living under the Fourth Republic, which means the fourth draft of the constitution since its independence. In April 2011, Nigeria had its third presidential elections in the Fourth Republic. The incumbent president, Johnathan Godluck, a Christian from the Niger Delta, was declared the winner. After the announcement of election results, violence broke out, particularly in the northern states where his main contender Muhammad Buhari, originates. Police reported a bomb detonation in a hotel in northern Nigeria, wounding eight people. Other incidents were also reported in the North, including officials' houses burned, and riots.³⁰

B. POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Nigeria has the second largest population in Africa, after Egypt, and the largest population in sub-Saharan Africa, with 138 million inhabitants.³¹ Tied with Turkey and Iran, Nigeria is the sixth largest Muslim country in the world.³² The population is

²⁸ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Voice of America News, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/North-South-Divide-in-Nigerias-Presidential-Election--120001084.html>.

³¹ John N. Paden, "Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria," in The Brookings Institution, (2005).

³² Ibid.

composed of more than 250 ethnic groups of which the following are the most populous and politically influential: Hausa and Fulani 29 percent (North), Yoruba 21 percent (West), Igbo (Ibo) 18 percent (South), Ijaw 10 percent, Kanuri 4 percent, Ibibio 3.5 percent, Tiv 2.5 percent.³³ Half of the population is Muslim and the other half is Christian or animist. Trust among the ethnically diverse population is sometimes shaky. Competition for jobs, education, and other resources also feed the ethnic rivalry.

After the British conquered the region, they set up native authorities throughout Nigeria, under the policy of indirect rule, utilizing preexisting political units for administrative purposes. Initially, the British ruled northern and southern Nigeria as separate colonies.³⁴ In the north, the British identified three distinct political and cultural entities: the Sokoto Empire, which is sometimes referred as the Fulani Empire, the Borno Empire or Kanuri Empire, and the minorities of the middle belt.³⁵ The Muslim north region had been dominated by the Sokoto caliphate since the nineteenth century. The Sokoto Caliphate was established in 1804, following a jihad led by Shehu Dan Fodio and was the largest single Muslim political entity in nineteenth century sub-Saharan Africa.³⁶ The Sokoto Caliphate remains the backbone of Nigerian Islam to this day.

However, the balance of power between the Borno-dominated areas in the northeast and the Sokoto Caliphate-dominated areas has been a constant challenge in Nigerian politics. While much of West African Islam has been influenced by Sufism, the mystical understanding of Islam, the Sokoto Caliphate has maintained a West African version of Islam, less dependent on outside influences in the Arab world.³⁷ Nonetheless, in the twentieth century there has been a revival in Sufi brotherhoods in Nigeria in part

³³ Rotimi T. Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, ed. United States Institute of Peace Press (United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 247.

³⁴ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Philip J. Shea, "Big Is Sometimes Best: The Sokoto Caliphate and Economic Advantages of Size in the Textile Industry" *African Economic History* 34 (2006), 5, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/227347451?accountid=12702>.

³⁷ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace [May 4, 2010]).

due to links with Senegalese Sufis.³⁸ Today, the most prevalent is the Tijaniyya brotherhood, which is also by far the largest Sufi brotherhood in Nigeria and probably in all of West Africa.³⁹

During the colonial period, the British had changed the systems of rule in Nigeria. This was strongest in the central and southern regions, where the systems of indirect rule placed certain Yoruba individuals as the leaders over others. This situation caused tensions and friction, especially among the Yoruba of western Nigeria; the political arrangement was a drastic change from the existing cultural and hierarchical structure of Nigerian culture. Also, under the British system, many villagers were governed by people from other villages with whom they had been at odds, traditionally and historically.⁴⁰ This system was unacceptable to the Yoruba people who felt that their views were not properly represented because they were under the direct rule of their ancestral enemies. Consequently, several Yoruba opposed the system and reacted violently against their intermediate rulers and colonial superiors.⁴¹

In addition to the NSCIA, there are a number of “anti-establishment” Sunni networks gaining strength in Nigeria. While there is no public evidence of a “Taliban” movement, as we know it in Afghanistan, there is a Sunni movement known as the Boko Haram, whose leader died in police custody in July 2009, after he and his followers launched a campaign to challenge the police and the government.⁴² The Boko Haram is a Nigerian Islamic group seeking to impose Sharia Muslim law in the northern states of Nigeria. It purports that Western or non-Islamic education is “sin.” The group was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri by Ustaz Mohammed Yussuf. In 2004, the Boko Haram

³⁸ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰ Nnamdi Ihuegbu, *Colonialism Aand Independance: Nigeria as a Case Study.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, where it set up a base called “Afghanistan.” While the Boko Haram gained notoriety after its violent clashes with the police, it is a relatively small movement in Nigeria.⁴³

Religion has always been an inseparable component of Nigerian society. During the British colonial period, northern Nigeria was ruled by Muslim Sharia law. However, when Nigeria gained independence, criminal jurisdiction was transferred to the national level. In general, religion in Nigeria, whether Islam or Christian, is largely based on ethnic tradition or location. However, religious practices do differ even within the same ethnicity and location, particularly between elites and the grassroots masses. Some Nigerians believe that the north/south dichotomy threatens the existence of the nation. At the same time, many Nigerian leaders have worked hard to build bridges of understanding and to mediate conflicts between the country’s religious factions.

C. ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Nigeria is the number one oil producer in Africa and the world’s tenth largest crude oil producer; the country supplies 7 percent of U.S. oil. The GDP is estimated at \$338.1 billion with an estimated real growth rate of 6.1 percent.⁴⁴ In addition to oil production, Nigeria is an agricultural giant and the main crops are cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, corn, rice, and rubber. However, the main economic power of Nigeria comes essentially from its natural resources: petroleum, tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, zinc, and natural gas. Major industries include crude oil, coal, tin, palm oil, peanuts, cotton, rubber, wood, textiles, cement and other construction materials, food products, chemicals, etc.⁴⁵

Despite sporadic attacks on oil installations, oil production has increased to more than 2 million barrels per day, shy of its earlier peak of 2.6 million.⁴⁶ Natural gas outputs

⁴³ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism.?*

⁴⁴ The CIA World Factbook, "Nigeria."

⁴⁵"Nigeria," *Ox Research Country Profiles*, accessed April 17, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/851496261/fulltext?accountid=12702>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

have also improved significantly. Economic growth is expected to be around 8 percent in 2010, with the nonoil sector also performing very well. In the power industry, Nigeria currently generates the equivalent of one 40-watt light bulb for each of Nigeria's 168 million people.⁴⁷ A power generation increase from 3,700 to 14,000 megawatts is expected to boost the economy by 2013.⁴⁸ Foreign investor interest in the Nigerian banking and power sectors is also likely to boost the economy.

Nigeria's economic power makes it one of the most powerful states in Africa, and the country aspires to the status of regional hegemony. Its creation and subsequent dominance of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a key method by which the country seeks to forge closer sub-regional economic and military cooperation in order to further its long-standing strategic objective of expanding its markets and lessening French influence in West Africa. Nigeria also uses oil diplomacy as a means to achieve regional influence by selling oil to neighbors at concessionary rates.

In addition to economic might, Nigeria has the largest army in sub-Saharan Africa (94,000-strong) and surpasses the combined total of its fourteen neighbors. However, domestic problems raise doubts about its ability to fulfill its leadership ambitions. The country's global reputation has been negatively affected by domestic political instability and corruption.⁴⁹ Within the context of Africa, Nigeria has provided leadership, along with South Africa, on a wide range of issues, from decolonization to regional peacekeeping, to both in the United Nations and African Union. Nigeria is often mentioned as a candidate for permanent membership on the UN Security Council.⁵⁰

Economic grievances have often been a subject of tension between the more educated and rich south, and the more populated northern regions. Because of their numerical advantage, northerners have maintained control over Nigerian politics for several years; however, their region has fewer natural resources than the south where

⁴⁷ "Nigeria," *Ox Research Country Profiles*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution..*

most the country's wealth is derived. These tensions reached their climax in 1967 with the civil war when the Igbo tried to secede from the rest of the federation. The secession was repressed and the federation was maintained.

D. ETHNO-RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN NIGERIA

Religious violence in Nigeria must be understood as part of a complicated political context in a country striving to maintain national unity amongst an ethnically diverse population split evenly between Christians and Muslims. Nonetheless, various forms of ethno-religious tensions have existed throughout all four republics of Nigeria. Each republic was marked by the drafting of a new constitution in an attempt to engineer Nigerian political and cultural structures in a fashion that would keep Nigeria as one federal system.⁵¹ The political spectrum of Nigeria has also been marked by long years of military rule between each republic. Despite military suppression, ethno-religious violence increased throughout each period of military rule.

1. The First Republic (1960–1966)

Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960. The period between this date and the first military coup d'état in January 1966 is usually referred as the First Republic. During this period, political tensions in Nigeria were mostly ethnic. After a plebiscite in February 1961, the northern Cameroons, which are a separate colonial entity, voted to join Nigeria. The country thus became a republic on October 1, 1963 with a constitution that guaranteed a large measure of autonomy to three federal regions: North, East and West. Each of these regions corresponded to a major ethnic group: Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba. This particular alignment of regions with ethnic populations almost guaranteed that political competition would form along ethnic lines in the First Republic.

Nigeria adopted a parliamentary democracy, modeled along British lines, and emphasized majority rule. Unlike many other African countries that adopted a one-party system immediately after independence, Nigeria chose a regionally based multi-party

⁵¹ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution*.

system. A sound constitution and multi-party system, however, were not enough to guarantee the survival of the newly formed state, and basic structural weaknesses remained. One of the most significant weaknesses was the disproportionate power of the Muslim North in the federation. The departing colonial authority had hoped that the development of national politics would prevent or obstruct any potential ethnic domination of power, underestimating the effects of a regionalized party system in a country where political power depended on the mobilization of ethnic groups.

Around the late 1940s and early 1950s, major regional political parties emerged with the aim of controlling power in their own regions. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG), which controlled the Northern Region and the Western Region respectively, emerged this way. Also, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which controlled the Eastern Region and the Midwestern Region, began as a national party but was forced by the pressure of regionalism to become primarily an Eastern party despite its strong support elsewhere in the federation. Each one of these regional parties was based upon, and derived their main support from, the major ethnic groups in their regions: NPC (Hausa/Fulani), AG (Yoruba), and NCNC (Igbo). A remarkable and more ideologically-based political party that never achieved significant power was Aminu Kano's radical Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), which opposed the NPC in the north from its Kano base.⁵²

In the general election of 1959, the first in the immediate postcolonial period, the major parties won a majority of seats in their regions, but none emerged powerful enough to constitute a national government. A coalition was, therefore, necessary between the NPC and the NCNC. This coalition provided a north-south alliance that would not have been possible if the NCNC and the AG had formed a coalition. Later on, tensions started to spark within the coalition government. The senior partner began trying to increase power in favor of the northern region on the premise that the northern region had a political advantage derived from its preponderant size and population. The southern region on the other hand, had the economic advantage as most of the exported

⁵² Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

agricultural products come from their region, in addition to their control of the federal bureaucracy. The NPC clearly sought to redress northern economic and bureaucratic disadvantages. The reactions to the fear of northern dominance, and especially the steps taken by the NCNC to counter the political dominance of the North, accelerated the collapse of the first republic.⁵³

By the time of the 1964 general elections, the country's politics had polarized into competition between two opposing alliances: the Nigerian National Alliance made up of the NPC and the NNDC (i.e., a northern party), and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) composed of the NCNC, the AG, and their allies (constituting a "southern" alignment). Each regional party openly intimidated its opponents in the campaigns. The Federal Electoral Commission could not guarantee neutrality and the army was called to supervise the elections. The UPGA resolved to boycott the elections, the Western Region became a theater of war between the NNDC (and the NPC) and the AG-UPGA. The rescheduled regional elections became violent. The federal government refused to declare a state of emergency and the military seized power on January 15, 1966 in a coup that marked the collapse of the First Republic.⁵⁴

Another illustration of these struggles and violence happened in 1967 with the failed Biafra secession and the civil war from 1967–1970. The Igbo people, an ethnic group fighting for equal socio-political participation under the leadership of Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, decided to secede from the rest of Nigeria and form a new country, the Biafra. The chain of events began with the 1966 coup led by General Aguyi Ironsi, an Igbo officer who toppled the government of Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, a northerner, killing about fifteen people. This revolution brought hope for socio-political equality to the oppressed Igbo. But the celebration was short-lived as General Ironsi proved unable to manage the political situation produced by the coup. The failure of Ironsi led to the counter coup of July 1966, which was headed by Northerner Lt. Col Yakubu Gowon.

⁵³ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

⁵⁴ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict in Resolution*.

The Biafra secession was crushed along with all the hopes of the Igbo people; oppression and exclusion continued. The counter coup, also called the “Northern Revenge,” cost the lives of 214 people, mostly Igbo.

2. The Second Republic (1979–1983)

Ethnic and regional tensions remained present in the Second Republic despite the various efforts by both the political leaders and the clergy. Following the assassination of Nigerian Military Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed, in 1976, his successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, initiated the transition process to terminate military ruling in 1979. Obasanjo's military junta drafted a new constitution that mandated that political parties and cabinet positions reflect the “federal character” of the nation. Political parties were, therefore, required to be registered in at least two thirds of the states, and each state was required to produce at least one cabinet member. The widely monitored election of 1979 saw the election of Alhadji Shehu Shagari on the NPN platform; on October 1, 1979, he was sworn in as the President and Commander-in Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.⁵⁵

However, the Second Republic’s administration was accused of being biased against minorities.⁵⁶ As a result, political activism progressively raised voices criticizing the corruption of the government of Shehu Shagari.

The Second Republic also witnessed a critical religious incident give rise to a new form of religious activism and violence that had not been seen before: the Maitatsine Incidents:

An Islamic cult known as the Maitatsine, which started in the late 1970s and operated throughout the 1980s sparked riots in Kano, Kaduna, and Maiduguri after police tried to control its activities. The disturbances caused by this group in Kano alone resulted in the death of 4,177 in 1980. The second religious riots happened in 1982 at

⁵⁵ Richard Joseph, "Challenges of A "Frontier" Region," *Journal of Democracy* (April 2008), 94 (accessed April 2011).

⁵⁶ Abu Bakarr Bah, "Approaches to Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Nigeria," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 32 (2004), 45.

Bulumkutu on the outskirts of Maiduguri, Borno State, and Kaduna. These riots were masterminded by Maitatsine's lieutenants after his death. Their violence cost the lives of about 400 people and millions of dollars worth of property destroyed. The group was led by a mystical leader from Cameroon who claimed to have divine revelations superseding those of the prophet. The cult had its own mosques and preached a doctrine antagonistic to established Islamic and societal leadership; its message appealed primarily to marginal and poverty-stricken urban immigrants. These disaffected adherents ultimately lashed out at the more traditional mosques and congregations, resulting in violent outbreaks in several cities in the north.

In order to appease religious tensions in the 1980s, Nigerian Muslims initiated an effort to bring all the disparate Islamic movements in Nigeria under one umbrella through the National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA). This organization is now the leading Islamic organization for Nigeria. By tradition, the Sultan of Sokoto is the president of the NSCIA, the Shehu of Borno is the vice president, and a distinguished Yoruba legal scholar is the general-secretary.⁵⁷

The Shagari administration was ejected in a military coup led by General Muhammadu Buhari on New Year's Eve 1983. The new military ruler cited charges of corruption and administrative incompetence as reasons for military intervention. President Shagari was placed under house arrest, and several members of his cabinet were either jailed or exiled. This coup marked the collapse of the second republic.⁵⁸ Even though ethnic tension tended to disappear in the political system, the Maitatsine Crisis gave inspiration to a new form of social tension on religious lines that would also be recouped by politicians.

3. The Third Republic (1993–1999)

After another decade of military rule, the constitution of the Third Republic was drafted in 1989 when General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, the military head of state,

⁵⁷ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?*

⁵⁸ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution*.

promised to terminate military rule by 1990. Babangida lifted the ban on political activity in the spring of 1989, and his government established two political parties: the center-right National Republican Convention (NRC) and the center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP). The goal of having only two political parties was to prevent them from forming along ethnic, regional or religious lines. State legislative elections were conducted in December 1991, while the presidential elections were postponed until June 1993. MKO Abiola, a wealthy Yoruba businessman, won a decisive victory in the presidential elections on the SPD platform. On June 23, 1993, Babangida annulled the elections causing the country to fall into chaos. One of the main reasons why Babangida annulled the election was the fact that Abiola, the newly elected president, was a Southern Christian. Had Abiola been either Northern or Muslim, the elections would have probably stood. Finally, IBB bowed to pressure from his inner circle and resigned from office on August 23, 1993. At this time, Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba businessman and the head of IBB's transition team, assumed the presidency as the head of the Interim National Government. Shonekan was unable to manage the political turmoil that ensued in the following months and his government was quietly removed from office by General Sani Abacha, then Minister of Defense, on November 17, 1993.⁵⁹

The Third Republic also witnessed an increase in religious violence. On May, 5 1993, there was a clash between two Muslim sects over the mosque built in the Tunda Waga area of the Brigade Quarters metropolis. Two people, including a police officer, were killed. In 1995, Gideon Akaluka, was murdered by Islamic militants while imprisoned for allegedly having used the Qur'an to clean himself after defecating.

On September 18, 1996, thirty-five Sunni members protested the arbitrary detention of their leader, Mallam Ibrahim El-Zaky, and attacked a police station. On July 25, 1997, the Sunnis in Kaduna state protested the refusal of the authorities to allow them to stage a demonstration in solidarity with their leader Ibrahim El Zaky-Zaky whose 1995 arrest allegedly followed clashes between Shi'ite Moslems and Christians in the town of Kafanchan, south of Kaduna. The police fired tear gas canisters to disperse the group

⁵⁹ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*.

who was shouting Islamic slogans. Four people were killed in the demonstrations. On September 19, 1998, five people were killed following a clash between security men and a Muslim group, believed to be members of the Sunni branch of Islam, at the end of Jumat prayers at Fagge Jumat mosque in Kano. This was in retaliation for the group that organized an illegal protest demanding the release of their leader, Ibrahim El Zaky-Zaky. On December 13, 1998, irate Muslim fundamentalists vandalized several churches in the Maduguri metropolis, burning two vehicles over what they claimed to be the imposition of Christian religious studies in state schools.

After the death of the Nigerian military ruler, General Sani Abacha, in 1998, his successor, General Abdusalami Abubakar, initiated a transition in order to return to democratic rule by 1999. Some of the measures to be taken included lifting the ban on political activities and the release of political prisoners from detention facilities. A new constitution was styled after the ill-fated Second Republic and the American presidential system. Political parties were formed (PDP, ANPP and AD) and elections were set for April 1999. These elections were widely monitored and saw the election of former military ruler, Olusegun Obasanjo, on the PDP platform. On May, 29, 1999, Obasanjo was sworn in as president and commander-in-chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

4. The Fourth Republic (1999–Present)

The Fourth Republic marked the peak of religious-related violence. In 1999, fundamentalist Muslims struck in Kwaya State, destroying more than fourteen churches. The year 2000 marked another peak in religiously motivated violence, particularly between Muslims and Christians. In February, riots broke out in Kaduna over Sharia and many people were killed; more riots expanded to other states such as Abia State, but Kaduna State was the center of extreme violence and riots resulting in many more deaths. With the rise of fundamentalist Muslims, violence extended to Saki, Oyo State, and Iwo in Osun State. In this particular state, riots were caused by Alfa Mofoye, an Islamic preacher who is said to have taken the town of Saki by surprise with his fiery brand of Islam. The preacher resorted to using unprintable words to describe Jesus Christ and engaged in acts that infuriated Christian groups in the town. In May 2000, religious

conflict was renewed in Kaduna, resulting in 300 lives lost in less than twenty-four hours. In November, fanatic Muslims destroyed the ancient Moreni shrine in Offa Kwara State resulting in several wounded. If the year 2000 was one of the most violent years in Nigeria, the violence did not end there. Religious violence has continued almost every year since then, with increasing numbers of casualties in various places, thus making the Fourth Republic era the bloodiest in terms of religiously motivated violence.

In the 1999–2000 elections, the twelve most northern states re-established Sharia criminal law, binding Muslims only. Each of the twelve states began to interpret Sharia criminal law in a slightly different way. In the central states, many feared that Sharia would be applied to Christians. This fear led to demonstrations in which Christian protestors took over the governor’s office, setting off a wave of killings and reprisals. Tensions between Christians and Muslims over the role of Sharia tend to split the country politically. However, in the 2007 elections, the issue was no longer as politically charged. Tensions over Sharia were tempered at the national level but other issues related to religion, such as balancing ethno-religious representation in political parties and establishing nonpreferentialism for religion in politics, remained a concern in local and national politics.⁶⁰

Since independence in 1960, there have been various efforts at both the national and the grassroots levels to promote interfaith dialogue and communications between Muslims and Christians with the aim of preventing an outbreak of violence and promote ethno-religious tolerance and federal cohesion. On the national level, the leaders of NSCIA and the Christian umbrella group, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), have stated their commitment to interfaith dialogue and some form of peace building between the two communities. The government of Nigeria has also used a variety of mechanisms to manage religious conflict for the sake of national unity. For instance, in the 1990s, the government moved the federal capital from Lagos, in the southwest, to Abuja, a city with

⁶⁰ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?* 3.

a symbolically neutral location in the center of the country, and hence much closer to the Muslim north. Abuja became home to both a national mosque and a Christian ecumenical center.⁶¹

E. CONCLUSION

Maintaining national unity in Nigeria has always been a particular challenge because of the religious and ethnic diversity of the country. If the first form of tensions were based on purely ethnic factors, over the years this violence has tended to shift to religious motivations. Understanding the drivers of Nigeria's ethno-religious tensions can help predict how the current situation in Nigeria will evolve over time.

Nigeria's civilian presidencies have been profoundly affected by the centralized practices under military rule. Nonetheless, the state has managed to function by recognizing its regional and geo-cultural zones and allowing power to be shared across these areas. As a result, political alliances across regions and ethno-religious groups have become a necessary condition for national unity.⁶² This is why Nigeria relies on both traditional cultural and more modern mechanisms to resolve conflicts. Nigeria is a case of central models of conflict and broader issues, both in Africa and in U.S.-Muslim world relations.⁶³

Despite setbacks, including the numerous outbreaks of ethno-religious violence, Nigeria has not disintegrated. The various governments and authorities have somewhat succeeded in maintaining institutions that can promote democracy and national integration.⁶⁴ Over the years, Nigerians have learned that peace and unity cannot be realized without the proper political representation of all ethnic groups as well as the fair and equitable distribution of its natural resources.⁶⁵ Consequently, nation-building has largely centered on designing institutions that structurally embody these ideals.

⁶¹ Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?*

⁶² Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution*.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bah, *Approaches to Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Nigeria*, 45.

⁶⁵ Bah, *Approaches to Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Nigeria*, 45.

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III. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The purpose of this chapter is to present two theoretical lenses for analyzing extremism: the Social Movement Theory and Drivers of Violent Extremism. Social Movement Theory (SMT) posits that the combination of political opportunity for collective action, informal or formal mobilizing structures and framing processes present in a society where grievances exist, induce change in an institutional structure or the informal power of a given national political system.⁶⁶ SMT enables one to analyze whether Nigeria is vulnerable to Islamic extremism as the consequence of Nigerians taking direct action against the state of Nigeria over social and political injustices and inequalities. However, those who lead and participate in social movements generally intend to create change through mass protests and political negotiations in order to create pressure on the government and compel it to confront the current injustice.⁶⁷

However, SMT alone does not explain the political unrest in Nigeria. Some groups, particularly Islamic extremist groups in Nigeria, seek to change the political and social status quo through acts of violence and terrorism. In order to understand the motives and goals of these groups, Drivers of Violent Extremism will be used to explain why a society resorts to terrorism to foster change. Together, both Social Movement Theory and Drivers of Violent Extremism provide the framework for analyzing Nigeria's vulnerability to Islamic extremism.

A. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY (SMT)

Scholars hypothesize that social movements occur when the following three factors exist: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes.

⁶⁶. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2, 3.

⁶⁷. Martin Luther King, Jr., letter from author, April 16, 1963.

Political opportunity considers the openness of a political environment to change.⁶⁸ Political opportunities are present when there is the possibility of “changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system.”⁶⁹ Additionally, such political opportunities “account for cross-national differences in the structure, extent, and success of comparable movements on the basis of differences in the political characteristics of the nation states in which they are embedded.”⁷⁰ Hence, social movements are shaped by broad political constraints and opportunities exclusive to each individual nation.

Mobilizing structures are the collective organizations, informal and formal, through which people mobilize in a collective action. Political systems shape the prospects for collective action and its associated movements, thus the influence of political systems is not independent of the numerous mobilizing structures. Two distinct theoretical perspectives of mobilizing structures exist: resource mobilization and the political process model.⁷¹

Resource mobilization theory focuses on the process of mobilization through formal organizations. It posits that social movements cannot occur without formal organizations to mobilize people.⁷² The second theory of mobilizing structures is the political process model, which credits existing social structures and their dynamics, like neighborhoods, community groups, occupational groups, and so on with facilitating collective action. For example, local churches and college institutions and informal friendship networks led to significant bounds in the early stages of the American civil rights and women’s liberation movement.⁷³

⁶⁸. McAdam, et al., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2, 3.

⁶⁹. Ibid.

⁷⁰. Ibid.

⁷¹. Ibid.

⁷². Ibid., 3–4.

⁷³ Ibid., 4.

Lastly, the framing process considers the ways in which grievances, and their solutions, are described and explained to affected groups. In addition to political opportunities and mobilizing structures, two perceptions must be present for the framing process to occur: grievances and optimism. Grievances, in some aspect of the lives of the persons mobilized, and the hope that the situation can be changed must exist in order to encourage collective action. McAdam et al. hypothesize that: “Lacking either one or both of these perceptions, it is highly unlikely that people will mobilize even when afforded the opportunity to do so. Conditioning the presence or absence of these perceptions is that complex of social psychological dynamics, collective attribution and social construction, referred to as framing processes.”⁷⁴

When all three factors are present—political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes—the likelihood of a social movement increases.⁷⁵ However, social movements possess another identity, a sacred-social phenomenon called religion. The worldviews, moral systems, theodicies, and organizations of religion legitimate and preserve social, political, and economic systems, and religion has the ability to challenge and overturn these systems as well. Religion has the capacity to mobilize, promote, and abet social movements and the organized efforts of opposing groups within a society to promote or resist social change through disruptive means. When studying social movement theory, one cannot ignore religion because religion enables one to accurately identify and understand the cultural, expressive, ideological, emotional, and symbolic elements of collective action.⁷⁶

Religion is a cultural meaning-system, oriented toward the sacred or supernatural. Meaning-systems are the patterns of purpose and significance by which people make their lives meaningful. The created meaning-systems are what societies commonly refer to as “culture,” a “social group’s conglomeration of shared codes, norms, values, beliefs,

⁷⁴. McAdam, et al., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, 5.

⁷⁵. Ibid.

⁷⁶. Christian Smith, ed., *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith In Social-Movement Activism*, “Collecting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In” (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1, 4.

and symbols that tell its members what to do with their lives and why.⁷⁷ Culture gives life meaning. It orients people to the world they inhabit, providing a sense of direction and purpose.” Sociologically, religion gives the people of social movements collective meaning and direction.⁷⁸

Since the late eighteenth century, Nigerian Islam has been used as a social and political power to challenge the existing political orders, and has succeeded in overthrowing or significantly transforming existing political systems.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the northern Nigerian states have become more fundamentalist Islamic with the reintroduction of Sharia law in 1999–2000, codified within the state constitutional law of twelve of Nigeria’s thirty-six states.⁸⁰ Therefore, using the framework of social movement theory—political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes—in conjunction with religion, the influential, sacred-social phenomenon characteristic of social movement, enables one to examine whether the organizational conditions and framework and the Islamic motivations, collective meanings, and direction are present in Nigeria to induce an Islamic extremist social movement.

B. DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM (DVE)

Those who assess what factors drive people to take up violent extremism present another perspective in assessing when and why groups may mobilize under the banner of religion. Within this school, religious extremism is just one form of extremism; other forms include social, political, and ethnic extremism. As understood here, religion is a set of beliefs and practices that are followed by a group, and which concern the cause,

⁷⁷. Smith, *Disruptive Religion*, 5.

⁷⁸. Ibid., 4.

⁷⁹. Yusufu Bala Usman, “The Sokoto Caliphate and Nation-Building” (Text of a Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference on the Sokoto Caliphate and its Legacies, Abuja, Nigeria, June 14, 2004).

⁸⁰. Schwartz, *Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism?* 3.

nature, and purpose of the universe. Religion can have both a positive and a disruptive face. Sociologist Christian Smith states: “Religion can help to keep everything in its place. But it can also turn the world upside-down.”⁸¹

Explanations of why individuals resort to violent extremism frequently stress the “root causes,” “structural factors,” or “underlying conditions.”⁸² Social movement theory does not address the specific root causes or motivations and triggers that induce the collective groups to take action. Drivers of violent extremism focus on three factors in particular—structural, motivational, and triggering factors—with the aim of identifying conditions leading to extremist mobilization.⁸³ For example, when considering the rise of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria in 1992, the structural factors that contributed to popular support included the strong state apparatus, lack of popular political participation, lack of basic human rights, and a weak civil society. Lack of political opportunity created one motivational factor—the absence of political channels for expressing dissent. Other motivational factors included the lack of social services provided and severe unemployment. Last, it was the cancellation of elections in 1992, signifying even further lack of political opportunity that triggered the emergence of the Islamic Salvation Front.⁸⁴

Denoeux and Carter argue that root causes and underlying conditions for extremism—such as strongly held ideas, beliefs, identity, faith and deeply felt convictions to extremist movements—are manifest in three ways: creating the inspiration, motivation, and mechanisms for joining and staying in such groups; providing moral justifications for resorting to violence; and facilitating organizational coherence and capacity. However, they are quick to note that specific “underlying conditions” do not directly correlate with violent extremism. “Social and economic root

⁸¹. Smith, *Disruptive Religion*, 1.

⁸². Guilian Denoeux and Lynn Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” (Washington: USAID, 2009), 8.

⁸³. Huma Haider, ed., “Drivers of Extremism,” (Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2007), 2.

⁸⁴. *Ibid.*, 2.

causes” in particular, do not automatically translate into extremism.⁸⁵ Issues of poverty, unemployment, lack of public services, and economic stagnation do not appear to be the central preoccupation of many violent extremist organizations. Instead, leaders and spokespersons for violent extremist movements are more concerned with issues of identity, existential threats, and cultural domination or oppression within society.⁸⁶ Additionally, extremist ideology allures specific segments of society. Before measuring the susceptibility of a society to extremism, one must identify the *vulnerable* and the structural and motivational factors and triggers composing these vulnerable groups.⁸⁷

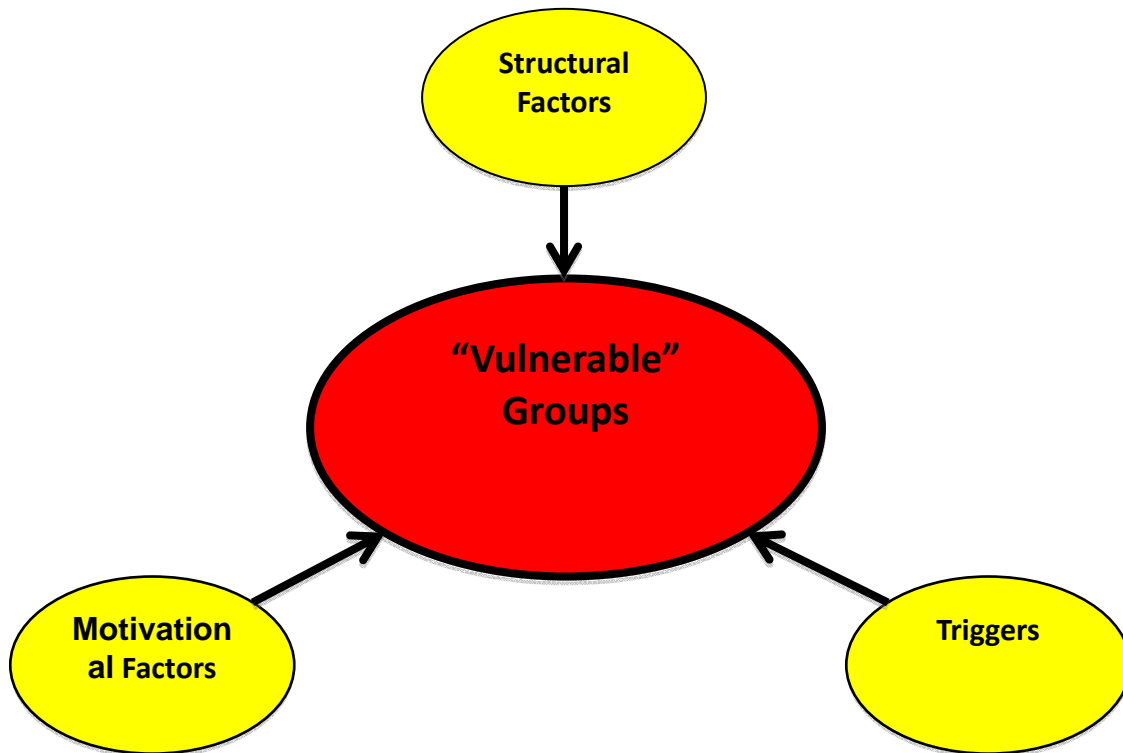


Figure 1. Vulnerable Groups (From ⁸⁸)

⁸⁵. Denoeux and Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” 11.

⁸⁶. Denoeux and Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” 11.

⁸⁷. “Countering Radicalization Through Development Assistance – A Country Assessment Tool” (Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2007), 16.

⁸⁸. Ibid., 10.

Structural factors are long-term risks that make some societies susceptible to radicalization, and describe pervasive conditions that become defining elements of society over time. In regards to extremism and radicalization, structural factors are divided into negative factors that advance the development of extremism, and positive factors that hinder the advancement of extremism. For example, within the same society, one may find a long-standing culture of violence that eases the acceptance of extremism along with a long-standing tradition of political tolerance and openness, which stalls the appeal of radical ideologies. Often, the focus is on identifying the negative factors. However, one should not lose sight of the positive factors because they point to inherent local strengths that contribute to countering the emerging process of radical extremism.⁸⁹

Political factors refer to governance, political systems, representation, rule of law, power sharing, and conflict management.⁹⁰ Denoux and Carter argue that political environments with the following factors are more prone to generate violent extremism: denial of basic political rights and civil liberties or political exclusion; highly repressive regimes that engage in gross violations of human rights; endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites; the presence of safe havens that are poorly governed, or ungoverned spaces; pre-existing, protracted and violent local conflicts that can be exploited by organizations seeking to advance their own agendas; state sponsorship of violent extremist groups; and discredited regimes with weak or nonexistent oppositions.⁹¹

Weak democratic governance can also give rise to domestic terrorists groups. Therefore, consolidated, mature democracies and totalitarian states are less likely to experience domestic terrorism than semi-authoritarian states.⁹² Similarly, the absence of political reforms and of an establishment of participatory political inclusion and representation promote extremism.⁹³

⁸⁹. “Countering Radicalization Through Development Assistance – A Country Assessment Tool,” 11.

⁹⁰. Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 2.

⁹¹. Denoux and Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” 27.

⁹². Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 3.

⁹³. “Report of the International Workshop On Global Terrorism, Terror, and Response Strategies” (Alexandria: SMWIPM Peace Studies Institute and Strategic Foresight Group, 2006), 17.

Furthermore, global political factors, such as the legacy of colonialism or occupation, may drive violent extremism as a counter to the threat of occupation. For example, terrorist attacks influenced the withdrawal of the British Empire in Egypt and Palestine, and the withdrawal of France in Algeria.⁹⁴ Similarly, many perceive the role of the United States in world affairs and global security, specifically regarding Iraq and Afghanistan, as neocolonialism. U.S. military occupation of both of these countries sparked insurgencies aimed at ousting its presence.

Socio-economic factors are another potential driver of extremist activity, specifically, the welfare and livelihood of the people within the state, including employment opportunities and access to social services and education.⁹⁵ Although these conditions may be powerful factors in explaining terrorism and insurgency, there are arguments that the reduction of poverty and rapid change in economic growth alone will not eradicate terrorism. Regarding violence of a nonpolitical nature, economic inequalities are a critical explanatory factor. Global studies of violent crime have found a significant correlation with socio-economic inequalities, but there is little or no correlation found with regard to political violence. More findings support “a relationship between average per capita income across countries and civil conflict, than between income inequality within a country and civil conflict. There is also evidence that many countries seem to tolerate increased inequality without greater exposure to violent conflict as long as there is economic growth.” However, it is certain that large socio-economic inequalities generate more conflict if economic growth prospects are negative, and if these inequalities are reinforced by political grievances like ethnic discrimination.⁹⁶

Security is another important condition that could facilitate the creation of extremist organizations.⁹⁷ Specifically, states may offer extremists safe havens through

⁹⁴. Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 3.

⁹⁵. Ibid., 2, 3.

⁹⁶. LIA Brynjar and Skjolberg Katja, “Causes of Terrorism: An Expanded and Updated Review of the Literature” (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2004), 27.

⁹⁷. Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 2.

poorly governed spaces, areas of protracted local conflicts, and discredited regimes. All of these conditions are susceptible to exploitation by violent extremist organizations. Therefore, Denoeux and Carter argue that violent extremists are more drawn to weak states.⁹⁸

Finally, motivational and triggering factors are incidents—often volatile and diverse—that unleash the underlying pressure caused by existing structural factors.⁹⁹ In other words, triggering factors are the sparks that ignite the fuel. Religious rituals and public debate on culturally sensitive issues can be motivational factors driving violent extremism under certain structural conditions.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, powerful ideologies and deeply felt convictions are the primary motivations behind numerous forms of violent extremism. Values and beliefs provide moral justifications for violence; the perceived presence of a compelling moral imperative is required for an individual to convince himself that it is acceptable and necessary to resort to any means necessary. Self-interest, narrow grievances, the search for power or wealth, or the desire to advance particular political agendas motivate many violent extremists. But what brings violent extremists together is their shared dedication to a particular vision of how society ought to be organized and their strong questioning of the foundation upon which their society is presently organized.¹⁰¹ Additional motivational factors that drive violent extremism are recent social and political developments, the state’s ability to secure its sovereignty and citizens, and new influences of culture and religion amongst the state’s citizens.¹⁰²

C. ALIGNING SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY WITH DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA

In past case studies, lasting successful political and social changes were due to social movements where the primary source of emergence was religion. “From the black civil rights movement to Poland’s Solidarity movement, from the Nicaraguan revolution

⁹⁸. Denoeux and Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” 27.

⁹⁹. Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 2.

¹⁰⁰. Ibid.

¹⁰¹. Denoeux and Carter, “USAID Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism,” 12.

¹⁰². Haider, “Drivers of Extremism,” 2.

of 1979 to the South African anti-apartheid movement, from Gandhi's movement for Indian independence to the US Central America peace movement of the 1980s, people and organizations of faith have contributed indispensable resources to the mobilization of disruptive political activism."¹⁰³ However, SMT alone does not capture the specific ideological, faith based, or ethnic and tribal, or economic and structural factors motivating action from within such collective groups. On the other hand, drivers of extremism identify the negative factors that advance the development of violent extremism, and positive factors that hinder the advancement of violent extremism.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, with SMT, one will identify and examine whether the existing structural and political factors in Nigeria present political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes for a collective, Islamic-driven social movement. Furthermore, the addition of the drivers of violent extremism enables one to identify and assess the structural, motivational, and triggering factors to measure the vulnerability of Nigeria to Islamic extremist ideology, recruitment, and the passive acceptance of religious extremist organizations, and distinguish and isolate the specific causes inducing extremist action.

By combining the conditions and goals of SMT with the motivations of the drivers of violent extremism, it is possible to construct a dual-theory lens that not only identifies and examines whether the existing structural and political factors in Nigeria present political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes for a collective social movement, but also measure the structural, motivational, and trigger factors that may indicate Nigeria's vulnerability to Islamic extremist ideology, recruitment, and the active or passive acceptance of religious extremist organizations.

¹⁰³. Smith, *Disruptive Religion*, 2.

¹⁰⁴. "Countering Radicalization Through Development Assistance – A Country Assessment Tool," 11.

Social Movement Theory

Drivers of Violent Extremism

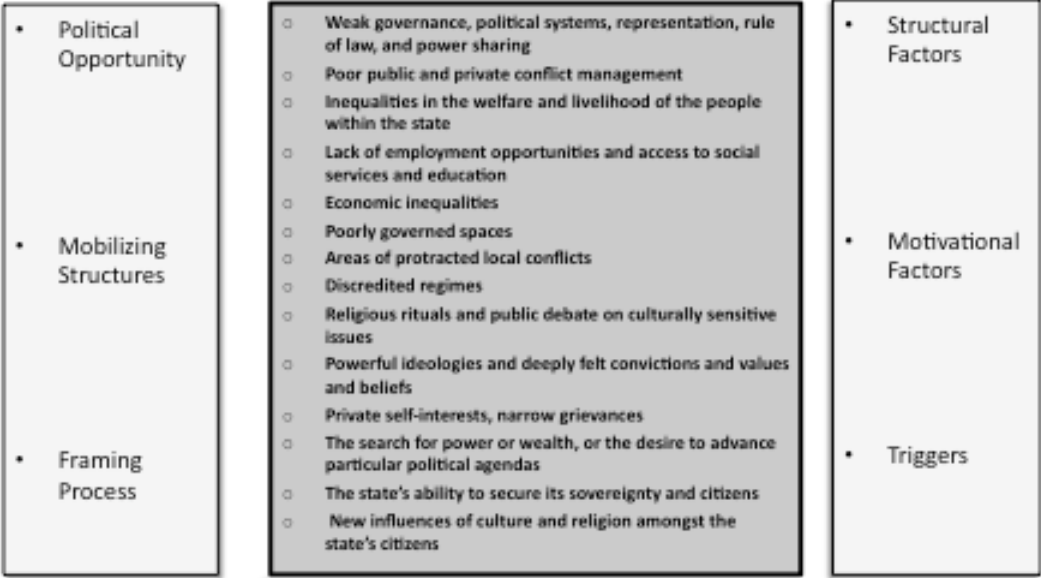


Figure 2. Combining Social Movement Theory and Drivers of Violent Extremism

The following chapter will use this combined framework of SMT and drivers of violent extremism to look longitudinally at Nigeria’s turbulent political and social history since independence. It will pay particular attention to the current rise of islamically motivated violence in the country to see whether Nigeria is vulnerable to the spread of Islamic ideology, including Al Qaeda’s message.

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IV. ANALYSIS

Violence in Nigeria has always been linked to military coups, state repression or intra ethnic and religious clashes. The history of post-colonial Nigeria shows a period of tension along ethnic, regional and religious lines. As the battle for political control between different ethnic groups and political parties continues, religion tends to become a major factor for mobilizations. Throughout the post-colonial era, tensions have almost always led to extreme violence.

In this chapter, we will use three main variables to analyze how social tensions led to extreme violence and how religion is used in Nigerian politics. From Social Movement Theory and the Drivers of Religious Extremism theories, we will examine the grievances associated with minority groups, the mobilizations at hand, and the triggers of extreme violence. This analysis will cover the first part of the post-colonial era, the First and Second Republics, then in the second part, the Third and Fourth Republics. As we analyze these social tensions, this chapter will also help determine the growing trend towards religious violence.

A. TENSIONS IN THE FIRST AND SECOND REPUBLICS

In the First and Second Republics, both religious and ethnic tensions were present. Religion in itself was critical due to the fact that the unified Muslim North opposed the diversified Christian South. Drawing from our analytical framework, we will analyze the grievances, motivations, and triggers that led to violence.

1. First Republic

a. Grievances

During the First Republic, grievances arose over the fear of ethnic and tribal domination. The newly independent country was faced with the challenge of administering in a multi-ethnic environment and was characterized by intense competition between the three regions. The question, then, was to determine which tribal

or ethnic group would control the new federal government. Controlling the government also meant controlling economic resources through the federation.

Political conflicts were often formulated in religious and ethnic terms. The ethnic minority fought to maintain their independence from the Muslim Hausa–Fulani hegemony.¹⁰⁵ During the period that followed independence, Nigeria was split into three geopolitical regions: the Western Region dominated by the Yoruba (21 percent of the population), the Northern Region, dominated by the Hausa/Fulani (29 percent of the population) and the Eastern Region, dominated by the Igbo (18 percent of the population).¹⁰⁶ The division of the political parties was mainly along regional lines. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North, the National convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) in the East and the Action Group (AG) in the West.¹⁰⁷ Because no party was able to win the majority in any election, two opposing alliances were formed: the Nigerian National Alliance made up of the NPC and the NNDC (i.e., a northern party), and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) composed of the NCNC, the AG, and their allies (constituting a "southern" alignment).¹⁰⁸ The NPC, which was led by Sardauna Ahmadu Bello, ruled the northern region and was the dominant force in the coalition running the Nigerian federation.¹⁰⁹ Northerners wished to enhance their influence relative to the more developed South while preserving their religious and cultural identity.

Another grievance arose over the 1962 census. The Eastern political coalition was hoping that the regional power balance could shift if the 1962 census favored the south.¹¹⁰ During the First Republic, population determined the allocation of

¹⁰⁵ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity* (London: British Academic Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Peil, *Nigerian Politics: The People's View*, Cassel & Company Limited ed. (London, 1976). 8.

¹⁰⁷ Bamidele A. Ojo, *Nigeria's Third Republic: The Problems and Prospects of Political Transition to Civil Rule*, ed. Bamidele A. OjoNova Science Publishers, Inc., 1998).

¹⁰⁸ John M. Ostheimer, *Nigerian Politics*, ed. Michael Curtis (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973).129.

¹⁰⁹ International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to* [December 2010].

¹¹⁰ Arthur Agwuncha Nwanko and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra: The Making of A Nation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970). 19.

parliamentary seats, on which the power of every region was based. Population figures were also used in allocating revenue to regions. The federal government control by northerners was accused of inflating figures, electoral violence, falsification of results, and manipulation of population figures in order to maintain their dominance.¹¹¹ The situation augmented the existing grievances. Igbo then started to express their grievances over what they perceived as the “Northern Dominance,” inherent confrontation due to the religious rivalry between the Muslim dominated north, which was opposed to the religiously diverse south. Local conflicts often translated into religious loyalties and were interpreted in terms of the historical antagonism between the ethnic minority Christians and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani.

Additionally, more grievances arose once the constitution gave the federal government exclusive control over a wide range of sectors, such as external affairs, the defense, currency, communication, and transportation. Limited power was left to the three regions, including some socioeconomic programs, education, and agriculture. Federalism in the First Republic saw the increasing growth of political and economic power in the hands of the central government dominated by northerners.¹¹² Contrary to the pre-independence era, where major economic and political decisions were in the power of regional governments, the national government progressively sought to control critical national sectors, particularly in defense, foreign policy making, and the coordination and supervision of economic development.¹¹³

The federal constitution enabled central authorities to assume extensive and intrusive powers, including the appropriation of the executive and legislative functions of the regional governments.¹¹⁴ The growing fiscal and political supremacy of the central government strongly impacted the political system in place. The disproportionate size of the north enabled the political party in control of that region, the Northern People’s Congress, to project its regional dominance onto the federal arena. The

¹¹¹ Henri Bienen, *Political Conflict and Economic Change in Nigeria*, Frank Cass & Co LTD, 1985).

¹¹² Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

federal party system in the First Republic turned out to be one marked by Northern and Muslim dominance. The situation led to grievances from the other ethnic groups, especially the Igbo, because federal development spending was heavily manipulated in favor of the North.¹¹⁵

Another grievance was that the growing subordination of the regions to the central government was reinforced by regional tax revenues, especially personal income taxes, and the downturn in international prices for regionally controlled primary commodities after the late 1950s. The East (Igbo), whose revenue position was enhanced by its share of royalties from the growing exploitation of oil located in its territory, experienced a heavy decline in revenue. Furthermore, since the resulting mass killings and exodus of the Igbo following the 1966 coup, the Igbo felt marginalized and discriminated against. These grievances led to the civil war from 1967–1970.¹¹⁶ The three regions now faced with budgetary constraints had to turn back to the federal government for financial aid or loans. This tough policy was in an effort to make the regions understand their financial and economic dependence on the national government.

Additionally, the growing influence of minorities due to the increasing profits of minority controlled territories of highly valuable oil reserves and increasing representation in the military since the second military coup, increased grievances and heightened ethnic tensions. The Tiv, were overrepresented as infantryman in the army, and the Ibibio, Efik, Ijaw, and Kalabaris retained some of Nigeria's most valuable oil reserves. This predicament enhanced both the "rule of ethnic minorities" minority political potential, strength, and strategy.¹¹⁷

b. Mobilization

The Nigerian elites from each region used ethnicity and religion to mobilize people at the grassroots level. Most of the elites who took over from the British

¹¹⁵ Nwabara S. N., *Iboland* (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1978).

¹¹⁶ Siri Aas Rustad, *Power-Sharing and Conflict in Nigeria*, Centre for the Study of Civil War, 2008.

¹¹⁷ Larry R. Jackson, "Nigeria: The Politics of the First Republic" (New York: Sage Publications, Inc., 1972), 294–295.

after independence did not make serious efforts to use resources and value for national unity. The northerners constituted a more homogeneous group with their unified Muslim religion. They were less educated than the southerners because during the colonial period, the North was almost isolated due to their traditional emirate rule. They lost the opportunity to develop at the speed of the South, which was ahead in all aspects of modernization, education, urbanization commerce, and industrialization.¹¹⁸

As a result, Northerners consolidated around religion, with a numerical advantage, knowing that this advantage would allow them to control the ruling coalition. Also, the NPC aimed to both unify the peoples of the region as a single bloc that would maintain influence on national affairs and restore the northern religious heritage and cultural identity. To achieve this, the party introduced several training programs to equip northern civil servants with qualifications to assume greater control of their government at the regional and the federal level.¹¹⁹

The Igbo from the West mobilized, essentially, around their ethnicity and territory and political parties. The Eastern Region was dominated by the NCNC, the political party of that region. The party was composed mostly of Igbo. After the failed census of 1962 and the election of 1965, they started with mass political rebellion. The federal government used the army to crush the opposition.¹²⁰

Mobilization also occurred around territory. Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojuku, the military governor of the Eastern Region, managed to consolidate the Igbo in their heartland and around the regional capital, Enugu. With time, Ojuku became increasingly defiant, seizing federal properties in the east and generally behaving as sovereign.¹²¹ Many groups both at the national and the international level attempted to prevent an escalation of the crisis. On May 26, 1967, Ojuku declared Eastern Nigeria a free, sovereign and independent state with the name and title of the Republic of Biafra.¹²²

¹¹⁹ International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

¹²⁰ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

¹²¹ Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 319.

¹²² S. K. Panter-Brick *Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to Civil War* (London: The Athlone Press University of London, 1970).

c. *Triggers of Violence*

The spirit of regionalism among the ruling class in the First Republic was a trigger to the violence that followed. The British and the Rulers of the First Republic had failed to unify the country and create a sense of national unity. These circumstances triggered the military coup of January 1966, which saw the fall of the First republic. Also, in the 1965 census, controversies and disputes arose. The ruling coalition led by Northerners was accused of the manipulation of census results in favor of the North. The Northern domination pushed a courageous group of officers, mainly from the West (Igbo) and led by General Thomas Aguiyi Ironsi, to overturn the civilian government in a brutal military coup.¹²³

During the violent military coup of January 1966, many officials from the Western and Northern regions, as well as the federal government, were assassinated. This small group of officers also eliminated a number of senior officers who would be likely to obstruct their plan.¹²⁴ With a few exceptions, all those assassinated were Western or Northern. Most of the officers involved in the coup were from either the East or the Mid-West regions, and the majority of them were Igbo and Christian.¹²⁵ Even though these officers claimed that their objectives were national and ideological rather than regional and factional, the coup was seen as an Igbo coup against other ethnic groups. The coup had been planned with the best intentions but its outcome looked to other ethnic groups, particularly the North and the West, like an Igbo conspiracy.¹²⁶ Out of the seven military leaders in the coup, six were Igbo. More importantly, almost all the victims were non-Igbo. Furthermore, Ironsi lost a lot of popular support when his fellow Igbo jeered at and taunted the people of the Northern Region for their losses. Ironsi also surrounded himself with Igbo advisers who irresponsibly urged him to various ill-considered decisions.¹²⁷

¹²³ Robert I. Rotberg, John Paden, Richard L. Skar, Rotimi Suberu, Itse E. Sagay, Peter M. Lewis, Patrick UItomi, *Crafting the New Nigeria*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg Lynne Rienner Publisher Inc., 2004).

¹²⁴ W. F. Gutteridge, *Military Regimes in Africa*, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1975). 110.

¹²⁵ Richard Joseph, "Challenges of A Frontier Region," *Journal of Democracy* (April 2008), 94 (accessed April 2011).

¹²⁶ Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 27.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

For example, he decided to promote twenty-one officers to the rank of lieutenant colonel (eighteen of whom were Igbo). Ironsi also took the unwise political decision to abolish federalism as a system of government in Nigeria.¹²⁸ This only showed that the new political and military leaders had the same vices as the first republic and that other ethnic groups' grievances increased.

Following the 1965 military coup, a series of uncontrolled violence and reprisals continued. The north/south division became very apparent at this time.¹²⁹ The effect of all these measures was heightened fears (especially in the North) of a plot by the Igbo to dominate the country. Protests against these measures, which started peacefully, degenerated into riots soon after the announcement of a unitary system of government. These led to the attacks on Igbo, first in Zaria and later in other towns in the North. The name Igbo has become almost synonymous with exploitation and humiliation.¹³⁰ This quest for survival gave Ojukwu and the Igbo the motivation to fight back and resist the federal authority controlled by Northerners. They attempted to break away and create the Republic of Biafra in May 1967.¹³¹ This solution was unacceptable to the rest of Nigeria. For Ojukwu, creating a separate nation gave the Igbo an opportunity to be free and feel secure.

The Igbo decision to secede also triggered more violence. This course of events started with a civilian uprising in the North and the assassination of General Ironsi in May 1966; many other Easterner officers and civilian were also killed by the end of July 1966. After the May attacks, some Igbo from the North started to leave the region and return to the East, but the majority remained behind. It was the killings that accompanied the 29 July 1966 counter-coup that began the massive migration of Igbo and non-Igbo back to the East.¹³² The move to counter the Igbo domination went too far and degenerated into mass killings of Igbo in September 1966. The counter-coup brought

¹²⁸ Bamidele A. Ojo, *Nigeria's Third Republic: The Problems and Prospects of Political Transition to Civil Rule*.

¹²⁹ Gutteridge, *Military Regimes in Africa*.111.

¹³⁰ Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 28.

¹³¹ Gutteridge, *Military Regimes in Africa*. 111.

¹³² Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 319.

General Yakubu Gowon, a northern Muslim to power.¹³³ This is why the Igbo's solution to the crisis was to secede from the Nigeria federation and live a separate existence.

After the Igbo announced the creation of the Republic of Biafra, General Yakubu Gowon, the new military ruler of Nigeria declared a state of emergency throughout Nigeria and assumed full powers as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and head of the federal military government for the period of emergency.¹³⁴ Furthermore, he announced the reorganization of Nigeria into twelve states, three of which were carved out of the Eastern region. General Gowon recognized the need to divide Nigeria into smaller units in order to prevent any one state from becoming so strong that it would either control the central government or opt to secede.¹³⁵ The result that followed was three years of extreme violence in a civil war that left millions of people dead and only exacerbated enmity between the different ethnic groups (mainly the Hausa against the Igbo). The war ended in January 1970 with a victory for the federal government.¹³⁶ Despite Gowon's success in forming new states and articulating feasible solutions to minority grievances, "the ethnic minorities and their political accommodation continued to be a striking political issue" that continued to exist without resolution. The Gowon government still failed to develop and construct an effective, modern political system to end the rise of ethnic and tribal conflict. This led to even further regional division into political party systems linked to particular territorial areas and cultural groups.¹³⁷

The division of Nigeria into three major regions, each dominated by one ethnic group and each controlled by a party based on that ethnic group, created a vulnerable situation in Nigeria because the regionalized party system created a "future of opposition to be in opposition," which led to further tensions and extreme violence.¹³⁸

¹³³ Ostheimer, *Nigerian Politics*.

¹³⁴ Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 30.

¹³⁵ Rustad, *Power-Sharing and Conflict in Nigeria*. 10.

¹³⁶ Odetola Theophilus Olatunde, *Military Politics in Nigeria* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1978).

¹³⁷ Jackson, "Nigeria: The Politics of the First Republic," 295.

¹³⁸ D. Anglin, "Brinkmanship in Nigeria." *International J.* 20, 173–188.

2. Second Republic

In order to avoid the mistakes of the First Republic's constitution, which allowed for the creation of political parties along ethnic lines, the Second Republic made provisions to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of Nigeria. The 1979 constitution encouraged political parties to become national, rather than regional, in order to reflect the federal character principle, and Nigeria entered the Second Republic with institutions that diverged remarkably from those of the First Republic. The Second Republic was preceded by a decade of military ruling. The military rulers of that period created a Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC).¹³⁹ Together, they came out with provisions that prescribed a substantial expansion in the legislative mandate of the federal government.

The new constitution was essentially an American-style presidential system abolishing the Westminster parliamentary system, and recognizing the federal character and the cultural diversity of Nigeria. Under these provisions, special procedures were set for electing the president, the formation of political parties, and the composition and conduct of public agencies.¹⁴⁰ Also, the military, a stronger institution, was able to maintain a form of national unity. Nonetheless, other problems, such as the worsening of the economy, the intensity of authoritarian regime, increasingly popular resistance and political and religious activism became prevalent.¹⁴¹ An isolated religiously based incident that threatened the existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria occurred in northern state of Kano: The Maitatsine Crisis.

a. Grievances

Parts of the grievances in the Second Republic were the continued northern dominance and government corruption. With a military regime, it was difficult for minority groups to express their grievances. Harsh repression was often the response

¹³⁹ Bah, "Approaches to Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Nigeria," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 32 (2004), 45.

¹⁴⁰ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 36.

¹⁴¹ Rustad, *Power-Sharing and Conflict in Nigeria* .4.

given by the military authorities. This repression created many grievances because of the high number of victims in police or military violence.

The Maitatsine crisis represented an unprecedented number of grievances in the Second Republic. The member of the Maitatsine sect felt that with corrupt authorities and Muslim clerics, Islam was the appropriate solution to fix the declining Nigerian society. The leader of the sect, Muhammed Marwa, was an Islamic fundamentalist scholar who migrated from Cameroon to the city of Kano in 1945.¹⁴² For the members of this sect, Islam in particular and the Nigerian society as a whole was corrupt and needed to be purified by all means necessary. The authorities were able to predict and repress political activism but a new form of activism arose, in a religious form, characterized by the Maitatsine crisis.

b. Mobilization

Maitatsine mobilized a large crowd of followers, especially among the Tallakawa (commoners).¹⁴³ They mobilized around the motto that Islam had to be purified by all means necessary. The activities of Maitatsine and his followers became a threat to the people of Kano. Part of their mobilization was conducting unauthorized open air gatherings, which caused the police to intervene. On December 18, 1980, the police underrated the strength of the sect, and the two police units that went to the operation were soon overpowered by the members of the sect. Members of the sect used bows, arrows, knives, and guns to oppose the police. They burned all thirteen police vehicles, killed four policemen, and injured the rest whom they stripped off their weapons. Encouraged by the defeat of the police, the sect marched in Kano, chanting provocative songs in Hausa. By December 19, the sect took over strategic places in Kano city, including the Fagge mosque, some schools, a cinema house, and the market place. For eleven days, the police were unable to control the sectarian riots.

¹⁴² International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

¹⁴³ N. D. Danjibo, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The "Maitatsine" and "Boko Haram" Crises in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan., 6.

c. Triggers

The Maitatsine crisis became a trigger for extreme violence in the form of a government crackdown. Their constant preaching became very abusive and provocative, especially against established institutions like the Emirate and the political class, to the point where the Emir of Kano expelled him from Kano. He came back to Kano in 1966 and continued his violent preaching, which caused him to be detained in prison several times. Because of his abusive preaching, he earned the name Maitatsine which means “one who curses.”¹⁴⁴

As the sect’s preaching was getting out of control, President Shehu Shagari had to invite the Nigerian army to intervene. It took the army two days to dislodge the sect. The leader of the sect was killed during the operation and thousands of his followers were arrested and tortured in prison. The death of the sect leader was the tipping point that triggered a series of uncontrolled violence, both from the members of the sect and the federal authorities. The crisis lasted eleven days, claimed the lives of 4,179 people, and hundreds of houses were torched or destroyed.¹⁴⁵ The Maitatsine case denotes a new form of religious activism that inspired many more uprising in the future and the politicization of religion. After this crisis, religion became a major tool that politicians used, not only to get popular support, but also to enhance their political power.

B. RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH REPUBLICS

Like the first two Republics, the Third and Fourth Republics also witnessed continued tensions with a growing trend towards religiously motivated violence. The main difference between the previous republics and these latter republics is the violent radicalization of religion, which started in the beginning of the 1980s. The ideologies and rhetoric used by politicians had changed. Both Christians and Muslim elites started to

¹⁴⁴ Paden, "Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution.”.

¹⁴⁵ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*.

express publicly the need for religious representation in politics and public offices. Religion was no longer used for ideological objectives like in the Maitatsine crisis, but rather for political objectives.

1. Third Republic

The Third Republic only lasted a few years, from 1989 to 1993. After the 1967–1970 civil war, some political and religious leaders made great efforts to appease the tensions, redefining the constitution and mandating political parties to be reflective of the entire society. With the new provisions of the Second Republic’s Constitution, conditions were set for a more integrated political system and regional representation in the central government.

a. Grievances

The grievances during the Third Republic were due to the continued period of military ruling and the repression associated with it, and the continued fear of Muslim Hausa domination. Since the fall of the First Republic in 1966, every attempt to return to civilian rule failed. Military coups were often very violent leaving many people dead. Also, northerners, who were in the majority in the Army, were able to maintain their dominance and ruled most of the post-independence era. Southerners were better educated and better equipped for government work. State repression was also very prevalent and this situation fueled more grievances.

A key political event occurred that increased the existing grievances in Nigeria. In January 1986, under the leadership of Military Ruler General Babangida, a northern Muslim, Nigeria secretly joined the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC).¹⁴⁶ The OIC guidelines require that a member country be predominantly Muslim, with a Muslim head of state. When the news of Babangida’s political move became known throughout Nigeria, the reactions were strong from all sides and tensions between Christians and Muslims increased. The grievance expressed by Christians was the fear of

¹⁴⁶ Paden, *Muslim Civic Cultures*, 266.

the Islamization of Nigeria. The situation created heated debates within Nigeria and opinions varied depending on whether there was a Muslim or a Christian Head of State. As a result, Nigeria decided to keep a low profile in the OIC, allowing only diplomats to attend meetings and not the heads of state.

b. Mobilization

As in the past, the main tools of mobilization were political parties and ethno-religious associations. Before the foundation of the main political parties in Nigeria, a large number of local ethnic associations were formed in Northern Nigeria. These associations were locally confined and often led by school teachers. Ethnic associations were the forerunners of the main political parties.¹⁴⁷ The two dominating parties in the central Islamic part of Northern Nigeria were the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). Political leaders from these parties and associations started to become vocal on the role of religion in Nigerian politics. As an example, MKO Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba chief, explicitly called for a reinterpretation of federal character in religious terms, contending that public policies and institutions had not given due regard to the interest of the "largest body of Nigerians, who are Muslims." A similar case for the explicit recognition of religion as an element of Nigeria's federal character was made by Ambassador Jolly Tanko Yussuf of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Yussuf argued that if a Muslim were appointed Minister of External Affairs, a Christian should be made Minister of Petroleum Resources, and that if the President were a Muslim, a Christian should be Minister of Defense.¹⁴⁸

c. Triggers

Violence in the Third Republic was triggered by the continuation of Northern dominance and politicization of religion. The OIC crisis and subsequent development under the Third Republic appeared to have confirmed Christian fears about

¹⁴⁷ Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in the Middle Belt Christianity*. 71.

¹⁴⁸ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 134.

a growing Muslim stronghold on key national political appointments. Peaceful demonstrations were initiated but became more violent over time. Religious activism and an increasing number of religious-based violence occurred, especially in the northern states.¹⁴⁹ Christian complaints reached a climax in January 1990, when Christian groups staged large street demonstrations in some of the country's major cities to denounce the new federal cabinet appointments of President Babangida that appeared to heavily favor Muslims.¹⁵⁰

2. Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic of Nigeria was inaugurated on May 29, 1999, with the adoption of a new constitution and the installation of a new civilian administration under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo.¹⁵¹ This period has been marked by a tremendous amount of religious violence.

a. Grievances

The grievances over Nigeria joining the OIC continued in the Fourth Republic. In 1999, with the restoration of civilian rule and the birth of the fourth republic, Nigeria witnessed, for the first time in history, an elected Christian southerner, Olusegun Obasanjo. This was an opportunity for Christians to reverse Muslim dominance. Like the Christians before, Muslims also started to complain. In April 2000, a communiqué from the Council of Ulama of Nigeria denounced the “imbalance” allegedly perpetuated by the new administration’s “systematic relegation of Muslims within the ranks of the armed forces and federal establishment.”¹⁵² Tensions continued to increase in the political arena. Ibrahim Datti Ahmed, a noted politician and Muslim scholar, accused the Obasanjo administration of openly pursuing a “Christian agenda” by “removing northerners and Muslims from positions and replacing them with Christians.”

¹⁴⁹ Rustad, *Power-Sharing and Conflict in Nigeria*.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph, "Progress and Retreat in Africa," *Journal of Democracy* 19 (April 2008), 95.

¹⁵¹ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 43.

¹⁵² International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

b. Mobilization

In the Fourth Republic, mobilization was also done around political parties and ethnic and religious associations, such as the Council of Ulama and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).¹⁵³ In the years 2000 and after, allegations and counter-allegations of ethno/religious domination continued causing even more friction in some of the states than at the federal level. For instance, Christian groups in the northern states, such as the northern branch of CAN and the Northern Christian Forum, denounced what they called “Muslim domination” in their states. Specifically, they condemned the permanent leadership of northern traditional rulers in the Sultan of Sokoto, the continuing imposition of Emirate Sharia on the non-Muslim population of the Middle Belt Region, the marginalization of Christian police officers in the appointment of police commissioners in the northern states, and the suppression of Christian broadcasts as well as Christian religious curricula and other educational privileges in state-owned electronic media and schools in the north.¹⁵⁴

c. Triggers

Violence in the Fourth Republic was essentially triggered by the planned application of Sharia law in Northern States. In January 2000, the governor of Zamfara State implemented legislation authorizing Sharia in the criminal domain applicable to all Muslims in the state. This enactment was based on two interpretations of the 1999 constitution.¹⁵⁵ First, the precedent of dual legal systems based on Muslim affiliation was established in the domain of civil law, to include family law, as per the 1979 and the 1998 constitutions.¹⁵⁶ Second, legislation that was not specifically prohibited in the 1999 constitution and that was a matter of state concern was appropriate for state-level action, provided that it did not contravene fundamental constitutional rights. Subsequently, eleven other far northern states also passed some form of Sharia criminal law, applicable to Muslims only. However, certain aspects of the Sharia, such as the banning of alcohol and prostitution, were applicable to all citizens in those states that held a stricter

¹⁵³ Rotberg et al., *Crafting the New Nigeria*.

¹⁵⁴ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

interpretation of the law. During the long year of military rule, the issue of Sharia was largely dormant. With the return to civilian elections, in the fall of 1998, Ahmed Sani, the APP candidate for governor of Zamfara State, ran on a platform of establishing Sharia in all domains.¹⁵⁷ On his inauguration, Zamfara became the first state to institute Sharia in the criminal domain. He opted for the hard-line interpretation of the law and its punishment, while states like Kaduna applied a looser interpretation, and only in the predominantly Muslim local government authorities.

The full introduction of Sharia was defended by northern Muslim elite, including ex-heads of states, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and General Muhammadu Buhari, on several grounds: the overwhelming Muslim composition and culture of the north; the popularity of Sharia especially among youths and the intelligentsia for whom the Islamic code represented a potential weapon for the reorientation of a morally decadent and materially dislocated northern society; the recognition, under the 1999 Fourth Republic constitution, of collective religious rights; the rights of the states to establish and define the jurisdiction of the Sharia court of appeal; the fact that the constitutionally prescribed legislative procedure was carefully observed in Zamfara, Sokoto, Kano, and other states where the Sharia system had been established; and the recognition, under the Sharia regime, of the fundamental rights of non-Muslims, who would be largely exempted from the purview of Islamic law.¹⁵⁸

Non-Muslims denounced the imposition of strict Sharia as a violation of the constitutional prohibition of state religion. They also contended that the extension of Sharia would effectively relegate them to the status of second-class citizens.¹⁵⁹ The most violent opposition to the introduction of Sharia law took place in Kaduna State, where hundreds of lives were lost in horrific riots, over the issue, between February and May 2000. The riots occurred precisely because the proposed extension of Sharia in the state inflamed the long-standing antipathy between the predominantly Christian southern Kaduna minority tribes and the Muslim Hausa-Fulani, who are in total control of government machinery and resources in that state. The Sharia crisis of 1999–2000 also

¹⁵⁸ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 136.

¹⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

resonated in the religiously bi-communal Yoruba states. Numerous waves of religious polarization and agitation developed in the immediate aftermath of the OIC debacle in the Western Yoruba states, which had been famous for the exceptionally peaceful coexistence between their Muslim and Christian communities in the past. The federal character of the Fourth Republic was intended to promote national integration but its politics have proved to be extremely divisive in regional, ethnic and religious terms. Violence was often carried out by gangs or cults of unemployed youth who were often paid by politicians or party leaders and was manifested in attacks on political enemies, rigged elections, the destruction of private property, as well as the vandalization of sacred places of worship.

Finally, the enlistment of Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Conferences in 1986 and the development and introduction of Islamic law into the political arena, especially with the introduction of Sharia, seems to suggest that Nigeria has drastically changed from a religiously peaceful to a religiously polarized federation.

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V. CONCLUSION

The history of the post-independence era in Nigeria has been marked by continuous ethnic and religious tensions that have often degenerated into religiously motivated violence. Since the first military coup of 1966 and the Biafra civil war of 1967–1970, Nigeria has been in a state of neither peace nor war, characterized by low intensity conflicts.¹⁶⁰ The origins of these tensions stem from the administrative division of the country into three regions, each dominated by a major ethnic group, immediately after independence: the Western Region dominated by the Yoruba (21 percent of the population), the Northern Region, dominated by the Hausa/Fulani (29 percent of the population) and the Eastern Region dominated by the Igbo (18 percent of the population).¹⁶¹ Additionally, the political ruling class was divided along regional lines: the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North, the National convention of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) in the East, and the Action Group (AG) in the West.¹⁶²

These divisions created low intensity conflict on religious, ethical, and political levels because neither the political parties nor the ethnic tribes were able to win the majority in any election. Therefore, two opposing alliances were formed: the Nigerian National Alliance made up of the NPC and the Northern Nigeria Development Company (NNDC), and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) composed of the NCNC, the AG, and their allies (constituting a "Southern" alignment).¹⁶³ The North wished to enhance their influence relative to the more developed South while preserving their religious and cultural identity. The NPC aimed to both unify the peoples of the region as a single bloc that would maintain influence on national affairs and restore the Northern religious heritage and cultural identity.¹⁶⁴ Northern civil servants then equipped

¹⁶⁰ Oyediran, *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule*, 31.

¹⁶¹ Bamidele A. Ojo, *Nigeria's Third Republic: The Problems and Prospect of Political Transition to Civil Rule* (Commack, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 1998), 129.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

themselves with qualifications to assume greater control of their government at the regional and federal levels. Additionally, the Igbo expressed their fears and grievances of what they foresaw as “Northern Dominance.”¹⁶⁵ This led to years of violence linked to coups, state repression, and intra-ethnic and religious clashes to induce a change in Nigerian society.¹⁶⁶

Besides these ethnic and political divisions, tribes play an important role in Nigeria’s tensions. The most influential tribe of Nigeria’s north, the Hausa/Fulani tribe, dominated the ruling coalition and Nigeria’s federal system for years. However, the Igbo, in the West, were also influential due to their rich natural resources.¹⁶⁷ The first constitution, in 1962, allowed a strong central government, with centralized power, to be responsible for the allocation of resources.¹⁶⁸ This deprived the Igbo of controlling natural resources in their land, yielding more influence and control to the Hausa in the North. As the Igbo were unable to reverse the trend of Northern domination, they initiated a military coup marking the end of the First Republic.¹⁶⁹ Each constitutional change in the four republics attempted to redefine the rules of the game in a way that no region or ethnic group would have total control over the political arena or attempt to secede.

In the First and Second Republics, Nigeria experienced ethnic and religious conflicts; however, in the Third and Fourth Republics the ethnic and religious disputes and struggles transitioned to religiously motivated violence in an attempt to resolve increasing grievances induced by the Nigerian Christians’ fear of the Islamisation of Nigeria.

¹⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*.

¹⁶⁶ Siri Aas Rustad, “Power-sharing Agreements, Negotiations and Peace Processes: Power-sharing, negotiations and Peace Processes,” (Oslo: Center for the Study of Civil War International Peace Research Institute, 2008), 8.

¹⁶⁷ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

¹⁶⁸ Odetola Theophilus Olatunde, *Military Politics in Nigeria* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1978), 98.

¹⁶⁹ Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 247.

A. SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY, DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND NIGERIAN VIOLENCE

Dissecting the socio-political context of each republic of Nigeria using Social Movement Theory and the Drivers of Violent extremism yielded several important findings. First, the outbreak of ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria suggests that minority groups facing oppression tend to react as long as there is a political opportunity at hand and the group has the motivation to act. As an example, the Igbo, who were the dominant tribe in the East with rich natural resources, felt deprived of their riches by a central government dominated by the Hausa/Fulani from the North. In order to stop the oppression, they launched a coup d'état, which was violently repressed. Later on, as the oppression continued, they tried to secede from the rest of the federation by creating the Republic of Biafra. The Maitatsine crisis is another example of a minority religious group who wanted to bring change to society because they felt that their religion was corrupted by secular governments and corrupt religious leaders manipulated by Western influences outside the Arab world.¹⁷⁰ The sect's demonstrations were also violently repressed but their activities gave rise to a new type of activism, using religion for political ends.

Second, Nigeria shows how religion can be used for political purposes. In Nigeria, Islam, in particular, has been used in this way. For example, in 1986, President Babangida secretly joined the OIC.¹⁷¹ This political move was seen as attempt to make Nigeria an Islamic state. In 2000, many Muslim political figures explicitly called for a reinterpretation of the federal character of Nigeria in religious terms.¹⁷² They argued that public policies and institutions should give due regard to the interests of Muslims, as they are the largest religious community, with 21 percent of the overall population.

Third, religious tensions are exacerbated when there is a major political event such as elections. After the April 2011 presidential elections, which saw a victory for the Christian Southerner Goodluck Johnathan, his main opponent, Shagari, and many other

¹⁷⁰ Schwartz, "Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Extremism?" 3.

¹⁷¹ Paden, "Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution,".266.

¹⁷² Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, 133.

Muslims contested the results. Recent violence also suggests that the fight for political control between Muslims and Christians is not yet resolved.

Finally, the transition from solely ethnic and religious tensions to religiously motivated violence was triggered after Nigeria elected to join the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) in 1986 and its adoption of Sharia law in 1999. In January 1986, under the leadership of military ruler General Babangida, Nigeria secretly joined the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC). The OIC guidelines assert that member states be predominantly Muslim and have a Muslim head of state.¹⁷³ Once Nigeria's secret alliance within the OIC became known throughout Nigeria, the reactions were strong on all sides and tensions between Christians and Muslims heightened. In an attempt to resolve the OIC controversy, a federal decree established the National Council for Religious Affairs in 1987.¹⁷⁴ The OIC crisis reinforced religious grievances and fears among Christians, led to even greater religious tensions between Christians and Muslims, and made the possibility of a Muslim-dominated Nigeria more feasible. Then, to bolster Islamic influence, in 1999–2000, Sharia law was codified within the state constitutional law of twelve of Nigeria's thirty-six states.¹⁷⁵

Christians believe that the Muslim political leaders who initiated these political moves were trying to make Nigeria an Islamic state where Sharia law would be applied even to non-Muslims. Relationships between the two communities, which had been amicable in the past, became extremely tense. The North/South dichotomy, which had seen struggles between Hausa Northerners and Nigeria's Southerners (Igbo and Yoruba), had now shifted from ethnic to religiously motivated. This is due, in part, to constitutional changes in the Second and Third Republics that addressed ethnic domination. As a result, power and resources were shared and ethnic tensions diminished. The political move of the OIC and adopting Sharia became the tipping points that allowed the North/South battle to shift from ethnic to religious.

¹⁷³ Paden, "Muslim Civic Cultures Conflict Resolution," 266.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁷⁵ Schwartz, "Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Extremism?" 3.

As political leaders have reduced ethnic violence by making constitutional provisions that allow equal distribution of power and resources, there is also a need for provisions that engage religious issues. These provisions should address, for example, the separation of religion from government and, thereby, make Nigeria a neutral state as opposed to an Islamic state. The government should also allow equal distribution of power among various religious communities. Finally, the government should prohibit the use of religion by politicians. If these laws are not in place, one can expect that religious tensions will continue. In any case, dialogue should prevail over violence as a mean to resolve conflicts.

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