

**Paradox of Contemporary Religious Practices and Politics of Peace in South West Nigeria
(1999-2024)**

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Abstract

Religion, like politics is one of the most pervasive and powerful forces on earth and very core in human relationship. Religious ideas have infiltrated families, societies, politics and cultures. Both religion and politics are intertwined, aggressive and compromising. Religion is no longer a matter of self-interest in pursuit of higher truths and worship of the Supreme Being, rather, religion has been deeply rooted in socio-political worldviews. It is true that religion contributes to human value, at the same time, history clearly shows that religion has often been linked directly to the worst examples of human attitude and behaviour in relation to other people whether at individual or corporate levels. This study examines the paradox of religious practices and politics of peace employed to resolve religious conflicts. Religious practices are fraught with intricate and complex contradictions. While religion promises peace, it is equally used as an instrument of violent conflicts. Politics of peace involves socio-cultural, political and relational mechanisms engaged to resolve conflicts by governmental and non-governmental actors. A mixed-method comprising the instrument of questionnaire and key informant interview with purposive sampling of 513 participants for survey and 60 key informants across south western Nigeria was conducted. Findings show that several contradictions in religious practices engender conflicts which politics of peace has not yet been able to adequately resolve owing to epistemic injustice, primordial hostilities, and inadequate interfaith dialogue among religious actors. Findings also emphasise socio-economic factors as undergirding reasons for engaging in religious malpractices. as depicted in the report in which both standardised coefficient beta (β) and unstandardized coefficient beta (β) reveal that economic elements have the most impact on both religious paradox and politics of peace. The t-value of 15.165 and the p-value of 0.000 show that sustainable peacebuilding which is predicated on religious practices and concomitant politics of peace is strongly influenced by economic elements. The study therefore, concludes that religion is a complex phenomenon and undeniably intertwined with politics, culture, ethnicity, and economic conditions and patrons of religious conflicts as well as politicians who pervert justice are primarily preoccupied with economic survival rather than pure allegiance to God or humanity. In the light of the findings and conclusion, the study recommends a more nuanced understanding of respective religious faiths and also to consider peace as an inalienable birth-right of human beings just as politics should be reconstructed as “good governance” to transform South West Nigeria.

Keywords: Peace-building, Politics of peace, Religious paradox, Contemporary religious practices, Sustainable development, South West Nigeria

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Religion, like politics is one of the most pervasive and powerful forces on earth and very core in human relationship. Religious ideas have infiltrated families, societies, politics and cultures. Both religion and politics are intertwined, aggressive and compromising. Religion comes with a big prospect as well as a big conundrum. Religion is no longer a matter of self-interest in pursuit of higher truths and worship of the Supreme Being, rather, religion has been deeply rooted in socio-political worldviews. It is true that religion contributes to human value, at the same time, history clearly shows that religion has often been linked directly to the worst examples of human attitude and behaviour in relation to other people whether at individual or corporate levels (Abdulla,2018) ¹. The sad truth is that more wars have been waged, more people killed, and more social unrests have been observed all in the name of religion, than by any other institutional force in human history. It is appalling that religion is still grossly manipulated with unspeakable evil things perpetrated under its guise, especially in the global south.

The tragic event of September 11, 2001 cannot be easily forgotten in a hurry. It may be difficult to know with certainty what was in the hearts of the nineteen men who hijacked the four planes that changed the whole story of world that day. What motivated the key leaders among the hijackers and the al-Qaida (“the base”) network supporting them was their understanding of a particular text in the Holy Quran of Islamic faith (Abolurin,2011) ². This incident was a clear

manifestation of the paradox of Islamic faith which is presumed to preach peace but at the same time has been used to kill and destroy people and properties in some particular nations including Nigeria. It is even enigmatic to understand the handwritten letter left by ringleader Muhammad Atta justifying the behaviour as a religious worldview. It is imperative to know why the Jihad Manual publicised by Osama bin Laden and his several taped messages following the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were laced with religious imagery and language designed to motivate other faithful Muslims³. The meticulous planning and preparation were conducted in a wider framework with the focus to die along with his cohorts “to meet Allah, their God”. How can you kill to meet the true Creator? This is a paradox of religion.

It is not fully understood why people believe in religion; however, psychologists have proposed several theories. For instance, while Freud believed that religious belief is a form of pathological wish fulfilment; other researchers have proposed that how the human brain works often predisposes people to believe. The human mind looks for patterns, purpose, and meaning, which may influence why people turn to religion to guide their belief systems. Parenting and cultural influences also play an important role since people tend to belong to the religion in which they were raised. The human need to belong combined with the desire for social connection also contributes to the desire to be part of someone larger than the self. Sociology of religion is connected to the study of the human animal as he relates and interacts with his fellows – in families, communities, economic groups and all other aspects of the human experience. Humans are social by nature. Humanity, as a general rule seeks out others of their kind for pleasure and business, friendship and romance. As humans, they comprise families, social circles, religious institutions, and bodies politic under the umbrella called “society”. Generally regarded as the father of Modern Sociology, he sought to employ the same methods that scientists had used in

the investigation and exploration of the physical world and apply them to the study of human affairs.

The insights and influences of three key sociologists changed the world and philosophy is still felt today. They all sought social reform to combat the injustices of the Industrial Revolution. Although their legacies are both revered and reviled, their ideologies led to the subsequent rise of the Russian Revolution of 1917 as well as the rise of the Soviet Union. Marxists believed that economic relationships were of primary importance, and the conflict between the classes was inevitable, due to the chasm between the haves and have-nots. The proponent of the Social Conflict Theory, Karl Marx, is famous for saying that religion is the opiate of the masses. He argues that religious people hope to be rewarded for the good they do here in time, hence they are passive sheep and this passivity is exploited by the ruling class to further their capitalist goals and keep the masses docile. In his worldview, the majority of people toiled with little reward while the upper classes reap the fruits of their labour as an inherent inequality in capitalism and this predisposes a revolution of the working classes against their capitalist masters. However, a critical review of Marxist theory shows the proponent was not always right in his judgment of both religion and the economy ².

Another influential sociologist of the era was a German thinker, who linked the rise of capitalism with the Protestant Work Ethic. Weber did not believe in the theory that it is not what you know, but who you know, and that bureaucracies would ultimately level the playing field between the classes. Therefore, a disadvantaged person would rise within the ranks based on his ability, not his connections. One of the philosophers opined that cultures have a collective consciousness because the values and beliefs held by a culture direct the behaviour of its members without their even knowing it. Anthropology can be broken down into the study of three main areas: society,

culture and evolution⁴. Ethnocentrism was the prevailing anthropological view with a belief that your society is better than the one you are studying; hence anthropology should be part of critical study in religion and politics to make local religion or politics more respectable than the racist views of many predecessors. However this is not to condemn or judge foreign civilizations being studied but to consider them as some sort of diversity which is the watchword of modern anthropology and this agrees with the practice of cultural relativism. Religion has the power to shape the world around us.

It has been estimated that there are more than 4,200 religions in the whole world, and about 4084 core political parties in 212 countries of the world, although seventy-five percent of the religious people follow one of the five main faiths which include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Religion as well as politics is not limited to the great minds of the Western world; the Eastern world has its own religious thoughts as well, including the well-known Hinduism and Buddhism religions (Polak and Schuster,2023)⁵. Hinduism is an action and polytheistic religion, replete with rituals – as opposed to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which are the three main monotheistic religions. Shiva and Vishnu are the main gods, and Devi is the main goddess, though hundreds of minor gods and goddesses are in the Hindu cavalcade of deities. Shiva is the contradictory god. He is the god of those who renounce the material world and the pleasures therein. This is made prominently clear in the statues of Shiva. Shiva killed his father Brahma, and carried his skull around with him at all times thereafter. This is very similar to the Greek myth of Zeus, who castrated his own father, Crocus. In the same light, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) claims the title of the world's largest political party, with a staggering 180 million members, followed closely by China's Communist Party (CCP) with 98.04 million, and the

Indian National Congress (INC) as the third position globally. Each political party, like religion has its peculiar paradox.

Buddhism is a popular belief or religion because of its flexibility, adaptability and absence of rigid dogma. It is thriving in Japan as well as in the Western world, though repressed in China.

Taoism is a Chinese philosophy that has intrigued and fascinated the Western world. Tao's scripture is the Tao Te- Ching (The Way and its Power), a slim volume of aphorisms and maxims attributed to a philosopher called Lao – Tzu. Taoism is fluid, formless and maddening elusive philosophy and an attempt to act out of rigid dogma. Lao – Tzu's name is the legendary among the Chinese. If translated into English, Lao – Tzu means the “Old Fellow” or “The Old Boy” to convey the lightness or simplicity of the Tao. An influential Taoist, Sun – Tzu, wrote The Art of War greatly embraced and entrenched in the Chinese philosophy as a living document. The Art of War is still widely regarded and studied. The Japanese took the principles presented in The Art of War and ran with it, using it as a motto “Business is War”. The Art of War as an ancient text that teaches strategy and tactics for military men and political leaders is still studied today by businessmen (Polak, R. & Schuster) ⁶. The principles are useful for corporate wheeling and dealing, especially as it contains advice on morals, metaphysics, and political science.

Over 2000 years ago, the first known acts of what is now referred to as terrorism were perpetrated by a radical offshoot of the Zealots, an active Jewish religious sect in Judea during the 1st Century AD. The Zealots opposed the Roman Empire's rule of what is Israel today through determined campaign, which involved assassination. The Zealot fighters used a primitive dagger *sica* to attack their enemies in broad daylight, especially on feast periods or in crowded marketplaces where there would be people to witness such violence so that a wider

audience might know that they were angry. All their actions were carried out with utmost zeal to protect their religious thought; hence they were dubbed, “Zealots. Between 1090 and 1272, the Assassin, an Islamic movement used similar tactics in their struggle against Christian Crusaders who had invaded what is part of Syria today. This ugly religious trend has eventually aggravated to self-sacrifice and suicidal martyrdom evident in some Islamic terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), among others. Whereas everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, ISWAP thinks otherwise (Abolurin,2011)⁷.

Muslim leaders who clearly disassociated themselves from terrorists publicly reiterated that Islam is a religion of peace. However, Osama bin Laden and his network had strong supporters and allies, not only among Muslims in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and elsewhere. The problem lies in the fact that religion that is supposed to bring peace is undergirded by a radical philosophy of terrorism by some religious extremists. We should be concerned about what religion stands to offer us when thousands of Al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and allied operatives are on the prowl to “kill and destroy”. Common people are in the volatile web of political, economic, social, cultural and military dynamics suffering under the guise of religion. Religion that is supposed to facilitate freedom has been manipulated by a few fundamentalists to make religion evil. It is ironical also that Boko Haram operatives celebrated the 2021 edition of Id-el-fitr on May 12 and 13, 2021 in the Niger state of Northern Nigeria with pomp and pageantry to the extent that foodstuff and drinks were shared to conquered villages to motivate them so that they could join their terrorist groups.

It is paradoxical to kill and still celebrate without qualm, and also to still carry and recite the Holy Scriptures. Boko Haram, ISWAP and other deadly terrorists continue to release taped messages and their affiliation with al-Qaida, yet they are very 'committed' Muslims with a claim to enter *Janatul firdaus*, the highest level of heaven where Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is. It is ambiguous to sow seed of murder, wanton killings and utter destruction of lives and properties and presume to enter gardens of paradise. If it is true that there is punishment of *Jahanam* in Islam with seven levels of Hell created as places of punishment and torment for sinners, then those who steal, kill and destroy God's creation should be the eminent entrants and victims of this prescribed eternal judgment (Obadare,2022)⁸. Instead of preparing people pleasantly to get to the desired eternity, religious people become vindictive and dangerous to live with here on earth. It is paradoxical that religious people still peddle their religious merchandise without recourse to the sacredness of life and human dignity.

It is appropriate to consider the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and non-recognition of the State of Palestine by the UN, though it has observer status at the UN. The solution to the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict has not come because Palestine insists that it has not got international justice and equity she deserves. The Human values which are considered basic inherent values include love, peace and honesty. In a society where these basic inherent values are absent or too minimal, conflict would naturally aggravate to violent conflict. To nurture our societal values, religions must be structured to engender peace and contribute to environmental security. Religion should be practiced with the right motive and all religious adherents should be rightly groomed to enhance their communities with goodness that is expected of any religion. However, the trend and religious issues on ground have caused right thinking people to cast aspersion on religion and the trend is worrisome. In China, the government views religion as a

dangerous rival for citizens, loyalty, hence the suppression of Christianity in China. Religion is tainted with sentiment, faith and tradition, and therefore omits huge opportunities in everyday practices; to the extent that modern people have begun to be suspicious of the illusory and atavistic nature of religion which is not appealing to the dynamic modern man in a rationalized society (Cohen)⁹. The background and religious landscape of the South West Nigeria is significantly characterised by religious tolerance and interfaith relations and it is, to a good extent, contributing to peacebuilding interventions in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study explores the complex relationship between religion, politics, and peace-building in South West Nigeria. The interplay between Islam and Christianity with concomitant values and problems calls for serious social concern. This study is borne out of a deep concern about contradictory features of religion on one side, and politics of peace often deployed by political leaders and government to manage or resolve religious conflicts; and the study also examines the failure of politics of peace to entrench sustainable development and peace-building in Nigeria. Although several summits, dialogues and literature attempt to resolve the fundamental problem of religion, the situation has not significantly improved, a problem that is entwined with ethnicity and unresolved by political mechanisms. Religious ideologies, at times, engender aberrant behaviours with indisputable escalation of violation of religious boundaries and human rights. Since the mechanisms hitherto engaged by several stakeholders and experts have not yielded the desired result, the thrust of this study is therefore, to examine the primordial factors causing paradox of religious practices and failure of mechanisms herein called 'politics of peace' used with a view to evolving sustainable peace-building mechanisms in south western Nigeria.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims at examining and reviewing the fundamental values of religion and peace mechanisms put up by politicians and religious leaders to foster peace among the two linear religions (Christianity and Islam) in Nigeria, while specific objectives are to:

- i. investigate the archetypical purpose and goal of Christianity and Islam with special focus on their respective goals.
- ii. identify effective strategies for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in religiously diverse contexts.
- iii. explore the implications of the research findings for broader theories of peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and religion-politics relations in South West Nigeria a microcosm of Nigeria as a whole.
- iv. examine the principal factors causing religious, political, and cultural challenges in South West Nigeria.
- v. provide insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and peacebuilding practitioners on how to effectively engage with religious communities and promote sustainable peace in South West Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent has the fundamental purpose and goal of Christianity and Islam been understood?
2. What are the most effective strategies for fostering peacebuilding in religiously diverse contexts?

3. What are the potential pitfalls and limitations of relying on religion as a force for peacebuilding, and how can these be mitigated?
4. Which principal factors are responsible for engendering religious, political, and cultural challenges in South West Nigeria?
5. How do contextual factors like political, economic, and social conditions affect the practice of religion in an attempt to foster sustainable peace-building in South West Nigeria?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study examines and reviews the paradox of religion in relation to politics of peace being played around it by religious actors and politicians. The study attempts to untangle the contradictions in peace-building efforts by politicians, therefore, the study is significant for societal transformation. The study is equally useful for governments at various levels because of their concern about violent religious conflicts over the years while at the same time giving the populace the hope that, through several dialogues, summits and peace meetings among stakeholders across the country, they would overcome religious crises. The study is equally useful for religious leaders who have been battling with perennial problems of religious relationship with people because of unclear nuances in the interpretations of respective Holy Writs, owing to selfish motives or ignorance.

Moreover, the study is beneficial to peace scholars, peace educators, peace advocates, activists and political analysts who have been grappling with state and non-state actors regarding peace and security in nations of the world. Avalanche of textbooks and scholarly articles have not

really solved the perennial problems; hence peace educators are expectant of some other auspicious solutions which this study proffers. In the same vein, the study would be of great help to students of peace and conflict studies who are passionate about peace mechanisms to manage or resolve various conflict situations that nations are plunged into. Although, they are wary of ineffective peace mechanisms, this study has been conducted to offer more objective and pragmatic solutions to strengthen social trust and brighten human hope that all is not lost.

The study is equally significant to social analysts who have observed various dimensions of violation of religious boundaries; abuses of human rights; and concomitant worries about politics engaged to minimise religious conflicts but with minimal results. For social analysts, and peace activists, this study offers them hope that values of religion could be restored and that politics of peace can actually be turned into positive solution to restore the dignity of religion and entrench sustainable peace-building in the society.

The study's findings can inform more effective strategies for harnessing religion's positive potential in peacebuilding efforts, and its insights can foster community and social cohesion, thereby acknowledging the role of religion in promoting peace and stability of the society. In the light of this, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between religion, politics, and peacebuilding, especially in South West Nigeria.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study is primarily preoccupied with the paradox of religion in relation to peace mechanisms, otherwise known as 'politics of peace' used by politicians to resolve religious crises and entrench sustainable peace in South West Nigeria. The thematic scope of 1999-2024 was intentionally adopted for the study because 1999 marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic and democratic

government in Nigeria and at the same time a watershed in South West territorial and political events with important events, which influenced its political ideologies. Geographical scope focuses on South West Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun Oyo , Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti states); the population scope targets religious leaders, political leaders, and community members from different religious and ethnic backgrounds in South West Nigeria; time scope covers the period spanning over two decades of democratic governance in Nigeria; the conceptual scope covers the complex relationships between religion, politics and peace, including the role of religious and political leaders and government policies, and community initiatives in promoting peace and resolving conflicts; and methodological scope employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods including surveys, interviews, and discussions. The scope of the study is bounded by the specific research objectives and questions.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Every research has its limitations; therefore, the limitations of this study include constraint of time over the past four years (2021-2025); volatility of the research theme; difficulty in eliciting responses from religious leaders and politicians, especially where acute perception of responsiveness toward religion and politics requires that individual emotions should be taken into cognisance.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

1.8.1. Religion: Religion, like culture, is as old as man and it is often an inherent value with its idiosyncrasies. Religion is a worldview and a way of life possibly inherited at birth or acquired by personal volition. Religion is equally a belief in, and worship of a supreme being, with a

controlling supernatural power and with the capacity to both reward and punish within a particular system of faith. As a way of life, religion has been traditionally part of humans, hardly separable.

1.8.2. Paradox of contemporary religious practices: Religion portends peace, harmony, stability, cohesion, communion, and unity but when misused or abused by disgruntled humans, it is engaged as a tool for crime and criminality with grave social consequences. Religion, at times, is a contradiction of what it promises to be, thus, instead of giving people hope, it is engendering problems through violation of human rights with the use of unwholesome political mechanisms. Religion which is thought to be archetypally peaceful, genial and comforting has been hijacked by power mongers in the gab of politics and state actors now use religion as a cover for selfish reasons to the extent that religion is fused with the state thereby diminishing its values. Judaism unequivocally prophesied about Jesus, the Messiah but at the same time prohibited and killed him; Christianity proclaims separation between the altar and the throne but it is now engaged in romance with politics; and Islam asserts that it is a religion of peace, whereas it is always implicated as being at the vanguard of terrorism and war.

1.8.3. Politics of Peace: Peace processes including social-cultural, economic, political, and religious mechanisms engaged for peace-making, peace-building and peace-keeping including the intrigues of politics. Politics of peace are diverse and are deployed through the use of suasion and direct controls which are often irksome. The intrigues associated with politics in Nigeria make politics of peace for solving religious conflicts doubtful and detrimental to the progress of the country and at the same time diminish the integrity of religions and political actors.

1.8.4. Peace-building: Peace-building involves all peace mechanisms deployed to resolve conflicts in non-violent ways with a view to transforming the structural conditions generating deadly conflict. Peace-building includes conflict management, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, conflict transformation, trauma healing, humanitarian action, transitional justice, non-violent social change, mutative justice, and any other post-conflict reconciliation.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Religion

Religion is a particular system of faith and worship of a certain supreme or supernatural being believed to reward good deeds or punish bad deeds according to worldview of the adherents. Every religion has its rules, ceremonies, and symbols. Religion is understood to influence subjective well-being through social support, economic support and ethical relations by building love, empathy, respect and harmony¹. Religion is the code of belief or philosophy, which often

involves the worship of God or gods. Religion is the human conception of a higher and supernatural being or beings that the human adherents conceived to be of enormous and unlimited powers, therefore, the natural being performs acts of worship to him². Religion is as old as man; hence it is not very clear whether religion is different from tradition or a worldview or culture inherited from the environment into which one is born. Religion seems to be a “given” phenomenon, although it may later be acquired by a personal intention.

The conception of religion is not different from a culture or tradition that one is comfortable with until an alternative to inherited religion is discovered and imbibed. Religion is an emotive, passion-laden phenomenon; therefore, it can be both ominous and transformational. The queen of England, while warning the bishops not to get involved with politics as they were doing then, refers to religion as “a private matter of belief”³. Likewise, an American cultural anthropologist, who asserts that, religion is an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings. Furthermore, a philosopher, a rationalist, opines, that religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands. An Austrian psychologist and neurologist describe religion as childhood neurosis, while a sociologist regards religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices that unites all people who adhere to it into one single community⁴. Religion often involves cultural beliefs, revelations, prophecies, texts, worldviews, and morals that have spiritual meaning to members of a particular faith. Religion encompasses a range of practices, including rituals, prayer, meditation, sermons, symbols, trances, feasts and sacred places. Religion is a set of organized beliefs practices and systems in reverence of, and in allegiance to a particular supernatural being, although not all religions are centred on a belief in a supernatural force. A famed psychoanalyst described religion as a form of wish fulfilment⁵.

2.1.2 Paradox of Contemporary Religious Practices

Several contradictions trail religion right from its definition to its practice. The uncertainty principle that characterizes religion leads to all sorts of paradoxes to the extent that modernism, postmodernism and scepticism have located contradictory features in religion. For instance, the three linear religions under examination are implicated overtly or covertly in violent conflicts that have led to massive destruction of human and non-human resources across the world and the scenario seems to negate the essence of religion traceable to Abraham. The situation surrounding religion seems impossible or difficult to understand in the contemporary world where religious leaders are more of commercial disposition rather than transformational or divine motive. A radical Christian of *the Lord's Resistance Army* in Uganda was confused about what religion is, although he had so much influence on people to the extent that he succeeded in using religion as a tool for terrorism⁶. The manipulation of religion in the hands of religious actor, in essence, is caused by the influence of politics on religion with concomitant violation of human rights and privileges in Nigeria and in Israel.

2.1.3 Politics of Peace

Politics of peace in a diverse religious context is the interplay between governmental and non-governmental peace activism and relations. Politics of peace engages political, economic, social, cultural and technological means to institutionalize peace in the society. However, the principal limiting factor is 'Politics of prebendalism' which is a political system in which elected political officials and government workers share public funds to benefit only political party supporters, ethnic groups and co-religious members and this is a commonplace in Nigeria⁷. Several agitations of nepotism, ethnic leanings, demographic injustice and other forms of social corruption have characterized the current government in Nigeria and this makes politics of peace

more profound. Thus, the constituent ethnicities of Nigeria's federal society are the bases for the organization, mobilization, and legitimization of ethno-clientelistic networks of patronage, corruption, and rent-seeking⁸.

2.1.4 Peace-building

Peace building is a long-term process of encouraging people to talk, reform institutions, restore relationships, and rebuild peace. For peace-building to be effective, everyone affected by a destructive conflict should be involved in peace-building process. The goal of peace-building is to transform conflict into peaceful relationships. Dialogue is essential to foster peace instead of employing security forces to silence dissenting voices. Five paradigms are used as approaches to peace building, they are: power politics, world order, conflict resolution, non-violence, and transformation⁹. All these approaches attest that the paths to peace are many and travelled by several people including diplomats, advocates, statesmen, educators, and volunteers. Peace building has multidimensional post- conflict focus which includes stabilizing the post-conflict zone, restoring state institutions, and dealing with social and economic issues.

Peace-building aims at resolving injustice in non-violent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. Peace- building is geared towards developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. Peace- building process includes conflict management, resolution or transformation, and post- conflict reconciliation or trauma healing before, during, and after any given case of violence⁹. Peace- building is a multidisciplinary cross-sectors technique that works over that long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally for the purpose of engendering sustainable peace and human dignity.

Peace-building is an integrative system that encourages an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace, reconciliation, conflict prevention, rule of law mechanisms, and civil society. Peace building is most effective when it engages culturally relevant conceptions of peace, using underlying dynamics that foster human dignity and inter-relationship.

Peace-building includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national, and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear (negative peace) and freedom from want (positive peace) and freedom from humiliation, before, during and after violent conflict. The language of peace-building is restraint and respect in violent conflict by creating peaceful politics across differences to mitigate hostilities and conflict.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Functionalist Theory of Religion

The thrust of this theory is that religion, being a conservative force, has positive function for individuals and the society. It is therefore, worthwhile to consider the significance of both religion and politics in Nigeria and in Israel. It is high time we have begun to consider and examine the human value of religion as well as the trajectory of politics. Imposition of cultural nuances on other cultures in the practice of religion makes religion unacceptable in different climes. Outright violation of human rights is a limiting factor in the practice of religion. Thus, the Marxists may be right to a large extent when he opined that 'religion is an opium'. Religion makes people docile, asinine and illogical in some cases. Functionalism is the doctrine that what

makes something a thought, a desire, or a pain depends not on its internal constitution, but solely on its function or role it plays in the cognitive system in which it is a part. Precisely, functionalist theories take the identity of a mental state to be determined by its causal relations to sensory stimulations, other mental states and behaviour¹⁰. Functionalists focused on the problem of order and the positive effect of social institutions and explain that the significance of social institutions depends largely on their functions that they perform in the society. Within this theory, function refers to the extent to which a given activity promotes or demotes maintenance of a system.

In considering Functionalism, conflict theorists understood that any social order involved the regulation of opposing interest and that as a result, conflict between individuals and among groups was an essential part of every society. Functionalists chose to begin with a different premise called functionalism, a view that focuses on the role of social objects, or actors and on what they do. Functionalists examine phenomena with regards to their functions in building or facilitating social cohesion. Functionalists take the pain to study division of labour, religion, suicide and other phenomenal actions from this philosophical perspective. Functionalist theory in religion is premised on three main functions in the society: social cohesion to help social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs; social control to ensure religion-based morals and norms help maintain conformity and control in the society; and giving meaning and purpose to life. In the light of this, functionalists believe that religious belief serves three purposes of belief in the sacred; in religious groups or cults; and in rituals¹¹. The theorist asserts that solidarity or social cohesion is what holds individuals together in social institutions and believes that solidarity is primary and normal condition of society that would allow for harmonious living, even though the turmoil and conflicts associated with religion are pathological.

In functionalist thinking on social fact, which consists of “ways of acting, thinking and acting, the individual is endowed with the power of coercion by which they control”. In other words, there are phenomena that cannot be reduced to economic or psychological objects or events. Social factors are external to individuals who make up society. Individuals are born into already established social systems; patterns of beliefs, values and norms as well as ways of believing and all these exert influence on the individual¹². Every member of the society is then shaped by these external forces that control them. and these external forces as constraints, are coercive but we accept them as part of who we are. We are shaped by society and social institutions impose themselves upon us, compel us to do some unusual things, yet we cling to, and love what the society dictates to us.

Functionalists are interested in the morphology of social system and they make a distinction between the causal analysis of a phenomenon and the functional analysis of it. While causal analysis involves looking for antecedent conditions, things that bring it about, functional analysis looks at the consequences of social facts. This analysis affects both religion and politics as social groups.

2.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

This theory states that people live both in the natural and the symbolic environment. Symbolic interactionism is an approach used to analyse human interactions by focusing on the meanings that individuals assign to things in the world around them including words and objects. Symbolic interactionism is how your experiences add subjective meanings to symbols and letters. For “God”, you see this as a big, tall, dominating sacred being, perhaps with two legs and two hands like humans. Another person may see “God” as both invisible and invincible supernatural being, perhaps as a loving or judgmental supreme. The same thing is applicable in politics. The symbol

a person attaches to politics through his interactions with the letter “politics” dominates his mind¹⁵. Your experiences and subjective meaning to the letter “politics” affects your perception about politics. While some people consider politics as a worthwhile venture for which one can die, some other people see politics as a dirty game which is only meant for rough and tough people¹³.

Symbolic interactionism starts from the proposition that our social world is constructed through the mundane acts of everyday social interaction. Through the repetitive act of interaction, individuals as actors in relation to social groups constitute symbolic and shared meanings. Polysemic words or symbols mean different thing to different people. Core principles in symbolic interactions include meaning, language which provides means; (symbols) for debating meaning; and thinking principle. Symbolic interaction theory acknowledges the principle of meaning as the centre of human behaviour and that our reality is socially constructed. Thus, the symbol attached to either religion or politics is what motivates people to whatever action, whether for good or bad¹⁴.

A central characteristic of human communities is interaction among other things with the help of symbols. By constantly acting and interacting, social norms and values are created. An individual’s personality is formed within a human community. Symbolic interactionism is a major theory in sociology, political science, psychology and religion. It focuses on the active role that people play in constructing their own reality, and helps to shape peoples’ experiences and behaviour.

Some of the characteristics of the symbolic interaction perspective are an emphasis on interactions among people; use of symbols in communication and interaction; interpretation as

part of action; self as constructed by individuals and others as flexible; adjustable social processes through communication. Symbolic interactionism is thus, a perspective that views society as the product of shared symbols, such as language. The social world I constructed by the meaning that individuals attach to events and social interactions, and these symbols are transmitted across the generations through language. A central concept of symbolic interactionists is the *self*, which allows us to calculate the effects of our actions¹⁵. In simple terms, people in the society understand their social worlds through communication (the exchange of meaning through language and symbols).

This theory emphasizes people's response to the elements of their environment according to the subjective meanings they attach to those elements being created and modified by people through social interaction involving symbolic communication with other people Symbolic Interactionism theory. In the symbolic interactionism theory, religion is a form of interaction while in the conflict theory and functionalism theory, religion serves only as a means of governance. Conflict theory addresses religion as a social construct while interactionism and functionalism views religion as a means for the functioning of the society¹⁶.

Religion or religiousness is a characteristic of human beings who have an attraction to an objective reality outside of humans but considered Ultimate, Divine, and Sacred in essence and action. Humans generally consider themselves dependent on this Ultimate Reality for their being and sustenance. This reality is considered to be in communication with humans who nonetheless respond in diverse ritual forms, sharing same symbols or language¹⁷.

Functionalists argue that religion contributes to social stability. Functionalism is a consensus theory which argues that the structures, system and institution all serve to maintain various

cohesion in the society. Functionalists argue that religion is a conservative force and that it is a positive function for society and individuals. The major differences lie in the goal that religion seeks to achieve. While in functionalism theory and Interaction theory, religion is a means through which social systems function¹⁸. In the conflict theory however, religion is viewed as a social vice because it encourages class stratification. Functionalism is a value consensus theory because functionalists view religion to play the function of maintaining harmony and social cohesion. Functionalists see religion as a positive apparatus in society which promotes social solidarity and allows society to run smoothly¹⁹.

2.2.3 Conflict Theory

The thrust of this theory is that religion is an institution that helps maintain patterns of social inequality through the dichotomy between leaders and followers, especially when those in religious leadership hold on to power and wealth by any means possible at the expense of the poor and the powerless. Autocracy, ludocracy and plutocracy are prominent in the Nigerian politics. Conflict is inevitable in a militarised democracy. Governance is handled by the few wealthy and influential people at the expense of the teeming population of poor people. Africa, in which Nigeria is a giant has remained vulnerable to terrorism in recent times. Conflict theory is used to explain various phenomena of social change in which religion is paramount²⁰.

The social conflict approach highlights how religion, as a phenomenon of human behaviour, maintains social inequality by advancing a worldview that justifies oppression. Marxian theory critically argues that actions should be taken to resolve social inequalities. One of the frequently paraphrased statements of Marxist view about religion is that religion is the opium of the people. and that religion plays a significant role in maintaining the status quo by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life. Social inequalities result from the differences inherent in

class structure such as the inequality between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletariat being the working class and the bourgeoisie as the capitalist class. The dictum 'religion is the opiate of the masses' means religion was constructed by people to calm uncertainty over our role in the universe and in the society. To conflict theorists, religion gives a sense of security and salvation to something yet to come²¹.

Early social theorists offered explanation and analysis of religion in terms of the function of religion in society, the role of religion in the life of the individual and the nature of religion. By focusing attention on other worldly rewards, religion pacifies members by providing a worldview that deflects attention that would otherwise be directed at the inequalities of this world. Marxists argue that humans are best guided by reason. In his own view, religion is a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misleading followers. However, contrary to misrepresentation of the theorist, Marxian theory never suggested that religion ought to be prohibited, rather he advocates freedom from the illusion that religion offers²².

Social conflict theorists viewed religion as a tool of social control used by the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat content with an unequal status quo. The social-conflict approach is rooted in Marxian critique of capitalism. According to the theory, in a capitalist society, religion is used as a tool in maintaining an unequal status quo in which certain groups of people have radically more resources and power than other groups of people and the bourgeoisie use religion as a tool to keep the less powerful proletariat pacified, using religion as the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of a soulless circumstance, and as the opium of the people. Conflict theory has the following assumptions:

- a. Humans are self-interested;

- b. Societies operate under perpetual scarcity of resources
- c. Conflict is pervasive and unavoidable within social groups and between social groups¹⁹.

The three main sociological theories of religion are postulated see religion as just an illusion and metaphysical, though powerful and interconnected with human society. None of the theorists was fond of religion but agreed that religion has strong power over people and society. The common takeaway from their theories is that religion is mainly an illusion and that its appeal and influence would decrease over time.

Conflict theorists on religion view social cohesion as a primary function of religion and recognised that modern societies were becoming less formally religious and the trend of secularism erodes away the human value of religion. However, they opined that a more civic religion should replace the traditional forms. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, the proponent attempts to understand the effects of religion on social solidarity by studying religion in primitive society- where religion functions to bind individuals to groups and regulate their behaviours and connect them to symbolic order and social structure and the three essential elements of religion which are; belief in the sacred; religious groups or cults; and ritual identified as principal factors in most religions... Thus, there is a collective sense of a larger force which controls their lives. This is the genesis of the distinction between the sacred and the secular and humans are still in that categorization till today. The sense of the sacred became formalized in some concrete symbols or “totem” and rituals serves to emphasize religious identity and energize its normative structure²³.

During periods of social change, individuals sometimes experience alienation from group goals and values. They feel distanced from the collective, and they are less constrained by group norms. Normative values become generalized, rather than personally embraced. The

development of the division of labour associated with industrialization facilitated anomie. As work became routinized, broken down into dull repetitive tasks, workers lose the sense of their role in production, and are less committed to the process and the organization. As a result, the norms of the workplace exert less influence on their activity. However, not all social behaviour is anomic. The proponent identified anomie which makes people feel distanced from collective norms and egoism which implies excessive individualism as a result of lessened social values and norms. Individuals tend to disregard norms in favour of their own interest and eventually this weakens social cohesion but such self-centeredness is destructive to individuals' wellbeing¹⁹. Both anomie and egoism play out in modern religion and politics in both Nigeria and Israel. The state of crises whether political or religious is a reflection of this conflict theory.

2.2.4. Paradox Theory

Paradox theory argues that people with a paradox mind-set are able to recognize, tolerate and accept contradictions as they are comfortable with entertaining two opposite cognitive processes at the same time: evaluative differentiation and conceptual integration¹¹. Paradox may lower self-efficacy as the many alternatives may increase the level of uncertainty which can confuse people causing them to adopt a wait-and-see attitude rather than become more proactive and take action to resolve the effects of the tension. The conceptual impression of paradox theory lacks definitional coherence and researchers who invoke the term *paradox* often refer to a variety of phenomena, including puzzling and contradictory situations, conflicts, and difficult choices as well as the simultaneous persistence of opposites²⁴.

Individuals with a high level of paradox mind set already possess high levels of integration mechanisms. As the degree of integration increases, an individual discovers more

interconnected options, but above a certain threshold, that high degree of integration diminishes creativity due to a decrease in an individual's confidence in his or her own innovativeness¹¹. One of the leadership competencies that are essentially important in today's complex global marketplace is the ability to effectively deal with paradox. Black and White thinkers see the world in two dimensions: either/or, but many challenges leaders face in the organizational world require both and thinking.

Paradoxes exist when seemingly contradictory activities operate together. For instance, for a person to succeed, he may first be allowed to fail. People need controls to be free and freedom can only be achieved if there are constraints. Vulnerability is often seen as a weakness. Weak leaders avoid showing vulnerability, but strong leaders can exhibit vulnerability and increase their leadership capabilities and "connectedness"²⁵.

Paradoxes discourage us from taking a one-sided or dogmatic standpoint to an issue or problem. Thinking in terms of paradoxes enables us to avoid biased, self-referenced perspectives, becoming attached to a "truth" or clinging to a conviction that stems very much from our own perspective. How can we unite two seeming opposites? When the inherent contradictions work together, success follows. Leaders who can navigate paradox have the biggest impact on religion or politics. An inability to deal with paradox narrows our visions limits possibilities and reduces the number of choices. It affects how you think, solve problems and make decisions²⁶.

The paradoxical thinker learns to be open-minded, creative, thinks out-of-the-box and be curious. Look for the opposites, the unusual things, paying attention to things you have been ignoring or taking for granted. Paradoxical thinkers are sceptical—they do not accept what

others accept as a matter of routine or doing things in a manner simply because that is how they have always been done. Paradox thinkers are “integrative thinkers” who consider divergent ideas or alternative poles simultaneously. Paradox thinkers learn by accepting the tension and becoming comfortable with the discomfort. The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function²⁷.

2.2.5 The Capture Theory

Agency capture and client politics is a form of corruption of authority that occurs when a political entity, policy maker or political interests of a minor constituency such as a particular geographical area or ideological group or ethnicity or religion is prioritized over the general interests of the public, leading to a net loss for society. The word ‘capture’ in this context is seen as the act of being in possession of governance or control by force or by superior power²⁸. The proponent of this theory in 1948 was of the opinion that state capture by illicit and corrupt means, would help the captors to wield much socio-economic and political power to themselves to the extent of buying over the interests of the electorate. With the help of few aristocrats from political, ethnic and religious lines, the captors focus their resources²⁹.

The proposition about “Capture Theory” was expanded by other scholars and all agreed that the theory is related to that of rent-seeking and client politics as benefits of a programme go to some patrons, reasonably small interest but most of the costs are borne by a large member of people. State capture is a type of systemic political corruption in which private interests significantly influence a state’s decision-making processes to their own advantage. The concept of Capture Theory lies in its act of catching, winning or gaining control by force, stratagem or trickery³⁰.

This trend is common in both religion and politics in which a device or trap is used to hold the one caught at the mercy of the captor. Today, many people are captives of some sort, to their religious and political leaders. Many religious adherents and political electorate have hard mentality rather than personal conviction. Religion has been turned into a weapon of politics with triumphalist characteristics. Both religion and political process are characterized by identity politics which always results in tyranny of victory. It has been noted that electioneering activities in Nigeria are devoid of morality and good values³¹. This is observable in the use of vulgar language, hate and inciting speeches, lies, propaganda and deceit against opponents.

The aggression for membership by any means is characteristic of both religion and politics since anyone that wins capture the innocent people. Unfortunately, the winner eventually become captors' wielding so much religious or economic power to themselves. These captors constitute themselves into patrons and use their followers as 'captives' in a patron-client relationship. The capture theory of politics explains how the elitist groups behave as patriarchs, patrons and godfathers for most of the times to promote selfish, geopolitical and perhaps religious interest²³. However, a veritable solution to the 'capture syndrome' is communitarianism which is a socio-political philosophy that prioritises the needs of the society. over the needs of the individual. The role of government and of citizens within a country should be guided by the philosophy of communitarianism. People stick together to improve their chances of survival with each person having a role in the community.

Ancient Greek philosophers like Aristotle also talked about the significance of community in civil life. Communitarianism is a political ideology that checks excesses of individualism, especially in governance. As a matter of fact, it is viewed as the opposite of individualism which encourages each person to prioritise the needs of the community. By implication, public

resources should be distributed equitably within the context of the community because each person elected to represent the community at the local or state level should contribute to the common good: and government structure should support the needs of the community. Akin to the social contract and natural rights, communitarianism is a reaction to the absolute power of authoritarian regimes of both religious and political leaders. Communitarianism checks religious and political individualism, bigotry, and egoistical motives among leaders. The philosophy of communitarianism is significant in curbing the incidence of neopatrimonialism, clientelism and patronage system which is fraught with vote buying, manipulation of electioneering process, manipulation of followers, ethnicity, nepotism, and prebendalism in religion and politics in Nigeria³².

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1. Politics, Religion and Secularity of the Nigerian State

The 1999 constitution of the federation of Nigeria (CFRN) affirms that Nigeria is a secular state. The Government of the federation or a state shall not adopt any religion as State Religion (Section 10, CFRN)³³. The section clearly indicates that religion is a private personal affair of individuals and it does not affect the state in any way. Thus, the role of the state is to ensure that there is no coercion to follow any religious belief or creed and to ensure freedom of worship without fear³⁴.

However, the attitude of government towards religion is ambivalent. For instance, the recognition and the establishment of the hajj commission, Christian pilgrim's commission, national cathedral, national mosque, imam of the Aso rock, chaplain of the Aso rock is a subtle ploy to use religion as an agency of political reasons. Religion is therefore used as a

demographic index required to register for national identity card, national passport, bank and drivers' license. The situation has gotten to the extent of preferring religion as an index rather than competence in political posts and national governance³⁵. Thus, mix religion and politics in the light of the growing phenomenon of religious extremism and religious motivated violence in the country is a major challenge of sustainable development in Nigeria³⁶.

There is much distrust in Nigeria and also in Israel, especially regarding religious and political matters. Religion is used as a tool for almost everything that has to do with political posts and governance. When religion combines with ethnicity, every citizen's emotion is arisen and both religious and political actors use the opportunity to protect their interest even if not the public good³⁷. For instance, the nationwide report indicated that Christian members of the APC in all the nineteen (19) Northern states as well as the Christian association of Nigeria (CAN) denounced the Muslim-Muslim ticket for the 2023 presidential election for no other reason than religion.

Two types of theocrats have been identified: the ambitious and the retiring. The ambitious theocrat participates in politics to change the society around them, while the retiring is withdrawn, secluded and reluctant to participate in the political or public process. Examples of theocracy in contemporary history are the church of England after the Reformation in England, the English puritans when they reached the New World, the Roman Papacy, and the christianisation of Europe, to mention a few. Disadvantages of theocracy include encystations, radicalism, intolerance, dogmatism and extremism. Theocracy does not align with the pluralistic and most recently, liberal ideals of the modern or post-modern world³⁸.

The Messianic perspective: This arose as a sub – component of Judaism and became pronounced in Israel during the Greek – roman occupation of Israel where the nation was subjected to taxation and oppression by Rome – appointed rulers. This perspective was drawn from the aspirations of the Jews to have a religious military – styled messiah who could deliver Israel from the Roman tyranny and oppression. The Messianic perspective is somewhat of a liberating ideology that resulted in a defiant culture that produced radicalized rebels like Barabbas. The Sanhedrin Council of the synagogues was an organized religious leadership under the oversight of the Roman government that championed hatred and final crucifixion of Jesus Christ since they noticed that he was pacific rather than polemic in his approach to issues. In their perception, the kingdom of heaven which this Messiah preached and died for was not the expected physical earthly freedom they wanted³⁹.

Although the Bible encourages believers to give honour to human government of the day, yet the community of Christian faith still holds diverse views regarding participation in partisan politics. The early missionaries frowned at partisan politics and taught their converts not to be involved in it because of the perceived potential corruption which is always associated with politics. Separation of Church and State was a western orientation exported with Christian faith and this has remained with the African Church for a very long time. However, a scholarly divergent view of African evangelism is that Christians should be actively involved in partisan politics in tandem with Apostle Paul writing in his epistles to the Romans and in the Psalms which states, “the earth is the lord’s and the fullness therein, the world and people that dwell in it”⁴⁰.

In Nigeria, like most parts in Africa, religion cannot be divorced from other aspects of living. Religion exists in the culture, vocation, politics and socio – economic practices of people and regulates their values world views and aspirations⁴¹. The three geo-political zones of Northern

Nigeria do not agree to the constitutional view of secularity of the Nigerian states. In the northern Nigeria, rights to freedom of religion and expression are somehow restricted as observed in the case of the recent killing of Deborah Samuel, a 200-level student of the Sheu Shagari College of Education. In fact, the Islamic fundamentalists had killed several other citizens through extra-judicial killings without meaningful penalty. However, Nasru-lahi-hi-fatihi society (NASFAT) an Islamic organization condemned the heinous crime and reiterated that such killing is alien to Islam. The action of Sultan of Sokoto as the head of Mushin community in Nigeria cleared other peace – loving Muslims of complicity when His eminence condemned the killing in his domain in strong terms, even in the heat of the moment⁴².

The use of religion to spread hatred and division in the choice of aspirants for political positions is a bane of democracy and leadership in Nigeria. Speaking on the presidential candidacy of Muslim-Muslim ticket by All Progressive Congress (APC), the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir Lawal, a Christian, directed this to the APC Presidential Election, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu that he would antagonise Christian majority in this country and that his political choice is a direct attack on them and even in his own native zone, because when it comes to politics and decisions, Nigerians take religion first⁴³.

The phenomenon of using religious criterion for choice of leadership is significant during electioneering campaigns but not while in governance. Both Christian leaders and Muslim leaders have always been implicated in cases of corruption, political injustices, crime and criminality. There is a symbiotic relationship between religion and corruption. Arguments still continue that with increased spirituality or religiosity, corruption ought to have reduced but instead, religion itself had become a channel of corruption in the society³⁰. This view was

corroborated by an Islamic scholar who was very objective in his estimation of the dynamics of the social life⁴⁴.

Almajiri, beggars, which is an Islamic educational system in the northern Nigeria is now an instrument to breed banditry and insurgency the double – menaces facing the Nigerian policy. Religion has exacerbated social mistrust and religious landscape portends serious dangers for the policy given the present crises at social political, economic and ethnic levels. Religion is used as a criterion for accessing power and positions⁴⁵.

2.3.2. The Nigerian Religious Council (NIREC)

If religion is the belief in, and worship of a supreme being, especially as a personal God, then all adherents should primarily have a sense of belonging to the supernatural being and pursue the interest of such a supernatural being with great devotion premised on the assumption that is peaceful and worthy of being followed for the common good of humans. It is paradoxical that religious crisis all over the world is phenomenal. Terrorism has infiltrated religion and it seems that the so-called supernatural being is already implicated since negative manifestations of religions tilt, overtly or covertly on daily basis, towards terrorism occasioned by the predatory character of human religious leaders who swindle unsuspecting adherents. It should be reasonable to consider and examine what led to the Americanisation of Islam within the Muslim world and why postmodernism of the West is used as fuel for driving Islamism, gay rights, LGBTQ++ and other allied social threats to Islam⁴⁶.

The imposition of Western mode of government in Islamic countries has engendered religious protest with some kind of civilisational clash. The International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety) has claimed that 46,000 Christians and 30,000 Muslims have been

killed in 13 years, from July 2009 to 2022. The claim is contained in a statement issued in Enugu, Eastern Nigeria signed by its Board Chair/Lead-Investigator and his associates. The cause of the killing was traced to Fulani Jihadists and other pastoralists or mercenaries. Patterns and trends associated with fractional killings of moderate and defenceless people in the Muslim dominant Northern States of Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kebbi, and North and Central Kaduna dating back to 2009 are centred on ‘collateral and revenge killings. The paradox of religion lies in the fact that all these actors of violent conflict are religious people who should have been influenced by the religious faith they profess but the situation betrays them.

Intersociety had, in its special international report 4th August 2021, revealed that many innocent Nigerians were hacked to death by jihadists and their collaborators in Nigeria in twelve years (2009- 2021) while estimated 20,300 others were abducted and disappeared without traces. Estimated total of 17,500 churches and over 2000 Christian schools were attacked, 522 Christian communities in Northern Nigeria were sacked from their communities and taken over by the jihadists. About 10 million Northern Christians were destabilised by the jihadists. The report further found that considerable number of moderate and defenceless Muslims equally lost their lives⁴⁷.

In March 2018, the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which includes the most influential religious leaders and addresses interfaith collaboration, met for the first time in five years to sign a peace pact and pledged to combat ethno-religious divisions. However, despite the dialogic summits and pacts, the situation has not really got better because of the volatile nature of religion and the politics of peace involved. The United States embassy and visiting the United State government officials promoted religious freedom and interreligious tolerance in discussions throughout year 2018 with government officials, religious leaders, and civil society organisations.

The Ambassador and other senior embassy officials hosted interfaith dinners, participated in interfaith conferences, and conducted press interviews to promote interfaith dialogue. All these efforts both national, international and non- governmental, have not yielded the desired result simply because the religious actors and political leaders have been treating the situation with kids' gloves, especially where some benefits accrue to them from religious manipulations including violent conflicts. In the light of the challenges faced, religion is due for a review in Nigeria just as a Mosque was renamed after Mary the mother of Jesus⁴⁸.

The constitution of Nigeria stipulates that neither the federal nor the state government shall establish a state religion and prohibits discrimination on religious grounds. The constitution provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change one's religion and to manifest and propagate religion "in worship, teaching, practice, and observance," provided these rights are consistent with the interest of defence, public safety, order, morality, or health, and protecting the rights of others. The constitution also states that it shall be duty of the state to encourage interfaith marriages and to promote the formation of associations that cut across religious lines and promote "national integration". The constitution prohibits political parties that limit membership because of religion or with names that have a religious connotation. However, in flagrant disrespect for the constitution, the Nigerian government continued to detain Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) leader Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky despite a December 2016 court ruling to release him. There were no reports of accountability for soldiers implicated in the December 2015 clash between the army and IMN members that, according to Kaduna State government report, left at least 348 members and one-soldier dead, with IMN members buried in a mass grave. Approximately 100 additional IMN members remained in detention⁴⁹.

As part of the politics of peace in Nigeria, in August 2018, the office of the Vice President (OVP) collaborated with the U.S. Institute for Peace, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPRC) to organise a two-day Justice and Security National Dialogue (JSD). The event included government, military, paramilitary, traditional, and religious leaders, along with civil society organisations and representatives from farming and herding communities. A training anchored by the OVP, NHRC, and IPRC commenced in 2019. On May 10, 2018, the Southern Kaduna Peace and Reconciliation Committee brought together security agencies in the state including police, army, Civil Defence, Department of State Security, and civil society, including religious leaders to foster trust through dialogue between the religious communities and security agencies. If the trend is not nipped in the bud, what happened between Israel and Palestine is looming in Nigeria⁵¹.

However, the gruesome murder of Deborah Yakubu, a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto came at a time of social escalation and economic tension in Nigeria and will most certainly raise the political stakes as the country enters electioneering season. Ms Yakubu was thought to have “blasphemed” Islam and Prophet Muhammad after a voice note that she left on a social media group responding to another student’s post on the theme of Islam. She was forcibly extracted from her safe room where the school authorities had hoped to hide her. Deborah’s colleagues took her, stoned and beat her with clubs before setting her lifeless body on fire and while beating and burning her, the assailants were shouting *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) till she was burnt into ashes⁵².

Various political and civil associations have condemned the killing and demanded the immediate arrest and prosecution of the killers. Notable religious associations and individuals that have condemned the heinous act include the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Northern States

Christian Elders Forum, The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria, Amnesty International, the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria, Bishop Matthew Kukah, Pius Anyim and the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo. The contradiction of religion here lies in the fact that 'a saving and peaceful religion has become a killing and violent religion; a protecting religious founder has been implicated to become tyrannical. Could a peace-loving Muhammad or Quran have justified the killing? What was the content and context of the alleged blasphemy and what hermeneutic analysis affirming the alleged blasphemy? Islam, as a religion of peace, should not be not been contradicted.

In June 2015, an Islamic court in Kano sentenced nine people (eight men and a woman) to death after finding them guilty of blasphemy. At a religious gathering in honour of Sheik Ibrahim Niasse, the founder of the Tijaniyyah order, the nine had apparently uttered the words "Niase was bigger than Prophet Muhammad". In August 2020, a Kano Islamic court sentenced gospel Musician Yahya Sharif Aminu to death by hanging for blasphemy, in "violation of section 382 (B) of Kano State Sharia Penal Code".

In April 2022, Mubarak Bala, thirty-seven old President of the Nigeria Humanist Association, was sentenced to 24 years in prison after pleading guilty to eighteen charges of "blaspheming Islam". Blasphemy is an offence under Islamic Sharia Law, effective across Nigeria's twelve majority Muslim northern states. Section 204 of the Nigerian Criminal Code stipulates a two-year imprisonment for "public insult... on religion". Although blasphemy is at odds with Section 38 and 39 of the Nigerian Constitution, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression, the story is not the same in the use of Sharia Law in Nigeria. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has declared blasphemy law

inconsistent with universal human rights⁵³. However, for good or ill, the deeply conservative and repressive interpretation of Islam as a “religion of peace” is paradoxical, especially in northern Nigeria where religion is losing human values. It is a travesty of justice on the part of religious actors and government to allow religious extremists to hijack religion for their self-aggrandizement and portray religions in bad light.⁵⁴

Less than two weeks after the gruesome murder of Deborah Yakubu for allegedly insulting Prophet Muhammad, the family disclosed that no government or politician had paid them a condolence visit, except the community of Christian faith in their house in Niger State. While the death of Deborah Yakubu is still raising a dust, another alleged blasphemy has resulted in burning of another youth in Bauchi.irate religious fanatics, after Islamic Jumat prayer on Friday 20 May, 2022 went on rampage destroying structures belonging to Christians in Katangan. Warji headquarters of Warj LGA of Bauchi State⁵⁵. The trouble started when unconfirmed reports circulated on the social media that one Christian youth allegedly blasphemed against Islam just as Deborah Yakubu was framed up and killed in Sokoto.

The story of the life and scholarship of William Tyndale, an English scholar and biblical translator, humanist and Protestant martyr is another paradox. Tyndale, who was educated at the University of Oxford and became an instructor at the University of Cambridge, should be celebrated for his scholarship rather than martyred. Christian people demanded for Scriptures in the vernacular and Tyndale began working on a New Testament translation directly from the Greek in 1523. After Roman Catholic Church in England prevented him from translating the Bible there, he went to Germany in 1524, receiving financial support from wealthy London merchants to complete the translation to meet the yearnings of people who demand the vernacular version of the Bible. Thus, his New Testament translation was completed in 1525 and

printed at Cologne, then in the face of intense persecution, he fled to Worms where he printed two more editions in 1525. This trend is nothing more than a 'weaponisation of religion'⁵⁶

The first copies were smuggled into England in 1526, where they were at once proscribed. When the New Testament was finished, he began work on the Old Testament translation. However, Tyndale was captured in Antwerp before it was completed, and was condemned for heresy. William Tyndale was executed by strangulation and then burned at the stake at Vivoorde in 1536. The Roman Catholic was implicated in the premature death of this young, vibrant translator whose greatest achievement was the ability to strike balance between the needs of scholarship, simplicity of expression, and literary gracefulness all in uniform dialect³⁵. William Tyndale's gallant effort to facilitate the creation of an English style of Bible translation, tinged with Hebraisms that was to serve as a model for future English versions for nearly 400 years paved way for King James Version of 1611. The execution of William Tyndale by fellow Christian religious leaders of the 16th century was both political and tyrannical and can never be pleasing to a peace-loving Supreme. As a matter of fact, Tyndale's unfinished revolution continues⁵⁷.

2.3.3. Religion as Source of Conflicts in Sudan, Afghanistan, and Arab-Israel

In both Somalia and Afghanistan, one major source of the conflicts is doctrinal practices in Islam. They fight over which faction of Islamic sect or brand would prevail and this extends ethnic content in populations⁵⁸. In Arab-Israel, the management of and access to religious sites are sources of serious tensions among extreme Jewish and Muslim groups. In this Arab-Israel conflict situation, it is the control of land and state sovereignty that causes unending conflict

among them. All these cases affirm that while religion is used as a principal source of conflict, other principal source of conflict, other principal factors such as geographical factors, political factors, ethnicity and social factors are actually the denominates of conflict. A scholar tacitly summed up the romance of religion and politics in Afghanistan as a romance of power and faith⁵⁹

Religion is used for both peace and war. One common goal of both religion and politics is to acquire support to fulfil desired aims. Different methods and strategies are used to acquire such controlling power-or support. While religion mobilizes religious sensibilities of people to acquire support to have controlling power, politics mobilizes political sensibilities of people to get support by diplomacy, tact, intrigue, and inducement, especially if the society is underdeveloped and poor³⁷. In other words, in power struggle, both religion and politics make attempts to undermine each other as it always happens in Nigeria before and during electioneering. Religion is deployed to gain political authority to exploit is divine ambition just as politics is engaged to meet social-economic needs of people and build a society according to the resolution of the political party⁶⁰.

When religion and politics are integrated there is the tendency to monopolize political power and governance. In this scenario, either religion or politics is used to arouse the emotion of potential electorate to acquire controlling power as it happened in the 2023 APC President Muslim-Muslim ticket. In this case religion played a subservient role to politics. The opposition party, especially the Labour Party used religion to compete in the struggle for domination, just as People's Democratic Party was defeated on grounds of geo-politics or ethnicity. The roles played by religion and ethnicity in the Nigeria 2023 presidential election would be used as a reference point in future and the implication of this may be grievous in subsequent elections because

religion has been overtly used to entangle in secular activities instead of being confined to sacredness. Thus, religion is now perceived to be more political, mechanical, and intricate. Separation of religion from politics and economics is now a mirage as it was possible in the medieval period.

2.3.4. Resource Curse (Trap) Hypothesis in Relation to Religion

A paradoxical situation in which countries with abundance still wallow in abject poverty and suffering may be described as poverty paradox or the paradox of plenty. As a phenomenon, Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources of crude oil, gold, and diamond but it often fails to transform that advantage into favourable development outcomes. This, akin to religious space with all shades of faith and piety but without significant human value to show for it is a resource curse. For instance, the Norwegian culture is rooted in the value of ethical awareness but in the case of Nigeria, politically controlled resource revenues encourage both corruption and violence. This trend resonates with the primordial factor causing unending war in Gaz⁶¹.

Religion is a powerful tool in peace-making hence, the virtues of religion should be deployed effectively to facilitate peace-building. Religious affiliation and conviction often motivate religious communities to advocate particular peace-related government policies and religious communities also oppose repression and promote peace and reconciliation. Religious leaders and political actors have the capacity to mediate in conflict situation, serve as a liaison officer between opposing sides and provide peace-making strategies, even though it garners less public attention.

Religion helps to defuse interfaith tensions that may cause future conflict. Religion is significant as both a source of international conflict and a resource for peace-making. Religion has assumed

unusual prominence in international affairs. A recent article in the 'Economist' asserts that, if there ever was a global drift toward secularism, it has been halted and probably reversed⁶². A notable scholar from Pennsylvania State University predicts that when historians look back at this century, they will see religions as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs, guiding attitudes towards political liberty and obligation, concepts of nationhood and of course, conflicts and wars. The article then cites statistics from a public opinion survey in Nigeria demonstrating that Nigerians believe religion to be more central to their identity than nationality. Nigerians are thus likely to identify themselves first as Christians or Muslims rather than as Nigerians. The horrendous events of September 11, 2001, the conflagration in Iraq and the aggressive assertiveness of quasi-theocratic Iran only confirm, in the popular mind, that religion lies behind much of contemporary international conflict. Religious hostilities could easily snowball into war as observed in the Middle East⁶³.

The decades-long civil war in Sudan is often described as a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians, with the north being predominantly Muslim and the south predominantly Christian or animist. There is some truth to this characterization, particularly after 1989, when an Islamic Fundamentalist government came to power in Khartoum with an agenda to Islamize all of Sudan. But the differences between north and south go well beyond religion and rarely are the disagreements religious or theological in character. Political reflections on Sudan affirms the far-reaching of religious influence on politics⁶⁴. The subtle or primary cause of the conflict was racial identity while religious divisions happened to overlap with the racial, ethnic, and geographical divisions. The causes of conflicts have not been exclusively religious. In places like Kaduna and Plateau States, conflicts described as religious had been remotely traced to economic competition, occupational differences, differences between migrants and indigenes.

2.3.5. The Niger Coup: An Outcome of Cultural and Structural Violence

In 2021 alone, there were six coup attempts in Africa, four were successful. A coup is an illegal and overt action by the military or by other civilian officers to unseat sitting leaders. A study by two researchers have identified over 200 coup attempts in Africa since 1950 and about half of these have been successful. The average number of coups attempts in Africa is around four a year between 1960 and 2000. This trend is attributed to instability, poverty and bad governance. Popular risings against long-serving dictators have provided opportunity for the return of coups in Africa. Sudan has had the most coups and attempted take-overs amounting to seventeen (17), six of them, successful. Burkina Faso in West Africa has had most successful coups, with nine take-overs and one failed coup ⁶⁵. Nigeria had reputation for military coups following independence with eight between January 1966 and take-over by General Sani Abacha in 1993. Since Nigeria had its fourth republic in 1999 by democratic election, no coup or attempted take-over has been noticed. However, poverty, underdevelopment and flagrant denial of basic human needs and dignity are the causes of religious and political conflicts for which politics of peace has failed to deliver favourable resolution. This unpleasant trend has slowed down peace-building mechanisms and ultimately delayed the country from having sustainable peace over the years.

There is regression of democracy in West Africa. The latest military takeover in Niger offers both opportunity and danger to ECOWAS because of the face-off between the sub-regional group and the junta. The forty-eight-year-old sub- regional block, ECOWAS is under pressure to stop the trend but both opportunities and danger lay on its path⁶⁶. Coups had taken place successfully in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger from 2020 till date. Recently, the police in Sierra Leone arrested several persons including senior military officers, in connection with a

suspected coup plot. President Julius Bio, himself a former coup leader, was elected to a second term only in June 2023. African conflicts have caused the unpremeditated displacement of more than 40 million people in Africa⁶⁷.

Put-schists and opposition groups have predicated forceful removal of political leaders on bad governance which has caused harsh economic conditions for the citizenry. The latest development affords ECOWAS to demonstrate that it is not a toothless barking dog. The Nigerian President Bola Tinubu has tried to rally other West African leaders to action just as he has sought permission of the Nigerian senate to allow Nigeria army to invade Niger. However, the senate has, so far, not acquiesced in such a delicate decision⁶⁸.

2.3.6 Religion, Politics of Peace, and Peace-building

Christianity has many paradoxes. There is one God, yet He is three persons. How can three persons be one God? This is religious puzzle that can only be untangled by the Christian faithful. Islam, too has many paradoxes. Islam implies peace, yet, most of the religious crusades are done with warfare and the religion is full of polemics trying to achieve peace through violence? How can you truly achieve peace through hostilities and wanton killing? Jesus Christ was born into Judaism and according to the Old Testament prophecies, yet both Jesus and his Christianity were rejected by the Jews to the extent that the same Jews were responsible for his crucifixion. How can the Jews truly serve Yahweh by killing his Son or Delegate? Religion is embroiled in paradoxes! Religion as well as politics has become belligerent or warlike. Thus, if religion is a culture as politics is an idea, it is not reasonable to challenge another person or party to a duel of ideas. Going through the whole corpus of biblical or Islamic literatures and the phenomenon of polemics throughout them is easily identified. Such controversies and disputations are equally common in political parties. Polemics as the art or practice of disputation or controversy is now a

living issue in religion as well as in politics. Religion is one of the most vexatious and contentious issues across the globe and the intrinsic nature of religion which is power makes it more enigmatic⁶⁹.

Pakistan is one of the largest contributors of troops to United Nations Peace Keeping Missions around the world. It participated in 43 peacekeeping missions in 26 countries with over 172,000 peacekeepers including 400 women. Thus, the role of Pakistan in global peace and security cannot be underestimated. Pakistan has sacrificed 83,000 lives and sustained economic losses of more than \$250 billion. In a few years, the country successfully eliminated terror networks, proxies and non-state rogue elements from its territory. In 2013, Pakistan established a centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS) in Islamabad, which was inaugurated by then UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon. The centre spearheads research and academic excellence in Peace Keeping, and enjoys immense respect among UN member Countries, it has trained more than 500 international Peacekeepers of different countries.

Amidst UN Secretary General's visit, ISWAP attacked Chibok, dislodged troops. Gunmen suspected to be Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists have launched a fresh attack on Kautukari community in Chibok LGA, Borno State. The insurgents invaded the community around 6pm on Tuesday, May 3, 2022 moment before the arrival of the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to the state as his part of his two-day visit to Nigeria. Eye witnesses' reports affirm that the terrorists set victims' houses ablaze and sacked the locals. Also, soldiers stationed at a military Forward Operation Base (FOB) in Kada, two kilometers away from Kautukari, were said to have been dislodged. Thus, within three months, terrorists, have attacked four communities: Kawtakare, Korohuman, Pemi and Kautukari all in the Chibok LGA. Chibok community first came under heavy terrorist attack when Boko Haram

insurgents attacked a Government Girls Secondary School in community, and abducted over 200 School girls⁷⁰. Borno state in the last twelve years has been ravaged by Boko Haram insurgency.

Saudi Arabia invites 43,000 Nigerians for 2022 Hajj, fifth in the world, following the lifting of Covid-19 restriction that saw the Holy Mosques of Mecca and Madinah closed to the public.

How much of this pilgrimage to Mecca and Jerusalem is beneficial to Nigeria in terms of morals?

A debate is raging in the Nigerian parliament regarding the funding of pilgrimage. Such debates had taken place severally but without any good outcome simply because the beneficiaries of the pilgrimage at the expense of the general public are the politicians, their patrons, and ethnic relations. All eyes are on the parliamentarians to see whether they could muster social strength to stop frivolous spending of public funds in a secular State⁷¹.

Religion unites people; promotes social cohesion; promotes conformity to cultural norms; it gives meaning and purpose to life; serves as an agent of social control of behaviour, motivates for positive social change; reinforces physical and psychological well-being and it is a source of comfort and guidance as a basis for moral beliefs and behaviours, especially when considering workplace conflict⁷². Religion helps people to develop healthy habits, regulate their behaviours and understand their emotions.

The 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom confirms that 84% of the world's population has some type of religious affiliations while remaining 16% could be termed "unreligious". Related to religion, animism is the belief in divine connection between humans and the natural world⁵⁰. On the other hand of religious spectrum is atheism, which involves a belief in no god or gods. Whatever the case is, religion is factor to reckon with in the whole world.

2.3.6.1 Mosque Named ‘Mary Mother of Jesus Mosque’

The only mosque named after Mary Mother of Jesus called ‘Mariam Umm Eisia Masjid in Arabic is located in All Mushrif, a central neighbourhood in the city of Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates. On 14th June 2017, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed All Nahyan decided to rename the mosque to “Mary, Mother of Jesus Mosque”. The change was done as an initiative exemplifying the values of co-existence among religions in the UAE. The mosque complex stands beside a Christian church as a symbol of building peace in a diverse and divided society⁷³.

Conflict prevention and peace building start from various peace mechanisms that could be deployed and this requires proactive identification of conflict triggers and a subsequent response to prevent violence from breaking out or escalating. This entails both foresight, hindsight. The drive for sustainable peace stems from the recognition that prevention of conflict is cheaper than conflict management or resolution. Thus, a turn to discourses of peace education and advocacy among religious leaders and politicians would go a long way in securing human and environmental security.

At the core of the United Nations (UN) is its renowned preamble. “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind... its development as a global norm and field of practice came in the Boutros-Ghali era, with the development of “preventive diplomacy” in the 1992 Agenda for Peace”⁵¹. Successive Secretary General maintained focus, with Annan shifting to a culture of prevention”, Banki-Moon declaring 2012 the “year of prevention”. The

Responsibility to Prevent R2P was adopted by all UN member states in 2005 to prevent crimes against humanity and affirmed by the World Health Organisation.⁷⁴

At the regional level, the European Union (EU) adopted conflict prevention as an explicit objective through the Lisbon Treaty. The African Union (AU) developed preventative tools within the Africa Peace and Security Architecture. In 2017, it adopted the AU Master Roadmap on Practical steps for Silencing the Guns by 2020. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has focused on “preventative *diplomacy*”, a state-centric approach to prevent conflict between member states while respecting strong norms of sovereignty that exists with the region⁷⁵.

2.3.6.2 Upstream, Midstream, and Downstream Peacebuilding Interventions

Conflict prevention is a term that lacks conceptual clarity and it is often used interchangeably with “peace building” and “conflict resolution”⁷⁶. Instead of a sweeping terminology, there are other underpinning factors and vernaculars from local and faith-based or religious perspective depicted to be preventative but not demonstrated to be so. distinguishes between upstream, midstream, and downstream interventions. While upstream and midstream are included in the analysis, downstream interventions are excluded. Upstream interventions seek to prevent harm before it occurs, targeting structural causes, midstream interventions mitigate the effects of harm, and then downstream interventions seek to cope with the consequence of harm and cost of conflict⁷⁷. In all of these, religious political actors have major roles to play and the neglect of this result in paradox of religion and politics of peace.

Washington Business Wire July 1, 2022 reports that prominent Nigerian religious and civic leaders addressed the rampant insecurity and religiously targeted violence in Nigeria during the International Religious Freedom Summit 2022 Washington D.C, and called for civic society

collaborative action as well as international support. Sessions on June 29 culminated with a “declaration for a Peaceful and Secure Nigeria” The declaration Peaceful and Secure Nigeria’ condemned the use of violence and coercion “to spread or hinder political or religious views and identities or to demean ethnic, regional or tribal affiliations”⁷⁸. Signed by the Muslims and Christian leaders in Nigeria, H.E Alhaji Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar. Sultan of Sokoto (represented by Professor Usman Yusuf) and H.E Reverend Samson Olasupo A. Ayokunle, president of the Christian association of Nigeria as well as the facilitator, Bishop Sunday Onuoha, president of Vision Africa.

The declaration reaffirms “our firm commitment to cooperation inclusive dialogue and concrete action for positive reform”. They are gravely concerned that political and government representatives as well, have not taken seriously their full duty to promote peace and harmony amongst the people of Nigeria. The Declaration was issued as part of an ongoing *Inclusive Security Dialogue* process engaging diverse key stakeholders representing the full spectrum of ethnic, religious and other constituencies in Nigeria. It is an ongoing initiative with facilitation and support from Global Peace Foundation, Vision Africa and ADF international. The international religious summit 2022 is a global convening of international NGOs, religious freedom advocates n activists focused on the increasing threats to freedom of religion, consent and belief around the world. The IRF summit has nearly 70 sponsoring organizations. Religion is supposed to be “pro-life” but unfortunately, conflicting experiences of belief, behaviour and belonging in Nigeria and Israel have made religion to be some sort of hypocrisy. Religion has given a mentality of polarised society which amps up political and social distress. For instance, while many Christians celebrated the Roe versus Wade ruling, others mourned it⁷⁹.

In Nigeria, the use of hijab in missionary public schools as a result of the court ruling was celebrated by the many Muslims while others especially Christians mourned it. Many from other faiths, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and more, have shared diverse reactions to the ruling based on religion. Thus, it is now difficult to be granted the dignity by both the Supreme Court and ethnocentric political leaders since government is using political authority to legislate and overrule religious matters. Religious freedom does not end with Supreme Court's protection of worshippers. An international activist on July 6, 2022 reiterated at the international religious summit in Washington, a bipartisan human right gathering that continues an effort begun under the State Department auspices during Trump administration to guarantee religious rights for all. He concluded by saying that, "if I wanted the freedom, *not* to believe, I personally needed to make possible someone else's right to believe"⁸⁰. This right strengthens projects that bring religiously and ideologically diverse communities together. Differences will forever be endless but the constitution affords us equal rights to consent, belief, association and religion⁸¹. The recent US Supreme Court ruling on three cases that supported conservative views has been labelled "pro-religion". Many political and religious leaders also championed SCOTUS' decisions as 'wins' of peace accord for political freedom⁸².

2.3.6.3 Religious and Political Sectarianism in South West Nigeria

The prophet Mohammad foresaw the schism that would arise among his disciples. In one of the most famous Traditions. Muhammad is reported to have said: 'verily, it will happen to my people even as it did to the children of Israel. The children of Israel were divided into seventy – two sects, and my people will be divided into seventy-three. Every one of these sects will go to hell, except one sect. He asserts that deviants will be consigned to hell by the umma. Only true Muslims would be privileged to enter paradise. Unfortunately, heresy in a religion or ideology

has never been easy to identify and this, too, is paradoxical. There are many admixtures of doctrine, interpretation, and practice within any group. Within Islam, homogeneity, heterogeneity, unity, discord, love and hate all merge into that which is at once a religion, a worldview, a community, a ritual, and a code. For all, the overriding unity is a sought-after but elusive phenomenon. Most Muslims experience frustration that the umma of Islam falls short of the ideal of unity set forth by the Prophet⁸³.

In the same vein, the most beloved of the disciples of Jesus, James and John, had lobbied their mother, Mary who had filial relationship with Jesus, that they would be made to take the two prominent seats, leaving out the other ten, in the kingdom of God. This is another conflagration of religion and politics, affirming religion as a cultural phenomenon. Sectarianism in religious faith is a big problem in the world today forcing the UN to have a Trust Fund for human security^{84,85}. The South West region of Nigeria has its own share of religious sectarianism and distrust, especially in government appointment at the state and local levels.

2.3.6.4 The Question of Muhammad's Successor: The Sunni-Shi'a Split

It is important to realize that the initial and fundamental split between Sunnis and Shi'a was over the question of succession. This issue was of a political nature. Today, approximately 85 percent of all Muslims are Shi'a. Muhammad made no provision for his successor. This created the climate for Islam's first major crisis, as it tried to constitute itself as a major political-cum religious combined force following the demise of its charismatic leader. This is a fusion of religion and politics which makes politics of peace non-neutral⁵⁷. It is right to say that Muslim disunity is a direct result of ignorance of what the founder, Muhammad and the early prophets said.

Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman followed Muhammad successively in leadership. Upon the assassination of Uthman, Ali became the caliph. He was a first cousin of Muhammad's as well as son-in-law of the Prophet through his marriage to Fatima. Immediately, Ali came into conflict with Muawiyah, the governor of Syria, who was also a relative of Uthman. It is at this point the divergence between Sunnis and Shi'a takes place. Ali is recognized as the first legitimate caliph, Ali's son, Hassan, according to Shi'a, should have been the rightful leader, followed by Ali's other son, Husayn. In the critical historical moment when Husayn might actually have assumed such leadership, Muawiyah's loyalists killed Husayn and seventy of his followers at the battle of Karbala⁵⁴. Shi'a take up their line from Ali the father of Husayn the martyred son, Sunnis, on the other hand recognize the line of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali and Muawiyah. Shi'a gave the successors of Muhammad the title "Imam" rather than "Caliph". These imams are historically regarded as infallible guides to all truth but some Imams were implicated for fuelling religious crisis⁸⁶.

Shi'i Distinctive: Over the years of Islamic history, there developed a number of Shi'i's distinctive that have put some distance between them and other Muslim traditions. For instance, their Qur'an contains a few variants when compared to the Qur'an used by the rest of the Islamic world. Also, the Shi'a have their own collections of hadith; composed during the tenth century when Buyid *amirs* were masters at Baghdad. The Shi'a uses the qur'anic citation of Sura 4:28 to support the practice of *muta* (temporary marriage) which Orthodox Sunni leaders have condemned.

The Wahhabis followed the doctrine of Muhammad Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, who was born at Ayinah in North Arabia in 1691. Wahhabi was carefully instructed in Islamic doctrine according to the Hambali School, the strictest of the four schools of law. By the end of the nineteenth

century, the Wahhabis controlled most of what is now called Saudi Arabia. The aim of Wahhab was to purge Islam of any accretions which were added later than the third century of the Muslim calendar. He was horrified to note aberrant practices of Muslims, The Wahhabis are dedicated to the strict interpretation and application of Islamic law. At times, Wahhabis go beyond the Qur'an in seeking to implement strict social codes. For instance, they executed the Arabian princess and her boyfriend for committing adultery. Such a stern and extreme punishment is not prescribed in the Qur'an.

Ahmadiya: The founder of that Ahmad movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born in 1839 at Qadian in Punjab, India. Ahmad received a good education in Arabic and Persian. He was said to have frequently had a mystical we experience of hearing voices from an unknown source. About 1880, he concluded that he was called of God for a special mission in life. He believed and taught that Muhammad may not be the last prophet; that Jesus did not resurrect; that Hell is not everlasting; faith is incomplete without belief in him (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad); spirituality in Islam is more important than legalism; jihad (holy war) has lapsed; and coercion in religion is condemned. However, an analyst has observed that Ahmad's most serious potential heresy was the precise 'import of his claims to Islamic revelation. The Ahmadiya thus, have a new structure of religious beliefs and practices outside of the mainstream of Islam. They developed a new prophet, a new focus of devotion, a new mission, a new spiritual centre, new rituals, and new religious leadership.

Muslims who choose to convert to the Ahmadi fold must reject old institutions and personalities. As a result of such inflammatory rhetoric, Ahmad was branded a heretic, blasphemer, enemy of the faith, and imposter, hence hostility between the Sunnis and the Ahmadiya⁶⁰. Outside Islamic fold, Ahmadiya are extremely anti-Christian in orientation. The Ahmadiya thrive on persecution

and they are self-motivated to endure even death for their belief. Thus, religious practices have issues and south western Nigeria has its own share of the issues⁸⁷.

2.3.7 Israel's Democracy: Lessons for South West Nigeria

The Arabs talk about nationalism, religion, and land. To Palestinians and Israel, identity is a principal factor. It is a moral problem and some sort of politics of peace to inveigh against deficiencies in Israel's democracy but not in Arab autocracies. The same applies to condemn Jew's national rights and identity but sanctifying Palestinian nationalism. In Israel, after all, Arabs enjoy far more civil liberties than they do in Arab countries. While Jewish population of Arabs has plummeted from around 850,000 to 4000, the Arab population in the Holy Land has increased from about 1.3 million to nearly 7 million. Meanwhile, in a rarity for the Middle East, the number of Christian has grown in Israel. Israel has maintained Islamic administration of Jerusalem Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site, restricting Jew's own ability to pray there. Regional extremists such as Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas have openly sought to destroy Jewish state within any boundaries⁶¹. Those accusing Israel if "apartheid" should observe the ubiquity of hijabs and keffiyehs in government offices, shopping malls, hospitals and universities there and consider whether people would similarly wear a kippah or Star of David in Ramallah or Jenin. Those asserting that Jewish statehood and pluralism are incompatible, might explain why the same logic is not applied to the dozens of states whose flags feature a crescent or a cross. The Israel-Palestine crisis is ethno-religious in nature and this has gradually affected Nigerian religious space⁸⁸.

The position of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) could be regarded as an open manifestation of ecclesia against Israel. The World Council of Churches also defended its next general secretary's rhetoric. Thus, this confirms that the U.N is a political body, governed by geopolitics, not ethics. Dedicated U.N divisions and personnel expressly promote Palestinian rights but not Israel's rights. An "International Day of Solidarity" embraces Palestinian but no other people. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addresses the emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly, Feb. 28, 2022 in New York. The U.N tars only Jews in their historic heartland as illegal "settlers" and officially categorizes Jihadist as terrorism, just not if targeting Israelis. The newest "commission of inquiry" on Gaza was populated exclusively with anti-Israel partisans. Hamas, which assaults Israeli civilians, was not condemned. This absurd record is not a reflection of Israel's real-life saga; rather it is not an expression of justice. It is therefore, informative for conflict analysts to know that mapping of violent hotspots is necessary in conflict management⁸⁹. Israel proclaims itself as the only truly democratic state in a region surrounded by autocratic, authoritarian and theocratic countries. The Nigerian democracy has a lot to borrow from this.

The Abraham Accords jointly built by the Israeli and the Arab should not continue to ignore the Palestinians. The Israeli system of government is based on parliamentary democracy and the Prime Minister is the head of government and leader of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government (also known as the cabinet). Legislative power is vested in the Knesset. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. Israel does not have a written constitution. The Knesset is a unicameral legislature of Israel and it is sovereign and supreme state body, except for checks and balances from the judiciary and local government. Politics in Israel are dominated by Zionist parties. They traditionally fall into three camps; the

first two being the largest Labour Zionism, Revisionist Zionism and Religious Zionism. There are also several non-Zionist orthodox religious parties and non-Zionist secular left-wing groups as well as non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Israeli Arab parties. From the founding of Israel in 1948 until the election of May 1977, Israel was ruled by successive coalition governments led by the Labour Alignment. The 2019 Freedom in the World annual survey and report by U.S based Freedom House, ranked Israel as the Middle East and North Africa's only free country.

Israel does not have a formal written constitution; instead, its system of government is founded on a series of "basic laws" plus other legislation, executive orders and parliamentary practice. The basic laws are a political compromise that serves as an alternative to a constitution. They are intended to serve as guiding principles of state; however, Israeli's High Court of Justice has historically ruled against laws that have contradicted the basic laws. The Knesset, or assembly, is a single-chamber Legislature (unicameral) with 120 members who are elected every four years with Hebrew, the country's official language and Arabic, legally used in all proceedings. In Israel, presidents are elected for a single, seven-year term but have no veto powers and exercise mainly ceremonial functions. However, presidents have the authority to appoint certain key national officials including Central Bank Governor, judges and justices of the Supreme Court, state comptroller (government auditor and ombudsman). Council on foreign relations ascribes a unique political landscape to Israel.

The political process of national and local elections is by universal, direct suffrage, with secret balloting. All resident Israeli citizens are enfranchised from age 18; regardless of religion or ethnicity and candidates for election must be at least 21 years old. Cabinets are often formed by broad political composition and alliances since no single party has ever been able to obtain an absolute majority in the Knesset. The primary system of election enhances participatory

democracy within the parties. Political parties are secular or religious. For instance, the Jewish secular parties are Zionist while religious parties tend to have ethnic appeal. Israeli citizens take an active interest in public affairs above and beyond membership in political parties. Modern Israel springs from both religious and political sources.

2.3.7.1 Religious Prejudice, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism

Hatred arising from religious impulses or directed towards a particular religion is not new. It is unfortunate that old hatred or prejudice has snowballed to genocidal phenomenon and has become a source of great threat to global peace. Neither prejudice nor genocide is a healthy impulse that should be attributed to religion, especially to monotheistic Abrahamic religion from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam are sourced. It is ironical in recent decades that religious fundamentalists have resorted to suicide bombing, killing and maiming others. However, assessment of crime incidence and putting up of preventive strategies to curtail crisis is a better⁹⁰. The issue that agitates the heart of modernists and postmodernists is about whether religion still has any human value. The term “religion” is already becoming a contradiction. Time is a concept that we all know the meaning of, until we stop and think about it. Religion is a bit like that. It is ennobling to reflect about time by using the analogy to define or describe religion⁹¹. To some scholars, religion is in a general sense of what it means or what we describe it to be; because we will always find out that we all actually define it somewhat differently. Religion is not a simple or straightforward term. A religion is not something worth agency, only religious actors are. It can thus be said that, for instance, Islam or Buddhism cannot be anti-Semitic, only individual Muslims or Buddhists may be. Christianity cannot hate Islam; only individual

Christians may be. Judaism cannot hate Christianity or Islam; only individual Jews may be. We may be speaking of Christian anti-Semitism, Islamic anti-Semitism or Hindu Islamophobia, the issue is largely about individuals or actor that are personally anti-Christian, anti-Islam or anti-Jew and their agitations are contextually and socially based, rather than something that comes out of the tradition or individual teachings of respective Scriptures.

The research trajectory and interest range from conceptual and historical religious issues to contextual and contemporary issues. In this globalized world where many of us are mobile, even with our religions, it is imperative to distinguish our innate tendency or prejudice from religion which may have been inherited or acquired by us. In other words, we are to blame for all terrible impulses that we express in the name of religion. We are the culprits of prejudice, hatred, violence or genocide carried out in the name of religion. One form of prejudice transforms into another higher prejudice to the extent of kidnapping, maiming, killing and arson. Unfortunately, the hostility has become a stereotype among extremists to the point that Islam, for example has been stigmatized as an agency of violence, whereas, the few criminal individual Muslims that have radicalized or militarized their faith are the culprits, violating common human rights⁹².

2.3.7.2 Trends of Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other Religions

It is estimated that there are over 10,000 distinct religions in the world, faith groups and denominations that exist around the world today. Researchers and academics generally categorize the world religions into five major groups: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. The graphic by Chit Chart visualizes the most popular religions around the world using the latest available data from Index Munds World demographics and with approximate ranking by the Population Education. Apart from the five major religious groups, the graphic

includes two more categories: one for collective of folk religious and another for people who are unaffiliated with a religion.

Although the number of religious adherents has decreased in recent decades, 83 percent of the global population still identifies with one religion of the world's major religions. It is a fact that religion is growing with the effects of insecurity⁹³ Here is the breakdown of the most popular religions ranked by their following as a percentage of the world's population.

Rank	Religion	% of World's Population
1.	Christian	31.6
2.	Muslim	23.2
3.	Unaffiliated	16.2
4.	Hindu	15.0
5.	Buddhist	7.1
6.	Folk Religions	5.9
7.	Jewish	0.2
8.	Other	0.8

Hinduism is considered the oldest religion in the world, originating in the Indus River Valley (modern day Pakistan) circa 7,000 BCE. Judaism which began around 2,000 BCE came after Hinduism and it is the oldest of the three linear and monotheistic Abrahamic faiths. Judaism began in the Southern Levant (modern day Israel, Palestine and Jordan). By contrast, Christianity was founded as an offshoot of Judaism in the first century and began as a movement within Judaism.

Islam began with Muhammad in the 7th century, making it the youngest of the world's major religions. Islam was established in Mecca (modern day Saudi Arabia). Sikhism which was founded in the late 15th century is relatively new, hence not listed in the major religions but there are more than 25 million Sikhs worldwide. Folk religions are an amalgam of ethnic or cultural practices that exist outside the theological doctrine of organized religions. For instance, folk religions lack sacred texts but they are concerned with spirituality than rituals or rites. Examples of folk religions include Traditional African Religions, Chinese Folk Religions and Native American Traditions. The social concern is that insecurity is a stigma on Islam as portrayed by Boko Haram insurgents⁹⁴.

2.3.8 Religious Identity and Conflict in South West Nigeria

Religious conflict is often caused by latent socio-cultural, ethnic or economic factors. These latent sources of conflict are often expressed in form of grievances, strife, bitterness, offences and animosity against other particular religious groups. When the conflict reaches a dangerous momentum, the extremists take over and have the upper hand⁷⁰. At this point, religious conflict becomes intractable. Religion is at the core of much of the crises around the globe; hence religion is a contentious issue. Since religion promises eternal salvation to adherents, it has become a central part of many individual's identities which, if threatened, he may go to any length to protect his religion and this is a primary motivation for ethno-religious nationalists. Some aspects of each religion make it susceptible to being a latent source of conflict. All religions have their accepted articles of belief, dogma that followers must accept without question. This often leads to intolerance and inflexibility in relation to other beliefs and it is this religious intolerance has always exacerbated political conflict in Nigeria⁹⁵.

Extremists are particular about their own interpretation of their religious scripture and would do anything to force their opinion on others whereas this is often times against moderate views. Extremists resort to radicalism to impose their own religious views on liberal co-adherents and non-adherents. Fundamentalists of any religion tend to take a Machiavellian view of the world instead of peacebuilding⁹⁶. For instance, America's new Christian right and Jama'at-i-Islami of Pakistan, have operated largely through constitutional means to pursue intolerant ends. Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine have engaged in violence, though in pursuit of selfish ends. Radical Jewish cells in Israel and Hindu nationalists and Sikh extremists in India are other examples of fundamentalist movement driven by perceived threat to faith.

Religious revivalism is powerful and it can provide a sense of purpose and pride but in places such as Srilanka and Sudan it has produced a strong form of radicalism that has periodically led to discrimination, intolerance and to violent conflicts. Fundamentalists see themselves as divinely directed, hence they resort to violence and do all they can to crush obstacles in their way to achieve "eternal salvation".

Another source of conflict are common but significant strains of evangelism which can be conflicted in relation to others. It is not an overstatement to view many religious practices as "new-colonisation". All forms of tyranny, manipulation, sorcery and deception are used to gain membership; one religion suppresses the other to increase patronage or retain membership since religion has been reduced to aggregate of membership or numeric. In the similitude of neopatrimonialism and prebendalism⁹⁷

Religious fundamentalists are primarily driven by displeasure for modernity as in the case of Boko Haram which implies "No to Western education. Boko Haram insurgents at least, as

publicity asserted, want a purification of Islamic religion. They view that Islam has been corrupted by modernization and globalization. The fundamentalists blame Western education as the source of materialism, gambling, and loose morals in general. They see Western culture as a threat to religion because western cultures allow liberal underpinning that threatens other cultures. Religious nationalists too can produce extremist sentiment to the extent that one is often confused whether the nationalists are actually fighting for God or for their selfish ends⁹⁸.

In a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, religious differences serve as a source of conflict because individuals are often ignorant of other faiths, especially when religions have ethnic, racial, cultural and political underpinnings. Cases of spill-over religious hostilities were observed in Ogun, Ondo, Lagos, Osun, and Oyo states, especially between locals and migrants. Migration has come with both benefits and challenges of insecurity⁹⁹.

Absolute peace is an illusion except we die and perhaps that was what informed a philosopher to assert that man was born free but everywhere he is in chains. However, religious conflict can be managed or resolved by using the following time-tested strategies to handle all forms of dimensions of religious conflict whether religious wars, religious persecution, gender violence, destruction of sacred places, forced conversion, fake propaganda, discrimination or religious extremism. However, poverty has been identified as the underlying actor of religious conflict in south western Nigeria¹⁰⁰. Strategies to manage or resolve conflicts sourced from the Harvard Business School is hereby expanded to include but not limited to the following;

1. Peace Education: peace education should be practically and intentionally taught for peace-building purpose from objective and impartial perspectives.

2. Peace Communication: The media is awash with conflict triggering news and such do exacerbate violent conflicts. The social media in particular is a volatile instrument in the hands of uncultured people in Nigeria to arouse conflict situations with grave implications for the public.

Religious communicators should learn to savour their messages in a way to encourage, edify and pacify the aggrieved and distressed rather than using religious messages to whip up ugly emotions. Pleasant communication can downplay conflict-oriented situations and calm dangerous sentiments.

3. Desacralization of the Conflict: The causes of conflict may not be religion; hence it is necessary to desacralize the issue to identify the real need of the conflict actors, their interest and their position with a view of solving the problem headlong. Until the sacred status or position of the problem is removed, one may be fighting blindly to protect the religion whereas the remote cause is not religion. If the conflict issue is secularised, it will be found out that religion may not be the real cause.
4. Analysis and clarification of religious goal: Many perpetrators and victims of conflict are grossly ignorant of the intent of their religious leaders. Thus, the original or archetypical purpose of the religion should be clarified to remove ignorance of current blind religious heritage keepers and leaders so that wrong battles are not fought¹⁰⁰.
5. Intensive Inter-Faith Dialogue: Dialogue, if it is free and fair can be used to resolve religious conflict whether intra-religious conflict or inter-religious conflict. However, parties to the dialogue should be sincere, objective, result-oriented and free of intimidation or coercion to evolve a lasting peace that will be mutually beneficial to all

the conflicting parties. Dialogue is non-evangelical as it is not intended to persuade others to come to your faith, rather, dialogue should assist other parties to understand your religion and accord it the honour due to it without jeopardizing any other faith. Mutual respect is the most important asset in interfaith relationship.

6. Engaging professional mediators: The significance of trained mediators cannot be overemphasized. They have psychological, mediatorial and counselling dexterity to persuade conflict parties to come to terms in pleasant relationship again. Their experience, skill and scholarship will go a long way to resolve religious conflict especially if they are eventually drawing from conflicting parties.
7. Historical awareness of source: Many religions have their sources from Abraham especially Christianity and Islam. If the roots of the major religions are traced to Abrahamic monotheism, then the conflict can be described as “sibling rivalry”. Once the trajectory of religion is diligently traced to divine narrative where Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael and Jacob are mentioned, the conflict situation can be transformed into a peace situation.
8. Separation of Church and State: Philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Spinoza proposed a separation of civic authority from religious authority or separation of Church and State. The sacred should be separated from the secular, to reduce political influence and corruption.
9. Government Response: The perceived overall response of Government of the federal state and local levels can help resolve to religious conflict through peace education curriculum, implementation of peace processes, peace building mechanisms, security,

justice, equity and poverty eradication strategies. The government can enact appropriate public legislation excesses or extremism without unduly infringing on the rights of religious people, when the ideal peace climate is instituted across communities or states through facilitative meetings with the religious stakeholders, religious conflict can be managed or resolved⁷².

10. The youth and peace advocacy: the youth can be sensitized and motivated to be involved in the broad sanitation and enlightening processes. Once the constructive youthful activism is secured, there is the possibility of having a significant resolution of religious conflict. Constituting the most active part of Nigeria's population the youth is the most potent for resolving religious conflict¹⁰⁰.
11. Non-Government Response: Generally, at the non-government level, the traditional institutions have also been instrumental to religious conflict resolution. Town hall meetings and community meetings may be constituted by traditional institutions to achieve peace settlement as well as to calls their subjects to order periodic sensitization programmes may be mounted to allow for peace promotion and tolerance.
12. Religious leaders Response: Many individual religious leaders are esteemed as "almost omnipotent" by their followers for instance, the sultan of Sokoto or Emir of Kano or Muslim students society of Nigeria (MSSN) may be involved in the broad sensitization and enlightenment of Muslims on the part of the Christians in Nigeria revered voices of Pastor Enoch Adeboye, Bishop Oyedepo, Christian Association of Nigeria, Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria can help sensitize Christians to resolve religious conflicts in Nigeria as people of influence and charisma religious leaders are at advantage position to

influence the peace of their communities as they set the mood for peace or violent conflict among their followers. A lot of faith based not-for-profit organizations have consistently engaged in peace-promoting activities across the country resulting in the initiation of reconciliation and peace building process.

13. Forensic findings and criminal profiling: Pathological criminals should be profiled to know their pedigree, criminal attitude and behaviour with a view to helping them out and stop their generational bloodline. Religious extremists such as Osama Bin Laden, Shekau the Erstwhile leader of Boko Haram had their pedigree. If forensic findings are considered other pathological fundamentalists and religious terrorism could be minimized¹⁰⁰.

Each radicalized group has its peculiarity hence it is necessary to determine the political socialized perspective of each group “one man’s terrorism is another man’s freedom fight”. One man’s god is another man’s devil Conceptions of political freedom, religious freedom, terrorism, anarchy and justice the concept of violence is intrinsic to the definition of terrorism. The concept of the governed spaces is intrinsic. Not all acts of violence are constituted negative. One political view will view an action as terrorism and another political view will view it as a justifiable retribution. The distinction between terrorism and retribution is dependent upon the perception of who was violated first⁷³. In the light of this, the concept of ungoverned spaces is predicted on the perception of what a constituted state is and whether it was rightly constituted with the assurance of democratic justice many of the so-called ungoverned spaces may have been constituted as a culturally relative construct to asset political and religious freedom even if that freedom entails the subjugation and harm of others¹⁰⁰.

2.3.8.1 Scramble for Religious Relevance in South West Nigeria

Subtle terrorism or tyranny is frequent in South West Nigeria, though it is hitherto praised for its regional religious tolerance, but the political battle was fierce in preparation for the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria as the religious leaders requested church members to use their voting rights wisely¹⁰¹. There is also a fierce competition between the two religions in sharing of available space as it happened in the University of Ibadan in the case of the Christian chapel and Muslim Mosque, as a reaction to multiple and long festering religious and political problem being experienced in Nigeria¹⁰¹. An altercation which occurred between the Soun and the chief Imam of Ogbomoso in September 2024 was eventually settled but soon after this local crisis and resolution, the feud was hijacked by topmost Nigerian Islamic leaders to state that the Soun of Ogbomoso erred to ask the cleric to report to him before embarking on pilgrimage. This is a crisis of identity and a scramble for relevance between both the *oba* and the Islamic cleric. Terrorist attacks confirm the presence of enigmatic, unresolved conflicts within a given society. Long, festering hatred, animosities, grief, bitterness against one another in the community yet unresolved would sometimes mature into terrorism. The use of *hijab* in Lagos has involved the intervention of the Supreme Court, the consequence of which is distrust and hostility¹⁰². Millenarian groups desire the creation of a paradise in the temporal world and they see the world as corrupt and hopeless therefore must be completely destroyed to allow for a peaceful world of the faithful.

Aum Shinkriyo and Hezbollah are the terrorist groups which believe that they can hasten the millennium by eliminating their enemies. Death, to the Hezbollah group, should not only relate to enemies but to group members in form of suicide bombings in order to hasten their millennium goals. This phenomenon has resulted in the self-killing of many members of Aum

Shinkriyo. To them, self-suicide bombing is to secure personal salvation of Aum Shinkriyo and Hezbollah group members in the afterlife¹⁰³.

Feeling of rejection, depression and despair here on earth with a view to wiping away this present world is somewhat a terrorist attack. Inordinate behaviour along this life can result in psychoticism or bipolar disorder. Many people are: genetically or pathological associated with episode of mood swings from depression lows to manic highs. If such persons find themselves in ungoverned spaces where their mood swings are enhanced and enabled, then become hardened criminals. Many of them join political parties, militias and burglars or other terrorist band like kidnapers, cultist groups. To them, death terminates this temporal world because they know that everyone will die some day in any form¹⁰⁴.

Behaviour is pathological when it is extreme, criminal to others in the society or unacceptable with an intense feeling beyond control. Behaviour of pathological terrorists is chronic and it negatively affects the victims' adaptive inflexibility. Pathological terrorists are vulnerable to psychosis such as schizophrenia and mental anxiety as observed in the Israel- Palestine crisis¹⁰⁴.

Pathological personality traits are maladaptive variants to the Big five dimensions of emotional stability which are:

1. Negative affectivity
2. Detachment (low extroversion)
3. Antagonism
4. Disinhibition (low consciousness)
5. Psychoticism (aggressiveness)

Behaviour is pathological when the victim is in the web or cycle of maladaptive behaviours and emotional instability and under duress or compulsion¹⁰⁵.

Pre-incident indicators of terrorist incidents, behavioural, geographical and temporal patterns of preparatory conduct.

The spatial analysis revealed that terrorist typically live relatively close to the incident target. Nearly one-half of the terrorists resided within 30 miles of the target location. Similarly, one-half of the terrorist engaged in their planning activities within same distance of their residences and preparatory terrorist behaviour took place within same 30 miles of the creatural target of terrorist incident¹⁰⁵. Thus, terrorist may think globally, they act locally. This reinforces that pathological and millenarian terrorists are bred locally before they are dispersed to different terrorist cells all over the world

A security-oriented environment is a *sine qua non*, an indispensable condition for a healthy society. As a fat, an environment that is not secure cannot be healthy both for religion and the society. There is a causal to link between environment and religion. Oftentimes an environment influences religion and at times religion influences an environment. A securitarian environment may have been influenced by the religion practiced in the region. When security is in priority, the link between religion and environment comes to play. To a very good extent, it is normative that all religions should have environmental ethics since the environment included all over surroundings and all religions are to be preoccupied with surroundings both human and non-human elements. Religious economies are primarily concerned with ontology or metaphysical dimension of life; however, the Constitution of Nigeria gives fundamental human rights to every citizen, irrespective of religion¹⁰⁶. Religious economies tend to proffer answer to the question

about life in time and eternity. Several religions consider humans as spiritual aggregates while environmentalist consider same humans as environmental aggregates. The variance between the two is centred on the fact that if the religious heaven is in the atmosphere, then it is part of the environment which includes atmospheric space which in the ultimate goal of religious people.

However, before religious pathological terrorism has triggered religious and political crises because the terrorists of this stock have succeeded in using ethnicity, divisive rhetoric and religion and other primordial factors for forging political and religious alliances to carry out their nefarious activities¹⁰⁷. Long history of bitterness, grief and unresolved untoward feelings against one another usually result in the development and initiation of pathological terrorism in Nigeria. Pathological terrorism which in both inherent and intrinsic is expressed during cultural and structural, violence manifestations. Pathological terrorism, when combined with other factors of injustice results in many ungoverned spaces in several regions of Nigeria. The “push” effects of poverty, underdevelopment, hopelessness and ignorance can only be neutralized if the intrinsic factors are addressed^{108,109,110}.

The genesis of Boko Haram insurgency can be traced to millenarian and pathological terrorism which is predicated on faulty line of faith, ignorance and bipolar disorder or psychotics. Many of the bandits, insurgents and kidnappers are actually suffering from manic episodes including high energy and loss of touch with reality while many of them are depressed with symptoms of loss of interest in daily common activities. Their mood episodes always result in suicidal thoughts to terminate their lives which are adjudged as “useless” in their own perception. Suicide bombers and shorter are mostly described as millenarian and pathological terrorists simply because their thoughts, attitude and behaviours have been impaired¹¹¹.

Militias', insurgents, bandits, cattle rustlers and neighbourhood gangs are notorious occupants of the ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. Most of them are millenarian terrorists that are tired of the constituted state and they are often brainwashed that this current world holds nothing good for them; hence they are brazenly defying the law of the land¹¹².

2.3.8.2 Spill-over Effect of Armed Islamic Group on South West Nigeria

South western Nigeria had a share of the terrorism and banditry that ravaged north western and north eastern Nigeria through unregulated influx of social criminals into south western borders. Qatar as the richest country in the world with a per capital income of \$134,620 although the petroleum industry accounts for 70% of the government revenue and 85% of its export earnings. Pick pocketing is the most common crime in Qatar. Pathological terrorism is regenerated and becomes hereditary as long as terrorism lasts. For instance, pathological and millenarian terrorists are mostly traceable to the top sixteen most dangerous countries¹¹³.

Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Democratic Republic of Congo Central African Republic, Russia, Sudan, Ukraine, Pakistan, North Korea, Turkey, and Nigeria have a very low state of peace and we can easily observe the indicators. Islam is, however, regarded as a religion of peace¹¹⁴.

Eight signs of terrorism in any country are:

1. Surveillance: Monitoring or recording activities are everywhere, cameras, and recorders detailing you.
2. Elicitation” People attempt to profile you or gain information about military operations, and capabilities of government email, telephone, eavesdropping to know more about you.

3. Tests of Security: Any attempts to appraise security strength and weaknesses. They many attempts to penetrate physical security barriers.
4. Funding: Suspicious transactions involving large cash payments, deposits, withdrawals, large donations are warning signs of criminal activities.
5. Supplies: Keeping or stealing explosives, weapons, ammunition, military uniforms, decals, flight manuals, passes or badges and production of such controlled items.
6. Impersonation: Suspicious border crossings, possessing and using of law enforcement, military personnel or company employers.
7. Rehearsal: Mapping out routes, suspicious surveillance, training and recruiting of the youth and potential suicide bombers.
8. Deployment: People and supplies are being deployed without legal backing. Movement of people and supplies especially in the night or secret places.

Democracy, though the best form of governance may be dangerous in practice when and if incomplete and unpatriotic wealthy citizens or ineffectual stooges of the wealthy dominate the playing fields. Legislative, judiciary, and executive arms of government. The country now experiences retrogression, decadence dwarfing of status in the comity of nation. The media houses have been put under the government's armpit with continuous threats of sanction. Oligo-military constitution is fraught with suffocating system and it has been part of leadership failure. Religion is fused with cultural nuances, ethnic hegemony, and feudalism and neo-colonization culminating in cabals and chattels. All efforts are clandestinely put up by government to subjugate those crying for their rights. Both politics and religion are implicated for this. Cases of kidnapping, clashes between Fulani-herders and farmers in south western region, especially in

Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Osun states attest to the spill-over of armed groups in South West Nigeria¹¹⁵.

2.3.9 Ambiguity of Politics of Peace in Nigeria

It was alluded and not openly refuted by the Buhari government that Buhari and his allies hired mercenaries called 'Boko Haram' to oust Jonathan out of government. Bandits are now working with Fulani herders. The Sultan of Sokoto is the permanent chairman of all the traditional rulers in Nigeria (not rotational). Several insinuations are yet to be unravelled. The British laid the strong foundation for the Hausa-Fulani hegemony and lopsided religion in Nigeria¹¹⁶. Sir Ahmadu Bello had said to the media that, "the new nation called Nigeria should be a state of our great grandfather, Othman Dan Fodio"¹¹⁷. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. Teaching of history has been banned in Nigeria; thus, our children are not free to know their history for clandestine reason. The resources in the south are nationalized but gold found in Zamfara belongs to Zamfara¹¹⁸. The inequitable treatment of Nigerian produced likes of Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho. Kanu was arrested and charged to court. He was granted a bail, before the next court date, the Buhari-led administration attempted to kill him, and in this attempt, they killed 28 defenceless citizens in his house in Afaraukwu, Umuahia, Abia State. The army's tendentious military exercise in the south east tagged "Operation Python Dance 2" violated fundamental human rights in the south-east, south west and middle belt. One would expect the rule of law to operate and to be served to every criminal without fear of favour in Nigeria as entrenched in the fundamental human rights.

The barefaced killers of the END SARS protesters are still free and bold without a qualm of guilt and violation of basic human rights. Politics of peace in Nigeria is questionable. The illicit declaration of Sunday Igboho (Adeyemo) wanted by the SSS is socially disgusting and

uncivilized and it is the height of contemptuous governmental hooliganism, nothing short of barbaric cruelty. The DSS broke into a civilian house in unholy hours like burglars or assassins, even killing a gentleman caught praying. Seizing of cats and killing of Igboho's cats is tortuous and can be classified as a jungle justice in a republican state. This in itself is a paradox of peace. The department of State Security (DSS) has the unique privilege to arrest and prosecute but it should be done with decorum and due diligence.

Politics of peace shows up when the unofficial "Minister of State for Bandit", Sheikh Ahmad Gumi was bold enough to say that Boko Haram should be sent abroad and treated like the Niger Deltans fighting for their resources were treated. Several of the Nigerian soldiers had been killed along with harmless civilians without qualm. Religious leaders in the Delta region had not practically reacted to the cause of Igboland agitators¹¹⁸.

Buhari attended Sharia rally in 2001 with professed commitment. A Fulani bandit bare-facedly boasted about the number of Nigerian soldiers he had killed and not yet arrested. Book Haram II SWAP has announced that they had appointed a governor for parts of Borno State, by name Abba-Kaka- with jurisdiction over 5 local ports leaving 22 LGA for the substantive constituted government of Babagana Zulum, book Haram II SWAP set up a full-blown port with flags and other structures even with a sovereign Nigeria with names mentioned, DSS did nothing about it. For a port that remains intransigent, should we not protest? Politics of peace was also rehearsed when a peace accord was signed by contesting politicians for the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria¹¹⁹. This is a practical paradox of both politics and religion.

2.3.9.1 Politics of Religion in South West Nigeria

Religion is both pleasant and problematic. Religion gives us both enigmatic smile and sorrow. Violent politics characteristic religion and the traits of such violent politics are profound in the three religions soured from Abraham. The motives behind religious conflict are mostly selfish. On Friday, 6th March, 1987, violent religious crisis was launched in Kaduna against life, property and places of worship in most of the major cities and towns of Kaduna State and South West Nigeria felt the ripples of the crisis. While Churches, mosques, hotels and cinemas, private homes, businesses and vehicles were attacked in Kaduna State, religious hostilities touched the southern part of Nigeria as well. Within seven days, many more people had been harassed, molested wounded and frightened. Over a hundred churches and a few mosques had been burnt down completely in Kaduna city. It is appalling that three days after the start of the violence, police and security forces were completely absent from the scenes; thereby leaving unarmed citizens completely at the mercy of the violent mobs. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) was loud and clear about the consequences of the crisis but the government was aloof in taking any decisive action against the perpetrators¹²⁰. This abdication of responsibility by government may engender distrust.

The wanton killings of innocent people and destruction of properties shows that we are bankrupt as regards the practice of basic human rights. Prior to the March 1987 religious' crisis in Kaduna, the Nigeria's relations with the organization of Islamic Conference was formally regularized in January 1986 after seventeen years of the status of Nigeria as an observer¹²¹. A reprisal attack of the religious crisis in the Northern Nigeria was carried out at Ijebuode, Ogun State and Ibadan, Oyo State respectively.

It is a truism that the Church is pacific in worldview, especially when it comes to warfare and vengeance because the incarnational nature of the Church runs contrary to the modern mind-set.

However, it is not sure that the Church can continue pacifism in the contemporary militarian and securitarian age. Religion in the urban ghetto or in a foreign country has taken a new turn. Many of the things admired in the twentieth century are undergoing a dramatic change. The contemporary world is in some of religious dilemma. God created man in his own image, which implies that man was originally good, responsible, and capable of having communion with God⁸³. However, a man has forgotten that he was created from the dust, which means that he is finite limited to time and space. Man should reflect God's image, because the primary need of man is relational. God would come down to the Garden of Eden to fellowship with his creation¹²¹. God created a companion for Adam to achieve that relational goal; therefore, we should restore that relational idea of God in the atmosphere of religion. Man is a relational being. Man is equal a responsible creation but he is all the way finite.

2.3.9.2 Traits of Religious Hostilities in South Western Nigeria

The south western Nigeria plays host to gigantic churches and mosques but religious intolerance is always a principal factor when it comes to political positions. The commencement of the third decade of the twenty-first century is fraught with religious controversies and dilemmas and the effect continues to spread wider and deeper throughout the world. The presence and untoward manifestation of crime and criminality in Nigeria is appalling. There are many controversies among the linear religious under review as well as among contemporary religious leaders. There are numerous scriptural verses that are hard to interpret and these verses are notable in Jewish Bible, Christian Bible and Moslem Quran¹²².

There are controversies about money, gender and class. None of the three religions is free or absolutely clear in terms of contemporary handling of money, gender and class. One can easily

understand why some people feel the way they do, based on their religious background, cultural experience and the environment, instead of religion to be used as a bridge or a cure to excesses in the handling of money, gender and class, all the ensuing social challenges are traceable to religion. Is there any religion without hate, hostilities and hassles? To some extent, we hardly have it even though each of the religious leaders pretends to profess peace while in actual fact, they are emotionally dangerous¹²². Shalom in Judaism and Christianity or Salaam in Islam is now a doubtful epithet. Religion has gated a free expression of our basic human rights. Beliefs and values are forced on us by religious leaders and controlling god-parents most certainly from selfish motives⁸⁷. Religion has been grossly manipulated. The fallout of the ongoing Israel-Palestine war attests to paradox of religion and politics and attendant politics of peace from regions of the world.

2.3.9.3 Religion on the Global Decline

Religion around the world is on the decline. This is not unconnected with flagrant violation of human rights by religious leaders in the contemporary world. The global explanation for the global decline of religion is not unconnected with the evil that comes along with it. This view is corroborated by the Pew Research Center¹²³.

1. Norway now has more people who do not believe in God-with 39 percent of atheist contending with 37 percent of believers.
2. In the US, even with the dollar bill signs, "In God we trust" was a low belief in the Christian deity. The trend now is towards atheism.

3. China has a far higher percentage of convinced atheists out of all the world's countries. According to Win/Gall up, between 40 and 50 percent of Chinese people identify as agnostic tendency when it comes to religion that subscriber to believe in a higher deity. China is known for communism regards religion as a means of oppressing the proletariat, hence the suppression of religion under Mao Zedong through his 27 years' reign until 1976.

China has governed under communism since 1949. Confucianism, a notable old religion which is a religion that has no respect for any supernatural deity is premier in China.
4. Japan which in China's neighbour is another eastern nation with a large population of atheists, between 30 and 40 percent of Japanese people are convinced atheist. Japan which formerly embraced Shintoism, a religion of ritual and mythology has become an old experience. Shintoism, like Buddhism in Japan, has been dwindling in recent years¹²³.
5. Czech Republic 30-39 percent of citizens are classified as atheists. Catholicism was considered an Austrian import and was discouraged by the state, while Protestantism has been managing to fill the gap. The country's communist past spanning 1948-1989 suppressed the revival of any religion.
6. France about 20 percent of France populations is proud that they are convinced atheists. The state was influenced the reduction of religious power with its borders. The French revolution in 1789 overthrew Roman Catholicism as the state religion and a law was promulgated in 1905 to separate the state from the church¹²³.
7. UK: In the UK the head of state the Queen, is also the head of the church.

8. Australia: About 20 percent of Australians profess atheism; perhaps the country has a strong tradition of secular government. In Australia there is a legal frame work which guarantees religious equality since 1788 to depose the sole privilege of the Church of England. Today in Australia majority relief in Christianity is in steady decline and more citizens identify as having no god.
9. Iceland: Catholicism was outlawed in the northern European island in 1550, and religious freedom became a legal right in 1874. Although many Icelanders consider themselves Lutherans, a small proportion follows folk religions while the rest consider themselves “convinced atheists”. The South wester Nigeria has a share of this urpsurge of religious intolerance and religious sectarianism¹²³.

2.3.9.4 Religion and Political Leadership in South West Nigeria

The approach of religious leaders in their drive for membership and to sustain old and new members is a gross violation of freedom of thought, conscience and expression and association and often, a sheer show of ethnicity^{124,125,126}. Religion has been used as an offending instrument for environmental pollution including poor waste disposal, noise pollution, air pollution, water population, urban sprawling, land degradation and desertification and for many other ecological offences. Most, if not all of the foreign terrorist’s organizations (FTOs) are millenarian and pathological terrorists. As years of their operations roll by, their terrorist thought, attitude and behaviour become ingrained. They propagate terrorism and procreate in terrorism, and perceived to be psychotic with intense episode to kill and destroy others as revenge and reward¹²⁷.

Pathological and millenarian terrorists have their terrorist cells all over the world. Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) in Palestinian Middle East, Abu Sayyat Group (ASG) in Philippines, Al-

Shabab in Somalia, Ansar-al-Islam (AAL) in Iraq, Asbat al-Ansar in Lebanon, AumShinrikyo in Japan, Gama's al—Ishamiya in Egypt, Islamic Resistance movement in middle east, Harakat al-Mujahidin (HUM) in Pakistan, Hezbollah (Party of God) in Lebanon, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) Army of Mohammed Kata Hezbollah (KH) in Iraq, Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in Libya Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Jun Dallah in Iran¹²⁷.

Nigeria in general and south western Nigeria in particular is dominated by people of diverse religions. A large percentage of the populations are either Christians or Muslims while a small percentage practice traditional religion or non-religious. Religion, in recent times is also one of the main factors in choosing political leaders in Nigeria, especially at the federal level. For instance, the immediate past president of Nigeria is a Muslim while his vice is a Christian to allow for equity and justice. The scenario is the same in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti states. The two prominent religions always compete for elective positions with utter disregard for capability, commitment, and competency¹²⁷.

Human rights in religion and in politics should be accorded due respect. We have observed this in the lives of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu who is an influential politician, a leader of the leading political party in Nigeria and a former governor of Lagos State whose wife is a devout Christian pastor Mrs Oluremi Tinubu and the present Senator representing Lagos central senatorial district. In the same vein in Babatunde Raji Fashola, a former governor of Lagos state and incumbent minister of works and housing who is married to a catholic lady, Dame Abimbola Fashola. Abdulfatai Ahmed is a former governor of Kwara State happily married to his heartthrob, Deaconess Omolewa Ahmed. Late Senator Isiaka Abiola Ajimobi was a two-term governor of Oyo State and was happily married to Florence Ajimobi. All these are good examples of people that exemplified freedom of thought, speech and association per

excellence¹²⁸. Human rights can be attained only if we are tolerant of ourselves and engage social, economic, cultural and religious mechanisms to foster peace among ourselves.

A certain Sheik Ahmed Gumi who had acted as a middleman between abductors and the abductees to facilitate the release of victims became popular for his defence of bandits and terrorists. To some analysts, Gumi is seen as mastermind, mouthpiece, patron, harbinger and solicitor of bandits in Nigeria but his motive is not yet very clear to the public¹²⁹.

2.3.9.5 Sociological Significance of Religion

The terrorist's events of Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, and their consequences should renew our awareness that religion matters in contemporary times. Terrorism displayed in that fateful September crystallized how adherence to a religious fundamentalism can destroy lives and forever change the orientation of many others toward religion. The September 2001 terrorism was a potent factor to force religion to a state of being eclipsed in the heart of many, especially among modernists and revisionists who see religion as insane for humans to engage in. Engaging religion to kill¹³⁰. This is rather odious, unthinkable and paradoxical.

Religion should continue to provide meaning to cultural, social, economic and political activity although it is at odds with much of contemporary theory, yet religion should not be wholesomely relegated to the realm of the non-rational that are characteristics of modern social thoughts. Religions are not always rational; often reason and sentiment are intertwined in the ritual roots of religion⁹³. There is too much ambiguity inherent in the conceptualization of ritual and the virtual interchangeability of religious and social behaviour. Religion in an activist environment of ritual in a myriad of forms has affected socio-economic life since the power of religion lies in the human value it provides toward individual and communal lives.

Religion is filled with the non-rational and the non-rational is constitutive of human society. However, reason has a solid place in religion; therefore, religion and practical reason should be compatible. But the opposite is what we observe in our contemporary society, especially in South West Nigeria. Religion has been used as a cultural excuse factor for many of the crime and criminality in the society. It is arguable that for the continuing relevance of religion, religion, religion institutions, tenets and practices, to should be open to reasoned criticism and to change. Although the founding narratives of religious traditions may be considered as divinely inspired, their subsequent institution agitation is a social process in a dynamic environment.

Sociology itself is a product of the enlightenment has a long tradition of scepticism toward religion. A notable religious sceptic acknowledged her special difficulty with finding any meaning or value in religion even though she had documented the persistence of religion as an important dimension of Americans lives¹³¹. To sceptics and revisionists, religion is frequently the forgotten or excluded variable in social scientific studies and literature reviews.

Religion is a key construct for understanding socio-cultural life in the contemporary world. Religion has the potential to play a vital emancipator role in the processes of social change; and it is an important predictor of a variety of social processes ranging from economic action to political outcome. Religion has been used as a significant social explanation of a wide range of social attitudes and behaviour. Religion has equally been used as an emancipator resource at one for time peace and at another time for violence. It is incontrovertibly real that religion is connected with violence among fundamentals. Cynics have no value to add to religion except vituperation and flagrant violation of human rights which ultimately impede peace-making and peace-building processes¹³².

2.3.10 Religious and Political Patronage in South West Nigeria

South West Nigeria is a very strong region in both religion and politics and the influence of notable political stakeholders and patrons affect both the religious and political spaces, especially since independence. Each of the political parties has its origin in patrimonialism¹³³. Neopatrimonialism is explained in a book *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism* deriving the term from Weberian term 'patrimonialism'. The term had been to describe a military administrative style of being responsible only to the ruler. Neopatrimonialism is a mixed system of rational bureaucratic and patrimonial style of rule. In Africa, neopatrimonialism is obvious since vertical distribution of resources that give rise to patron-client networks are in practice. Corruption through subtle coercion and government's attempt to gain legitimacy through manipulation of electioneering process; vote buying; and attempts to remain in position of power by all means by some form of neopatrimonialism¹³³.

Nigerian regime is presidential which facilitates clientelism since power is concentrated in a single individual with ultimate control of networks. The President of Nigeria seems almost omnipotent and omnipresent in major aspects of people's lives from the very local to the federal levels. The type of federalism in Nigeria concentrates so much power and authority in the central government at the expense of the six geo-political zones or regions, hence patrimonial logic and language are common place. Public resources are misappropriated by a few whose political authority is based on clientelism and office holders use public fund to promote ethnicity and for personal benefits. The scenario has generated ill-feeling among ethnic groups in the country and has drastically reduced the legitimacy of many political parties, the consequence of which has been rebellion in form of militarized protests and increased spate of terrorism in the country¹³³.

The political structure of Nigeria which is based on religious, ethnic, monetary and selfish ambitions has always hindered true democracy⁹⁵. The political ideas, attitudes, behaviour and beliefs that underlie the country need an urgent restructure; without which rebellion cannot be fully overcome.

Neopatrimonialism is a system of social hierarchy where patrons use state resources to secure loyalty of clients in the general population. It is a system in which an office of power is used for personal uses and gains, as opposed to a strict division of the private and public spheres. A renowned scholar defined neopatrimonialism as a form of organization in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system¹³³. It is evident that neopatrimonialism may undermine political institutions and the rule of law, and is a corrupt practice. It supplants the bureaucratic structure of the state in that only those with connections have the real power, not those who hold higher positions. It is an informal patron-client relationship that can reach from very high up in state structures down to individuals in small village¹³³.

2.3.11 Developing a Peace Economy for Sustainable Development

Politics is seen as a mechanism for managing and resolving conflict. A political scientist, and one of the best known proponents of the politics of peace defines politics as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community. He considers politics as a solution to the problem of order which chooses conciliation rather than violence or coercion. This proposition agrees with the view of another political theorist that a political solution to a problem such as the problem of Boko Haram, ISWAP, ISIS, and other

terrible splinter terrorist groups may achieve a better result than military solution which implies the use of force¹³⁴. Politics is concerned with the state but it can be used to correct the disorder in religion if a due process to solve the problems is followed. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, party politics is the bane of the country.

Are suicide bombers acting religiously or politically? Or are they engaging in violence, pure and simple, entirely eschewing the religious and political processes? Are revolutions generally defined by their violent political character? A scholar broadly defines politics as the activity through which people make, preserve and amend general rules under which they live. Politics has been characterised as a process of conflict resolution, whereby an attempt is made to reconcile rival interests. Whether the conflict is managed or resolved, politics is characterized by a search for such a resolution. Politics is a process whose end is the reconciliation of differences and the resolution of conflict. This definition is premised on the assumption that difference and conflict are undesirable and their reconciliation and resolution desirable. However, the workability of politics in both Nigeria and Israel is questionable. For instance, both Nigeria and Israel are embroiled in bitter politics, considering the unending hostilities between the Hamas and Israel on one side, and between All Progressive Party and People's Democratic Party in Nigeria.

Politics is meant to resolve conflict. In politics, compromise, conciliation and negotiation are necessary. However, political conflict can escalate to the use of force and violence⁹⁸. Today, the country witnesses high scale of assassination, electoral violence, insurrection, terrorism and war. At its core, politics is a system for social problem-solving. Politics may be a source of conflict where it is inevitable that the public rarely sit in complete agreement. Politics produce winners and losers, and victories relate to both the acquisition of power and the fulfilment of interest and

values. Politics is not always presented as positional bargaining. Politicians frequently champion themselves as uniters who will bring conflicting parties together, however, the possibility for interest-based bargaining exists in politics. Political calculation based on ethnicity and prejudice cannot afford peace. The interests, values and needs of the parties involved in peace politics can be accessed in terms of three satisfactions: process, emotion and substance. The recurring Kaduna riots involving the Shiites is a fresh case study of political religiosity¹³⁴.

The process dimension includes features of acknowledgement and inclusion. Parties to conflict are disappointed when they are denied access or feel silenced and satisfied when they have opportunities to make complaints and participate in decision making. The emotional dimension captures a range of feelings as they relate to engagement, identity, safety and security. As emotions are processed, they can illuminate issues, and what starts as anger may turn into fear. Fear, in turn, tends to reflect clear underlying interests and needs. Thus, in engaging politics of peace to minimize religious problems, process, interests and needs of the actors' matter. Constructive conflict will first expose these interests and needs and then address them. Politics that are expressed *prima facie* as issues of equity and justice may be experienced by parties as existential threats. One group's fair may not serve as another group's "survival". Politics may also serve constructive purpose when they educate or inform the public in beneficial ways. Conflict can reflect a range of unmet expectations or miscommunications for the errors to be corrected as the protracted case of Palestine-Israel¹³⁵

A notable American civil rights activist describes riot as the voice of the unheard. Those who want their wants and needs met can take steps to be heard. Riot can, for example, destroy the livelihoods of the community in need while polarizing the issue in disputes, making opportunities at resolution more problematized. In Nigeria, the destructiveness of ethno-religious

conflict has made it untenable, prohibitive and all hands are on deck to curb the excesses of religious paradoxes¹³⁶.

Politics of peace is concerned with an understanding of the origins of violent conflict and possibilities for their resolution and transformation, as well as the condition for building sustainable peace. The dynamics of war, armed conflict and political violence are constantly changing from the geo-politics of the Cold War to “new wars” and intra-state violence, to trans-national non-state groups, such as Al-Qaida and ISIS and the interplay between local, regional and global dimensions of conflict¹³⁶.

2.3.11.1. Poverty and Underdevelopment in South West Nigeria

In Nigeria, 40 per cent of the Nigerian population are categorised poor and this affects the political and religious landscapes including concomitant urban crime and criminality¹³⁷. Formerly, religious leaders taught their congregants that religion and money should be separated because they are non-convergent; however, recent events have threatened to demolish all the core assumptions. The permanent Voter’s Card (PVC) is a political instrument conferring on its owner the power to vote for a politician or a party of his choice. Recently, a Christian cleric, while stressing the importance of the PVC to his church members, asserted that “without it, the church’s gate will be shut against any member that refuses to obtain his or her own once such member has reached the eligible age. By implication, the PVC has, from political instrument, become a religious instrument to ensure maximum Christian suffrage participation in the 2023 elections. The sanctuary which, hitherto, is the exclusive presence of the righteous, has also become a haven for the politically correct. The order of No-PVC was not an empty threat because at the entrance of the church were standing enforcement agents of the church¹³⁸. The implication of this is that the church is interested in political decision of who governs his people.

The church is not just interested in sending people to heaven, but also to have a right combination of righteousness and political decision about governance. In the light of this, some notable Muslims have equally been admonished to vote only Muslim candidates.

Religionisation of politics has come upon Nigerian voting populace. Politicians are no longer free to choose a Muslim-Muslim or Christian-Christian tickets as presidential candidates. As the country is preparing for election in 2023, the struggle between Christians and Muslims for the presidential candidacy is strong¹³⁸. The South West region has its share of poverty and underdevelopment engendered by sheer religiosity.

2.3.11.2. Interface between Judiciary and Religion in Nigeria

There is no clear-cut difference between religion, reality and rulership in Nigeria. The kings of old were appointed based on their abilities to achieve three basic things. The king must be a man of war, a warrior who must be in charge of any war expeditions with the ultimate goal of protecting lives and properties of his people. Secondly, the king must have the ability to organize the citizens to maintain growth, development, law and order for human and environmental peace. Thirdly, the king must make consultations with wise people, foretellers and guardian spirits before he takes major decisions. Then, religion was outside the mandate of any government entrenchment because the throne is different from the altar.

Humans have imposed social contracts in their doctrinal beliefs to the extent that religion has become more of enforcement rather than a voluntary thing. Humans have created religion for selfish sinister motives, and today they use their weapons of mass destruction in defence of their specific gods who must be appeased by bloodshed. Society harmony has been turned into hatred and sacrality does not matter to the religious extremists¹³⁹.

The fusion of the throne and the altar or the state and religion will eventually lead to chaos as both religion and governance are competing in a race of supremacy. Whereas, in all Holy Books, religion has always been the final spiritual realm of behavioural assimilation for government to find gods mind for leadership, today, religion has been hijacked by government through the judiciary to judge on what school uniform a religious sect should adopt at the expense of the priesthood of another religious sect. religion, is to foster morality, articulate character, galvanize adherent to human right and eventually ensure peaceful human relationship. Unfortunately, however, extremists have recreated their own kind of “political religion” with detrimental doctrines rather than to fulfil God’s purpose here in the earth. Thus, it is becoming a reality to say that “God did not create religion, humans did”. No wonder in Nigeria, people can kill for religious blasphemous doctrine but cannot revere the sacredness of life. It is ironical that religious murderers profess affection for their Holy Book and god but without any iota of respect for God almighty¹³⁹. The Bible clearly states that if we profess that we love God who we cannot see but hate our neighbours whom we can see, then the love of God is not in us. It is not possible to love God without loving our fellow humans. That will be hearsay and outright pretence.

Religion has been the greatest problem in Nigeria presently, and it is like the country is under a spell. Supreme Court judges on the 17th June 2022 came up with a ruling that hijab can be worn in Lagos state public schools even when supreme court judges did not wear hijab to be lawyers¹⁰². Every school as a socializing agent, has its own peculiar mode of dressing and often times, it is totally outside religious sentiments. It is unthinkable in a time like this when security challenges are facing us that the highest court of the land would condescend to sentiments in a pluralistic where Christians, Muslims, Polytheists and Atheists reside. The judges, mode of school uniform is the most critical judgment they can dissipate energy on when other socioeconomic and

security issues are taking tolls on the populace. Instead of getting the priorities right by improving on our decaying educational system, the apex court is busy creating religious sentiments that could heat up the already tensed socio relationship occasioned by predatory religious extremists. Religion has beclouded our thoughts and cognitive development. With the enforcement of hijab in Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara. Kaduna and so on, morality among young female students is not encouraging and neither is their improvements in their academics. It is heart-breaking to hear Justice Ali Gumel say while ruling on wearing of hijab that “wearing hijab is an Islamic injunction and an act of worship”¹³⁹. This is a display of judges shooting themselves in contradiction of what the subject matter is in a secular country.

Why should Nigeria’s public institutions become Islamic injunctions and worship centres at the expense of other religions? While Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Sudan and the Middle East are looking for a way where religion and governance will be parts away and separated, Nigeria judges are plunging the country into religious chaos. However, as religious as Nigerians seem to be, the citizens are still bereft of core morality values and principles. Have their religiosities changed the pathetic situation where corruption, nepotism, mediocrity and tribalism are destroying the lip services to being ardent followers of Muhammad or Christ?^{140,141,142}

Sometimes ago, Kwara state experienced the worst of religious violence due to Muslim students trying to force themselves into wearing hijab in a christen missionary school. The consequence of this was great on the state. Instead of forcing hijab on a school, why not let the agitating students establish schools where their ideals are accepted instead of changing existing school’s rules and regulations.

Politics as well as religion is tearing Nigeria apart. Supreme Court judgment has just opened issues of religious rights and one must not be surprised to see Sango, Amadioha, Egungun and other traditional religion worshippers going to school, even offices with their religious regalia and peculiar act of worship of their gods. This played out on Thursday, 23rd June 2022 when a human rights lawyer, Malcom Omoirhobo attended court proceeding in an adorned traditional attire of an Olokun priest in Lagos. The judges had to take off and the court was closed that day¹⁴³. Consequent upon that, another lawyer, Dennis Ezigha Esq. was seen dressed in his religious attire to enter appearance before the court on 29th June, 2022. He appeared in his professional attire with a large rosary bead wrapped around his neck. This is just the beginning to the reaction to the inadvertent errors of the Supreme Court. The terrorism war right now in Nigeria is the battle between the blind and the sighted and it is all premised on religion.

2.3.12 Christianity, Islam, and Human Values

Israel had suffered in the hands of Assyria, Persia, Babylon, and Rome. It is generally known that the nation of Israel began with the call of Abraham in Genesis, that Moses led its people out of Egyptian captivity, and that Joshua brought them into Canaan. After this, the nation floundered under the judges, flourished under David and Solomon, and became fragmented under wicked King Rehoboam. The of Israel finally suffered exile at the hands of Assyria and Babylon, only to be returned to the land of God during the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah¹⁴⁴.

In Jesus' time, mighty Rome ruled over the Holy Land, and four decades after his ascension, destroyed Israel's temple in A.D. 70. It is also common knowledge that after wandering for nearly nineteen centuries, Israel was once again established in her own beloved land. The historical trend of Israel between the first and twentieth centuries is a tragic, turbulent, thrilling,

and finally triumphant tale. Jerusalem was violated by some bloody crusaders but was vindicated by a Burma Road¹⁴⁴.

On September 8, A.D. 70, by God's judgment, the Jewish temple in Israel was burned and destroyed by Titus, the Roman General. On October 6, A.D. 1973, by God's grace, the Jewish state of Israel was saved from destruction from the Egyptians and Syrians¹⁰⁴. The eventful nineteen centuries can be historically divided into ten main periods:

- I. The Roman period (A.D. 70 – 325)
- II. The Byzantine period (325 – 614)
- III. The Persian period (614 – 634)
- IV. The Arab period (634 – 1072)
- V. The Seljuk period (1072 – 1099)
- VI. The Crusaders period (1099 – 1291)
- VII. The Mameluke period (1291 – 1571)
- VIII. The Turkish (Ottoman) period (1517 – 1917)
- IX. The British period (1917 – 1948)
- X. The Independent period (1948 – present day)¹⁴⁴

The Roman period A.D. 70 – 325 marked the beginning of intense persecution of the nation of Israel. Starting with Pilate in A.D. 36 when he sent Roman force to crush Samaria till May 1948 when Israel regained their native land. The Byzantine period (325 – 614) was the era when Constantinople, or Byzantium, as it was called, was made capital of the eastern half of the Roman Empire. Christianity spread rapidly after the conversion of Constantine. Churches were built and Palestine flourished. However, with the advent of Constantine the Great, the Jews were

even persecuted by professing Christians until Emperor Julian the Apostate, who hate Christ and Christianity promised to rebuild the Jewish temple to disprove the Saviour's prophecy As a relief for Christianity, Julian died on a battlefield after reigning for only eight months in A.D. 363 and the project was quickly abandoned. During the Byzantine period, the Jews were not allowed to visit Jerusalem except on September, the anniversary of the destruction of their temple.

The Persian period marked a great setback for both Judaism and Christianity when on May 20, 614, Jerusalem was conquered along with Palestine by the Persian warrior Chosroes II. The Jews supported this invasion after being induced with a promise of relief after taking over the land, a promise he never kept. In A.D. 629, the Byzantines were supported by Emperor Heraclitus and drove out the Persians¹⁴⁴.

The Arab period (634 – 1072) marked a great persecution and sorrow for Christianity. The great founder of Islam, Mohammed was born in Mecca in A.D. 570, raised by his uncle, Abu-Taleb and later worked for, and married a rich widow Khadija. In A.D. 611, at the age of forty, he received his famous vision dream which states "There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet". However, as much as tried to unite his Arab people under the banner of Allah, the citizens of Mecca who polytheistic sharply and rejected hi monotheistic approach. For years, they had worshipped a great black stone (possibly a meteorite), around which were 360 idols. Mohammed therefore, escaped to Medina where his monotheism was accepted and his flight described as Hegira (the flight) took place in June A.D. 622. His persecution and militant crusade to make converts was done through the Koran, tribute or the Sword (Jihad). Thus, his Jihad meant one could accept the Koran, pay tribute, or be slaughtered by the Sword¹⁴⁴.

After Mohammed's death in 632 at Medina, his followers compelled people to testify, "There is but one God, and Mohammed is his Apostle". If you refuse this, consent to pay tribute, and be under us forthwith. However, the victorious Muslims who had captured Syria and Jerusalem with forceful crusade were finally stopped in their westward advances by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in A.D. 732. In A.D. 1009, the Muslims ordered the destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulchre with over 30,000 Christian buildings destroyed along the church¹⁴⁴.

Furthermore, the Seljuk period (1072 – 1099) was another period of persecution of the nation of Israel. The Seljuk was a Turkish dynasty which overran the Middle East for about twenty-five years. They were driven out by the Egyptians shortly before the arrival of the crusaders. The Seljuk occupied Jerusalem in 1076. The Seljuk came for near the borders of China and had been converted to Islam. They persecuted both Jews and Christians. The Crusaders period (1099 – 1291) was not only the most turbulent, but in many ways, the most tragic post-Calvary era of the history of Palestine. It was turbulent because of the hundreds of thousands of European troops marching across the land to fight with equally massive Arab armies. It was tragic because much of the butchery and bloodletting was done in the name of Jesus, by professing Christian warriors¹⁰⁴. There were eight main crusades during this time to free Jerusalem for the pagan Arabs. The eight crusades lasted one hundred and ninety-two years but the crescent still triumphed over, the cross and the crusade left behind only ruins and memory of wars which they had waged and a kingdom which they had founded and lost eighty (80)¹⁴⁴.

The Mameluke period (1291 – 1517) was another great setback for both Palestinian Jews and Christians. The Mameluke were Turkish slaves who revolted against their Egyptian masters and took over the throne of Egypt and overran Palestine, driving out the crusaders in A.D. 1291. During the Mameluke period, the Holy Land suffered one of the most severe and prolonged

droughts on record. The Mameluke placed heavy and grievous restrictions upon both Palestinian Jews and Christians. By law, Jews had to wear yellow turbans and Christians blue turbans to distinguish them from the first-class Muslim citizens. Life was so terrible because of famine to the extent that people ate dogs, cats, worms and on occasion, even little children¹⁴⁴.

The Ottoman (Turkish) period (1517-1917) was the final crusade because in 1517, Selim I (the Grim) of Turkey defeated the Mamelukes and took over Palestine. Prior to this, the Mamelukes had taken over the Constantinople in 1453. The son of Selim ruled from 1520 – 1566 and was the greatest monarch during the 400-year Turkish occupation of Palestine. He rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem which still stands as a monument till today. The era of “Abominable Turk” came with bribery, greed, dense and cruel taxation with rape of people and land. Jews, Christians and Arab suffered under their disgraceful rule¹⁴⁴.

The most significant event of the 400-year Turkish rule, and indeed in Holy Land history since Bar-Cochbas A.D. 132 revolt, occurred in 1897. It was during that year that Theodor Herzl, and Austrian Jew, launched a political movement in Basel, Switzerland, known as Zionism. Two hundred and four delegates from Europe, Africa, America, and Palestine attended this momentous meeting which began on August 29, 1897. From this day, there emerged the world Zionist organization, having for its goal, a legally secured, publicly recognized home for Jewish people in Palestine. Herzl cried out: “There is a land without a people! There is a people without a land! Give the land without a people to the people without a land!”¹⁰⁴. The conference accomplished three far-reaching things:

1. It gave the Jews a living and not a latent hope for reunion with their land.

2. It gave birth to the Jewish flag, featuring broad stripes of blue and white with a Star of David in the centre.

3. It produced the Jewish national anthem, “Hatikvah”, meaning “the hope”. Here is its wording:

So long as still within our breasts

The Jewish heart beats true

So long as still towards the East

To Zion looks the Jew.

So long our hopes are not yet lost

Two thousand years we cherished them

To live in freedom in the land of Zion and Jerusalem¹⁴⁴

Herzl at that time predicted that within fifty years, the proposed Jewish state would become a fact. With only nine months' differences in the prophecy of Herzl, history was made and in May 1948, the Jewish state became a reality within fifteen of the 1897 conference delegates in attendance¹⁰⁴.

Tensions between the Arabs, Jews and British intensified after the Second World War. In July 1947, an incident of international scope occurred which helped formulate the British decision to leave Palestine in 1948. It is known as the Exodus Event which implies that Jewish a refugee ship carrying Jews going to Palestine was to be sunk by British ships for violating the White Paper law. The 4554 refugees were arrested and imprisoned but all the Jews (prisoners) refused to leave the ship and went on a hunger strike. This tragedy made the world news and Great Britain had to scrap the White Paper policy and asked the U.N. to partition Palestine between Arab and Jew. This marked the sixth and final Aliyah returns, all which prepared for the new

state of Israel. The Hebrew word, Aliyah, means “to go up”. It may be used as a term to go up and read the Torah in a synagogue service but it is used to go up to their promised land, Palestine¹⁴⁴. The six Aliyahs are:

1. 1882 – 1903
2. 1903 – 1914
3. 1919 – 1925
4. 1925 – 1932
5. 1933 – 1939
6. 1940 – 1948

The U.N. Special Committee on Palestine then retired at Geneva and recommended that the British mandate be ended. The committee advocated the partition of Palestine and the creation of the statehood for Israel. On November 29, 1947, by a thirty-three to thirteen vote (ten abstentions) the United Nations General Assembly passed this resolution. The next day Arab hostilities broke out against the Jews¹⁴⁴.

The Independent period (1948 till today) has witnessed four major wars in the Middle East between the Jews and Arabs. Israel became a state on May 14, 1948, and immediately, even the second day, May 15, 1948; Israel was invaded by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This pitted forty- five million Arabs against 64,000 Jews. The allied armies closed in from the north, south and east, while Israel’s back was to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The Arab in soldiers outnumbered the Jews forty to one, in population, 100 to one, in equipment, 1000 to one, and 5000 to one in area. Against this massive and well-armed invasion, Israel had but 10,000 rifles, each with fifty rounds of ammunition, four ancient artillery pieces, and 3,600 sub-machine guns. To the Arabs, the name of the game was revenge and expansion, but to the desperate Jews,

it was sheer survival. At the end, Israel gloriously survived and triumphed with the assistance of America and this war of Independence afforded Israel to gain 23 percent more territory than had been allotted to her by the 1947 partition plan. The Sinai War began on Monday, October 29, 1956; and ended on November 5, 1956 and within this one-week war, Israel had overrun and conquered the entire army and captured vast stores of supplies and Russian-built equipment¹⁴⁴.

The six-day war began on June 5, 1967 and Israel destroyed the entire air force of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, annexed Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza strip, including major cities of Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, Nablus, Ramallah, and Jenin. 444 Arab-planes were destroyed on the ground when Israel attacked airfields in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria. Egypt suffered the most because 100 out of 350 pilots were killed, and Russian-built equipment worth several billions of dollars was lost to Israel in a matter of hours. When the cease-fire came, Israel had gained the Gaza strip, since Peninsula, all of Jordan's west bank territory, including the Old City of Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The Arab states had been delivered a crippling blow, and Soviet Russia received a major setback in the Middle East. Israel had now increased her territory from 13000 square kilometres to 43,000 square kilometres. The last war described as the Yom Kippur War began on Saturday October 6, 1973 and coincided with the Day of Atonement, a sacred day, which the Jews were fasting. A combined force of Egypt and Syria was to annihilate the Jews in the Sinai desert but on October 25, 1973; this fourth and biggest Middle East War came to an end with Israel winning the war¹⁴⁴.

The scenario of wars and counter wars among Jews, Christians, and Muslims reveals in clear terms, the paradox of religion and politics of peace among the linear religious traceable to Abrahamic faith of monotheism. It can be inferred that religious leaders and politicians are

insanely busy and often stressed in their selfish attitude and behaviour. One had seen ugly experiences of failure, panic, depression, deprivation and economic loss as part of their actions and inactions which have global consequences.

2.3.12.1. Religious Jurisprudence for Peace and Human Dignity

Religion is the belief and worship of a deity which, by implication, means the relationship that subsists between humans and the supreme. This relationship is generally regarded as the highest distillation of morality. It has been argued among scholars that religion and sin should be separated from law and crime. While sin should be punished by the supreme to show religious people allegiances, and the punishment show outside this material world; crime should be punished here on earth. The Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (CFRN) provides that the Government of the Federation does not adopt any state religion¹⁰⁶. However, it appears that the penal code (which predominantly applies in the Northern states of Nigeria) have some sharia flavour. On the contrary, some advocates for the law and state to conform to certain religious standards. Saint Thomas violates laws of God should be invalid. Aristotle also maintains that the law of polity should conform to law of heaven, else there would be chaos which only God can solve¹⁴⁵.

In the contemporary theocratic states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen and the Vatican, state and religion are inseparable. For instance, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini a revolution leader, supreme leader of Iran is the country's leading political and religious figure. In Afghanistan, Islam is the official religion and foundations of the political institutions are based on Islamic Sharia law. In other words, political power lies almost exclusively on the hands of the religious leaders of the regime. Mauritania is an Islamic republic

with a theocratic government with its legal system based on Sharia law, especially when its political situation changed in the 1980s with strict Islamic jurisprudence. The Vatican City is the only country in the world with an absolute theocratic elective monarchy that is guided by the principles of a Christian school of religious thought¹⁰⁷. The pope is the supreme power that leads the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Vatican government. This is also perhaps the only monarchy in the world that is non-hereditary in nature.

There are also a host of cases where religious infractions had been punished by the courts. It is contradictory that religious infractions had been punished by the courts. It is contradictory that religious actors or leaders as citizens do not prescribe appropriate punishment for their co-religious members; hence those that criticize the involvement of courts in the affairs of religion may not good grounds. Most provisions of judicial codes are against lies, theft, dishonesty, and other criminal acts also prohibited by religion. It appears in theory, that religion is separate from law, its manifestations are inherent in most of the laws of the country, section 383 of the Criminal Code, a corresponding provision of the Penal Code is 286 (i). Various laws against dishonesty, corruption and misappropriation are seen in Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)¹⁴⁵.

Guaranteed in Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution, Article 8 of the Africa Charter on Human and People's Rights. The Edict of Religious Toleration. Section 10 of the Criminal Code exempts a wife of "Christian Marriage" from being an accessory after the fact for her husband. Section 33 exempts a wife of a Christian Marriage for act she does under the command of her husband. Section 34 provides that a husband and wife of Christian marriage cannot be guilty of conspiracy. Section 369 and 370 also promotes the Christian admonition of one man, one wife¹⁰⁸. Medical and Dental Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal versus Okonkwo (where refusal to take blood to

save patient's life was justified on religious grounds). Kokinakis versus Greece where the court held that every person is entitled to proselyte and seek for converts¹⁰⁸. This was the first religious freedom case in Strasbourg in 1993.

2.3.12.2 Conflict Resolution among Christians and Muslims

Conflict resolution begins with Jesus Christ. Isaiah called him the Prince of Peace, and at his birth, hosts of angels sang glory to God in the highest and proclaimed "peace on earth to all whom God favours"¹⁰⁹. During his ministry he predicted that tension would arise between his followers and their non-believing relatives and friends, but he was described as a maker of peace who is able to break down interpersonal barriers and the walls of hostility that divide people.

Further, the followers of Jesus have been promised a supernaturally produced inner peace of mind that gives internal stability, even in times of turmoil and interpersonal tension, dissension and relations. According to Christian orientation, real peace can be felt within and occur between individuals when humans have peace with God with the time of committing one's life to God. This peace is sustainable through regular times of worship, prayer and meditation on God's word. Thus, peace can overcome interpersonal tensions, prejudices, and disputations.

At the core of interpersonal conflict always lies the subtle and manipulative hand of Satan, hence, Satan is fingered as responsible for some conflicts, therefore Christians are instructed to resist him¹¹⁰. Personal attributes, attitudes and actions often fuel interpersonal tension and such tension escalates with people whose personally traits, attitudes, perceptions, feelings, mannerism, and behaviours create conflict and distrust¹⁴⁵.

Jesus was once approached by a man who called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." This sounds like a legitimate request, but instead

of arbitration, Jesus gave a warning against greed. Apparently, the family conflict came because of the man's selfish attitude. At another time, Jesus warned us against finding fault in others when there are even worse faults in ourselves. Human beings are social creatures, therefore, interpersonal relation among people is sine qua non but when strained and marked by conflict, we should resolve the conflict.

The Bible records a long human history of interpersonal problems and communication breakdowns. Adam and Eve, the first married couple, had a disagreement about the reason for their rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Their first two sons, Cain and Abel, had a conflict that led one to murder the other. Then as population multiplied, the earth was filled with violence. For instance, the argument between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, the conflicts between Joseph and his brothers, the jealousy that led Saul to be at odds with David, the disagreement between Pharisees and Sadducees and the disagreement between Saul and Barnabas over Mark and many other numerous examples.

There are consequences for using religion to manipulate politics. Recalling the issue of the All Progressive Congress (APC) Muslim-Muslim ticket, using religion to control politics has consequences. Germany was cited as an example that the consequences are there to see in Hitler. Nigeria political elites lack the mental capacity to understand the consequences of the fire they are stoking, especially considering the recruitment process of Buhari administration which has the tendency to cause a threat in the volatile environment where Boko Haram say that, except Nigerians accept their Islamic religious belief, killing will continue¹⁴⁶. Thus, giving privilege to a particular religion or an ethnic group makes others to feel marginalized or excluded and it is a potent cause of hostilities in the society.

Nigeria is facing series of security challenges for over a period of time now, especially in the recent time when the ware of crime and criminality has drastically increased to an unbearable level. There is a high level of suspicion across board which has raised the agitation about dominance and marginalization. It is generally believed that the ineptitude of leadership is responsible for unemployment, tribalism, nepotism, social injustice, political instability and other structural problems being experienced in the country¹⁴⁷.

The whole of the country is characterized by one form of violence of the other depending on the prevailing circumstances at a particular zone or locality. For instance, the North East is battling with insurgency popularly referred to as Boko Haram and ISWAP, the North West is battling with farmer – herder banditry¹⁴⁷. The South Niger/Delta South is battling with military and South East with POB militants and killings. The menace is gradually spreading to South West with the kidnap and killing of the daughter of Pa Fashoranti and the kidnap of Chief Olu Falare in 2019 among others.

Lack of tolerance is largely responsible for the absence of religious violence especially in Northern Nigeria, unlike in the South West where Christians and Muslims relate very well. Hardly could one find a family without the adherents of the two major religions as members in Yorubaland¹⁴⁸.

Negative responses towards Islam and Muslims are manifestations of Islamophobia and these responses include aggression, retaliation, submission, retraction, observation and trepidation. Religious peculiarities are actually difficult to assimilate, yet for the purpose of peaceful co-existence, human resources and relations should be cultivated and sustained. Such differences were there even in the days of Jesus Christ, because he had difficulty in relating with Jewish

clerics and women. He engaged the clerics and scholars with the claims of the kingdom of God¹¹³. There are parallels between the Jewish religion, Judaism and Islam. Most of the practices in Islam were taken from Judaism. For instance, the Jews do ablution; Muslims do ablution. The Jews prayed at certain hours facing a particular direction, Jerusalem. Islamic prayers are conducted facing a particular direction, the Qibla, Mecca. Jewish women wear the veil; Muslim women wear the veil. Jewish rabbis wear long beards and cloaks. Muslim clerics wear long beards and cloaks. Jewish religious clerics did not mix freely with woman; Muslim clerics restrain themselves from moving freely with women in the public. Jews remove shoes before entering the synagogues; Muslim does not enter mosques with shoes. Worshippers in the synagogues sit on floors; Muslim sits on floors in the mosque. In other words, the highbrow clerics and scholars behind the beards and cloaks and women tucked behind the veil are all humans, waiting to relate and be related without fear¹⁴⁹.

Man was born free yet everywhere he is in chains is a term often cited in the Social Contract, that all men were created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, but ironically, others see the Social Contract as a model for a totalitarian state. The general will is the inalienable right of everyone. No king can bestow these rights upon you; you already have them. Governments can repress them, however, and often do. The will of all is the will of certain factions of a society, like kings or religious leaders or the aristocrats or any special interest groups. It is the rule of the powers- that be, not really the “will of all’ at all¹⁴⁹.

Political freedom or religious freedom is a liberty but the liberty is not as a license to do whatever you want, but rather, the opportunity to do the right thing and to obey the authority that is not imposed on you but one that governs by the assent of the citizens. Unfortunately, contrary to the view philosophical thought on social contract, both religion and the government repress

fundamental human rights and they play politics of pace to bestow these rights upon citizens whenever there is conflict. Religious actors as well as political actors can spin philosophy to accommodate religious and political situation. Politicians could prove “day is night” and “black is white” and leave their audience awe-struck. Religious and political leaders have impressive powers of persuasion, and they are enormously popular and influential celebrities to the extent that even with the paradoxes in religion and politics, their audiences still hold them in high esteem¹⁵⁰.

The true Muslim believes that the Qur’an is the word of God, revealed to Mohammed through the agency of the angel Gabriel. It is believed among the Muslim umma that the Qur’an was revealed from God piece by piece on various occasions to answer certain questions, solves certain problems, settle some disputes, and to be man’s best guide to the truth of God and eternal happiness. Every letter in the Qur’an is the word of God, and every sound in it is believed by Muslims to be the true echo of God’s voice. The Qur’an is regarded as the first and most authentic source of Islam. It was revealed in Arabic and will remain in its original and complete Arabic version to safeguard it against corruption¹⁵¹.

Traditions of Mohammed: the second source of Islam is the Traditions of Mohammed. The Qur’an is the word of God, whereas, the traditions of Mohammed are the practical interpretations of the Qur’an. The role of Mohammed was to convey the Qur’an as he received it, to interpret and to practice it fully. Thus, his interpretations and practices produced what is known as the Traditions of Mohammed and they are considered the second source of Islam and must be in complete harmony with the first source, namely Qur’an which is the criterion. The relationship between the Prophet Muhammad and the Quran cannot be overemphasised; for he asserts that

Quran is the confirmation of God's word as spoken by the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad¹⁵¹.

Islam's character first changes when the umma fled persecution in Mecca and began to form a successful society in Medina. The newly dominant umma began to subjugate non-Muslim, including the Jewish tribes in Medina. At this time, the umma shifted its focus and became an Arab-focused religion¹⁵¹.

Rather than celebrating the Jewish Day of Atonement and praying towards Jerusalem, now both the hajj and prayers were directed towards Mecca. Another shift occurred soon after the death of Mohammed, as cultural differences and disagreements over who to succeed Mohammed cause rebellion and civil war in the umma. Muslims still struggle with these tensions today; hence, Islam of today is more diverse and is struggling with change more than ever before. However, in spite of the diversity, Muslims share a spiritual kinship and similarity of forms like clothing, prayer, names, repeat the same prayers and celebrate the same feasts and festivals. While there is not, in reality, one Islam or type of Muslim, tawhid, or oneness stands as a rejection of a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, Muslims believe that God should rule all of one's heart and life, not just a portion of either¹⁵¹. In the light of this, personal, religious, economic, political, social and cultural spheres of life are all to be merged together and submitted to God via Islam. Religion, therefore, is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man. Whereas, the Western conception of governance is to separate religion from the state, in the Islamic worldview, both religion and state are fused together to serve the purpose of faith¹⁵¹.

While the idealistic vision of a united and successful umma inspires Muslim dawah, or outreach, much of the umma is suffering under oppressive “Islamic” governments which fall short of the ideal. The Muslim empires of earlier centuries have faded, and the caliphate has been dissolved. The moral drift of their cultures towards modernism and western orientation is a big challenge to conservative Muslims. Today, Islam has both religious and secular reform movements seeking to modernize the faith. Islam has a resurgent revival effort attempting to reunite the umma and return to its ideals. Thus, to assimilate either Arab or western orientation is a big question in Islam of this age. Muslims live in a world that has been rocked by nationalism, capitalism, socialism, materialism, modernism, racism and secularism. This disillusionment sometimes turns to anger towards those they perceive as the cause of Muslims’ constriction or frustration. Conservative Muslims believe that imperialism of the twentieth century continues today in the form of economic and cultural oppression through the West’s commerce and exported television, movies, and pornography¹¹⁶. In Islam, democracy means the people are slaves to the laws made by incompetent politicians who only seek to secure their own interests. Islam is against the culture of freedom and democracy which teaches that there is no difference between Muslims, Christians, and the Jews, atheists, idol worshippers. Thus, in Islam, democratic rule implies modernism but the issue is that democracy rules the contemporary world.

2.3.12.3 Should Religion be Used as a Cover for Crime?

If there were no protestant reformation and the Roman Catholic Church still reigned, it is certain that we would still be living in barbarism today. Many historians argue that England rejecting Catholicism was crucial key for the protestant movement to survive at all. Within the Body of Christ, for reason of religious disposition and orientation, some male victims tagged heretics, were emasculated, disembowelled, sometimes having their hearts torn out while still alive,

beheaded, arms and legs cut off while treasonous women were burned at the stake. This was a manifest persecution of co-believers among the Roman Church, the Puritans, Quakers, Baptists and Anglicans until 1649 when the Maryland Toleration Act became law – as the first establishment of religious tolerance in the American colonies¹⁵². This law protected dissenting protestant as well as Catholics. However, the decision to let others worship as they please tended to further secularism and relativism and the belief that all religious beliefs were either illusory, or all the same (indifferentism).

The effect is Marxism of which we live to this day. Protestantism and Catholicism are both implicated in the blame. Protestantism is promoting secularism and theological liberalism while Catholicism blamed for hegemonism and patrimonialism, especially of popery. It is ironical to note that Karl Marx, though ethnically Jewish, was baptized and raised as a Lutheran; yet he lived and died as both anti-Judaism and anti-Christian because he regarded religion as “illusory” and “emotional” influence. Today, religion has liberalized divorce, abortion, lesbianism, gay, bestiality, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexed, asexual, ally, and pansexual community (LGBTQQIAAP). Religion is therefore vacillating between dogmatism and liberalism or between authoritarianism and libertarianism or between conservatism and reformism^{152,153}.

Today, Nigeria has begun to experience sexual and gender inconsistencies despite the number of churches and mosques in Nigeria. The debate on gender stereotypic issues rages on in Nigeria. This is also a paradox. The ill-motivated romance of religion and politics has further exacerbated politics of peace without significant result. The government of Jonathan (2011-2015) resisted gender-liberalism. The religious space is confused about what to do with gender issues, hence, politics of peace is still deployed to manage the trending gender issues¹⁵³. Postmodernism, a

philosophical system that rejects all foundations, all knowledge of systemic truth and inherent truth has, no doubt, affected both religion and politics in Nigeria.

Postmodernism is a global phenomenon that comes after modernism which stresses individually-based knowledge, truth, religion, values, norms, and promotes relativism. Scholars basically divide western thought into three basic eras: premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism. The premodern worldview was conservative with solid and basic belief in God. The scripture was accepted as true and trustworthy and therefore authoritative. The modern humanity was deemed to be enlightened by a worldview of an objective, scientific methodology, reason, and empirical observation rather than religious faith or tribal myths. Modernism was the root of postmodernism. Postmodernism is a rejection of modernism, urging human beings to enjoy a condition of existentialism in form of human dignity, freedom and responsibility. This implies that humans are free to believe what they regard as truth and worthwhile for their own self-development and esteem. Postmodernism is a philosophy that claims that truth, reason, and reality are not absolute and universal, and this philosophy affects conservative interpretations of scripture, culture, art economics, and virtually everything. Postmodernism is often associated with deconstruction and post-structuralism; hence it fosters fighting against historical critical methods of interpretation of the Holy Writs, with paradoxical concomitant consequences resulting in religious practices¹⁵³.

Persecution was a product of the worldview of the Middle Ages, which held the view that if people could be executed for harming others or their property, then heretics ought also to be executed because they harmed souls and could help cause a person to end up in hell for eternity. This is an influence of secular trends of thinking. The Roman church has a bubble called *Dictatus Papae* literally “pope’s dictatorship’ may not be appropriate in the contemporary

democratic dispensation¹⁵⁴. As a human being, the pope claims himself to have power over temporary and heavenly governments; for this he is a dictator par excellence. His word is infallible and unquestionable. This attests the fact that the Roman church is dictatorial in nature. Dictatorial ideologies cannot thrive in protestant countries as communism thrived in orthodox countries¹⁵³. Freedom gene is in vogue and this extends to religion.

There are five communist countries today (Laos, Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Korea). Only Cuba had a Catholic past. The Castro regime was brutally forced upon them. Russia was also Orthodox and communism was forced upon it too. Cuba was hugely exploited by American corporate capitalism (and we all know that America is a protestant-dominated country). The fall of communism in the Soviet Union was influenced by Pope St. John Paul II and protestant president Ronald Reagan¹⁵⁴. Thus, it is paradoxical to celebrate dictatorial religion in a democratic government and Hindus. Theocracy is subjugated in democracy because Muslims submit their will to the perfect will of Allah, hence opposed to democracy in which humans are independent, sovereign, judging good and bad according to their desires. This is the reason why radical groups like Boko Haram, ISWAP, Al-Qaida are on the prowl to restore Islam that has been modernized and westernized.

2.3.13 The Big Three Monotheistic Religions

Three religions forged in the fiery furnace of the ancient Middle Eastern deserts have done more to reshape the face of the world than any Socratic dialogue or ontological conundrum. These three religions are Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Monotheism is practiced by these linear religions and the philosophy of monotheism shapes our contemporary world at almost every level, both secular and spiritual. Christianity and Islam are spinoffs of Judaism, yet despite their common origins, there has been little in the way of peaceful coexistence over the millennia. For

good, and sometimes for ill, the influence of Judaism, Christianity and Islam continues to shape the world at the personal, sociocultural and political levels. Many a crusade, pogrom and jihad have been in the name of Yahweh, God and Allah, which enhances the tragedy since these are really three names for the same Deity.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have inflamed the souls of their followers with the ecstasies of illumination and bigotry that sometimes result into violent conflict, forced conversion, or killing. It is ironical that the three linear religions of same Abrahamic faith are the culprits of terrorism, banditry, ritual killing, and ethno-religious hostilities. It is contradictory that religions sourced from the same Abraham now have some religious actors that are now doom and gloom merchants who denigrate their own country. The impact of these big three monotheistic religions is ingrained in our culture and our mind-set either for good or sometimes for ill of our society¹⁵⁵. South West is blessed with two dominant linear religions patterned after Judaism and it is credited with minimal religious crisis, hence development in the region is steadily appreciable.

Judaism: The first of the three monotheistic religions is Judaism. However, the first Israelites were not monotheists. They are what is called henotheistic, meaning that they had their God, but they accepted the deities of their neighbours as equally valid for them – a theological ‘live and let live’, as it were. The Israelites shaped their belief that there is one God, whom they called Yahweh, during their trials and tribulations as slaves in Egypt, Babylon and Rome. The Ten Commandments or Decalogue became the main set of law for moral and religious discipline. The Roman occupied Judea for many years and Jesus was born during the Roman domination. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 in one episode and this is always referred to as “dispersion” or in culture history called “The Diaspora”. The foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 was the first Jewish homeland in almost two millennia. The generation of being a culture without a home,

wandering and living in other lands led to prejudice and persecution of Israelites and this has further shaped Judaism and the Jewish philosophy¹⁵⁵.

The Jewish Torah Talmud is significant to the Jews in general. Jews do not embrace the teaching of The New Testament; hence they do not call their spiritual Scripture “old’. The term “Torah” is used to cover the whole body of Jewish scripture and commentaries by scholars and rabbis over the centuries to the foundation of Jewish religion, tradition and law, otherwise known as “Jewish doctrine” in Hebrews. The Talmud is another phase that includes the entire body of Jewish religious and civil law – the Pentateuch, the Torah and the commentaries of the Torah. There are two version of the Talmud: The Jerusalem Talmud and the Palestinian Talmud¹⁵⁵.

Jewish believe in one God, Yahweh, who created and presides over the universe is sacrosanct. The Ten Commandments which were given to Moses on Mount Sinai are to regulate human living. Judaism is based on a contract, or covenant made between God and the Jewish people acknowledge God as their ultimate King and Lawgiver, to whom devotion must be given¹⁵⁶. While the Jewish tradition maintains that they are the “Chosen People”, Christians assert that Jesus is the only way, and Muslims equally assert that Islam is the complete and universal version of primordial faith revealed through Prophet Muhammad.

2.3.13.2 Contribution of Religion to Politics in South West Nigeria

There is no doubt, religion has contributed immensely to politics in the south western region of Nigeria. Religious leaders in the south western region deserve some credit for using their religion to enhance social harmony and cohesion. Politics is the art of commanding the respect of followers and its goal is to gain power and to have control over human and non-human resources. Religion at its best is the antidote to excessive pursuit of power and authority for selfish gain¹⁵⁷.

Jesus told his disciples to love their enemies and this is part of pacifism in religion which governments need to engage to temper the worst sides of politics. What Jesus told his audience is to love everyone. It is thinkable to conclude that religious leaders who stir up hatred, hostilities and killing of fellow humans have no value for religion at all. When people turn their religious convictions into laws and force others to obey them, they are not preaching religion, but politics. However, religious leaders in the South West Nigeria have always taken the lead in interfaith dialogues and religious tolerance which have largely helped the sustainability of the country¹⁵⁷.

In spite of a post tagged, “Christianity shrinking in U.S, may no longer be majority religion in years to come”, religion still has its relevance and human values in the south western region of Nigeria. A study has revealed that Christians in the US are quickly shrinking and may not be a majority in 2070. The study was on four hypothetical scenarios, based on trends of no switching, steady switching, rising disaffiliation with limits, and rising disaffiliation without limits. By 2055, the unaffiliated would become the country’s largest group at 46%, which will be more than Christians’ 43%. To preach the religious landscape of the country, the centre modelled four hypothetical scenarios, based on trends that included no switching, steady switching, rising disaffiliation within limits and rising disaffiliation without limits. It was observed that Christians are primarily being older than other groups, on average and the unaffiliated being younger, with a larger share of their population of child-bearing age; the steady switching scenario will make Christians to lose their majority but will still retain their title the biggest U.S. religious group in 2070¹⁵⁷

A religious warning was given to political gladiators in Nigeria by young people. You are beating drums of religious war, Northern Christian Youths tell Dogara, others. Ahead of the 2023 election, the Northern Christian Youth Initiative (NCYI) has condemned the activities of

the politicians using religion under the guise as basis for their political rallies and electioneering campaigns. The group condemned the attacks by former Speaker of the House of Representative, Honorable Yakubu Dogara, and the erstwhile Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF) Babirchir Lawal, on the same faith ticket decision of the All Progressive Congress (APC)¹⁵⁸. It is noteworthy that some church leaders had argued against the choice and emergence of two Muslims as the party's flag bearers for the 2023 polls, saying it was against religious balancing. NEYI convener, Honorable Mike Msuaan in a statement on Friday, 23rd September, 2022 insisted that both APC chieftains were staunch supporters of the presidential flag bearer of APC, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu but that the issue was so critical that the way the duo of Dogara and Lawal were handling it could plunge the country into a religious war and with the current scenario, it would be difficult to promote peacebuilding efforts ¹⁵⁸.

2.3.13.3 Politically Motivated Violence in Nigeria

It is a truism that most of the religion crises ever experienced were politically motivated. Belligerent activities in peacetime in form cloak-and-dagger operations and punitive strikes or guerrilla war and insurgent terrorism are all traceable to political motivation. In Nigeria, for example, the nature and trend of violence can hardly be clinically categorized. Racial or ethnic rivalries, vindictive vigilantism, to score a political goal, political riots as strategies of insurgency, guerrilla (a diffuse type of war or auxiliary fight fought in relatively small formations against a stronger enemy), riots and terrorism are common in Nigeria¹⁵⁹. It is noteworthy that terrorism has no legal standing in international law (from the view point of domestic law all insurrections are treated as crimes). Since morality cannot be coherently treated as an absolute value, in a given time, society and context, matter the moral reasons for terrorism, banditry or any other form of

crime and criminality, they are emotional and politically motivated and do not correspond to existing law of the society.

In its modern manifestations, terror is the totalitarian form of war and politics. It shatters the war convention and the political code and breaks across moral limits because moral code includes the rule of war, clarity, precision and formality. As a reflection of current norms, terrorism is an immoral form of warfare in the contemporary world. Terrorists' operational goal is to assassinate political opponents, take hostages by kidnapping, hijacking, or bombing of humans and public places. Terrorism as a strategy based on psychological impact has political undertone "to influence an audience". Terrorists have rarely been clear enough as to lay down a complete, coherent strategic plan; hence they use propaganda, intimidation, prorogation, and strategy of chaos or tension¹⁵⁹.

2.3.13.4 Psychological Warfare in South West Nigeria

The south western region of Nigeria is blessed with politically strong activists when it comes to political economic analysis, debates and protocols, even though many of the philosophers are averse to exercising their voting rights during elections. This trend is akin to the activities of the Mongols and Tamerlane who used terror to reduce cities without having to resort to siege. Terrorism is used to constrain behaviour without the necessity of fighting. Throughout history, power has often been wielded by inciting fear in a target audience as a means of dissuasion or punishment or rebellion against the constituted authority and that is the reason postmodern philosophy is gaining ground, even in the south western Nigeria.¹⁶⁰ Terrorism is used as a tool of enslavement and guarantor of mass obedience to terrorists' position or interest. Terrorism is warlike violence, tyrannical and tortuous. Terrorism is the most violent form of psychological warfare with far-reaching effects.

Terrere (Latin) means “to make tremble”. The first Mesopotamian Empire of Sargon of Akkad, was founded on terror. The same was true of ancient Assyrian military with brutal intention to crush any opposing nations and resources. The principal aim of terrorism is to terrorize and it is currently used to as an exclusive weapon of the weak against the strong. Terrorism is a way of creating power in the hope of seizing from below that which the state exerts from on high¹⁶⁰.

The History of Terrorism from Antiquity to Al-Qaida page that religious fanaticism is the most compatible with enslaving man’s will. After the Gold War, most of the terrorists (cloak-and-dagger persons) had moved into growing field of “new threats” which include use of nuclear proliferation, weapons of mass destruction and organised crime. On September 11, 2001, nineteen determined suicide-bomber-terrorists struck New York and Washington, D.C, the worst high-tech terrorism in history. The scenario, was surreal, having a mix of fact and fantasy, as an unbelievable event in a water-tight security system¹⁶¹.

Terror in the name of religion, holy War is a recurring historical phenomenon. The first century Jewish Zealots known as the *sicarii* was a murderous sect that incited an uprising against the Roman occupation which resulted, among other things, in the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70, and the Diaspora¹⁶¹.

2.3.13.5 The Ismaili Sect

The Assassins, known as an Islamic correlate, made political assassination for two hundred years (1090-1272) which led to the gruesome death of Muslim dignitaries. A scholar has argued that the Islamic sect is misrepresented¹⁶¹. No Christian sect ever used terror to such harrowing effect. However, it is noteworthy to comment on the fifteenth-century Taborites of Bohemia, the

sixteenth Century Anabaptists, and the active anti-semitism of the first crusade in 1095. The messianic spirit lived on within Judaism in the seventeenth century movement of Sabbath Zevi. Immediately following Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, the return to the Promised Land "provoked" a messianic revival in the form of the creation of Gush Emunim, with its goal of colonising Judea, and Samaria (the West Bank). Christian messianism is manifesting today among fundamentalist protestant sects with its roots in the nineteenth century whose belief that Israel's victory is a precondition for the Parousia. Islam has its own movement of this kind, especially with respect to the awaited coming of the Mahdi, its counterpart to the Christian Messiah¹⁶¹.

2.3.13.6 The Messianism

Messianism is central to the Twelve Shiism of Iran, with its anticipation of the twelfth Imam. Although theirs is a political conflict, the events and antagonists that fuel violent clashes between radical Islam and United States, such as Israeli-Palestinian conflict, also have a messianic dimension to them. The attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca by a radical, mostly Saudi, Sunnis, or the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, deemed by a member of Gush Emunim to be complicit in the abandonment of Judea and Samaria¹⁶¹.

Religious terrorism is regarded by the practitioners as a transcendental divine act. For instance, the perpetrators of the first 1993 partially successful attack on the World Trade Centre, had first obtained a *fatwa*. Islamic legal permission or opinion from Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, now imprisoned in the United States¹³⁵. It is noteworthy that both theological and political issues are closely bound up with each other in Islam.

In Islam, it is an ideal structure as alluded to, in the Quran under the concept of *dinwa dawla* (religion and state), whereas, when Christianity became the official religion of empire in the fourth century, the religious and political apparatuses remained separate. The radical Islam and its affiliates have abandoned guerrilla warfare but because they proclaim and profess Islam, are characterised by their use of terrorism coloured by religion, to promote mobilization for political goals¹⁶¹.

2.3.13.7 Christianity and Islam as Offshoots of Abrahamic Faith

There are parallels between the Jewish religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Most of the culture and practices in Islam were taken from Judaism. Here are a few examples of many. The Jews do the ablution; Muslims do ablution. The Jews prayed facing a particular direction, Jerusalem; Islamic prayers are said and done facing a particular direction, *qibla* Mecca. Jewish women wear the veil; Muslim women wear the veil. Jewish *rabbis* wear long beards and cloaks, Muslim clerics wear long beards and cloaks. Jewish religious clerics did not mix freely with women; it is the same also with Muslim clerics. Jews remove shoes before entering the synagogues; Muslims do not enter Mosques with shoes. Worshippers in the synagogues sat on floors; Muslims sit on floors. A key theme in this study is the role that culture and cultural misunderstanding play in Judaism-Christianity-Islam relationship. Thus, to contextualise the truth about religion requires interpretive bifocals, therefore, we need to understand the foreground to determine how best to relate with each religion to avoid unnecessary violent crises¹⁶².

The suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of oppressors over the generations gave birth to the prophecy that Messiah would come to save them from Roman tyranny. Contemporary Jews

believe this Messiah has yet to come. However, many people believe that he actually came some 2000 years ago and a religion was formed about his conception, birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. This new religion is, of course, Christianity. In the history of Judaism, many have claimed the mantle of Messiah over the centuries. However, the authentic and most influential of the big three monotheistic religions is Jesus Christ. Christianity is the religion based on the preaching and teaching of Jesus Christ. He was executed by the Romans in the grisly manner of crucifixion and this is confirmed by secular Roman writings. The gospels stress the divinity of Jesus and as the Son of God. Christians believe that Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus, and that in his death on the cross, he took on the sins of humanity and offered salvation to all those who believe. The early Christians were all “Jews for Jesus”, thus Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism. Christianity eventually eclipsed Judaism, especially through the efforts of St. Paul and other missionaries as the Christian message spread across the ancient world. Christianity, like the other two monotheistic religions, has numerous sacraments especially the Eucharist and baptism¹⁶².

It is absurd that religion is fraught with paradoxes. All preach of the promise of an everlasting life but challenges of religion are legion, and rivalry, bad feeling, animosities, and hostility have sometimes blemished the relations between monotheistic religions. Some are tolerant of other creeds and religions, while other insular religions adherents seem more obsessed with violence both covertly and overtly. Unfortunately, the three linear religions have insular characteristics.

The word, “Islam” means “surrender”. This means total submission to Allah. Devotees of Islam are called Muslims, “which means one who surrenders to God”. Islam teaches that you can convert to Islam with a simple personal decision. You are a Muslim if you say you are, and of

course belong to one community called *umma*, whether they are in Arabia or Indonesia or Nigeria. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, was born circa 570. Muslims believe that Moses and Jesus were holy messengers of God and the Old and New Testaments are valid scriptural documents, but the ultimate expression of God's mysterious plan, found voice in Muhammad and their holy book, the Koran. The five-fold profession which are faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca during one's life are altogether a sacred contract between the individual Muslim and God¹⁶².

However, some Muslims consider the concept of Jihad to be the sixth pillar of Islam¹³⁴. The word *jihad* conjures images of terrorism to many non-Muslims because some militant Muslims use it as a rallying point for a holy war against their enemies. The word *jihad* in Arabic actually means "to struggle" in order to please Allah and is often interpreted to preaching, performing charitable deeds or fighting in defence of Islam. The three linear religions, the Abrahamic faith from where the monotheistic religions began is a beautiful thing, and so is tolerance. The Jewish scriptures include the Old Testament, the Christians have both the Old and the New Testament, and the Muslims honour both books and have added what they believe is the last scripture, Koran¹⁶². Thus, there is much in common among these three linear religions. All the three linear religions have traits of Abrahamic faith in their contemporary practices in south western Nigeria.

2.3.14 The Israeli –Palestinian Conflict and Politics of Peace

The Israeli – Palestinian conflict is an ongoing military and political conflict in Levant. The Levant is historically, the region along the eastern Mediterranean shores, roughly corresponding to modern-day Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and certain adjacent areas. Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories referred to as West Bank and Gaza strip are the location of the conflict,

which has degenerated into direct war. It is noteworthy that Egypt had earlier occupied the Gaza strip between 1948 and 1967, and Jordan annexed the West Bank. However, since 1967, Israel has been occupying the Gaza strip until 2005 when it unilaterally disengaged. Israel has also been occupying the West Bank until there was the Oslo II Accord in 1995 which agreed on a definite division of Israeli control and Palestinian control¹⁶³.

The violent conflict among siblings has been very devastating since October 7th 2023 when the violence broke out with several thousands of lives wasted and displaced in both sides. The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, accepted by the Jewish leadership but rejected by the Arabs, triggered a violent conflict between these groups which would see the expulsion or fleeing of most Palestinians from Mandatory Palestine. The current status quo began following the 1967 Six – Day War which saw Israel occupying the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza and the West Bank known as Palestinian territories. Various attempts have been made to resolve the conflict as part of the Israeli – Palestinian peace process but without sustainable peace in the region.

The majority of recent peace efforts have been centred around the two – state solution, which involves the establishment of an independent Palestinian State alongside Israel. Public support for a two – state solution, which formerly enjoyed support from both Israeli Jews and Palestinians, has dwindled in recent years. The United Nations, the United States, Russia, the Arab League and the European Union are principal actors in the negotiations and mediation initiatives but with shadow interests. The latest round of peace negotiations began in July 2013 but were suspended in 2014. Since 2006, Hamas and Israel have fought five wars, the most recent of which began in 2023 and is ongoing as of April, 2024. The key areas of the conflict include the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip, the status of Jerusalem, Israeli

settlements, borders, security, and water rights, as well as Palestinian freedom of movement and the Palestinian right of return¹⁶³.

The dispute is over a specific area of land (what used to be the Mandatory Palestine area) that Palestinians and Israeli's both claim¹³⁵. Many attempts have been made to make a two – state solution work, which would mean an independent Palestinian state and an Israeli state, dividing the land between the two groups. Since a two – state solution has not been effective, some people are preparing a one – state solution in which the state would be established between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean. Proponents of this solution advocate a single state in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The term, “one – state reality” describes the belief that the current situation in Israel and Palestine is *de facto* a single state. It may also be called a bi – national state, owing to the hope that the state would be a homeland for both Jews and Palestinians¹⁶³.

Various models have been proposed for implementing the one – state solution. One such model is the unitary state which would comprise a single government on the entire territory with citizenship and equal rights for all residents, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, similar to Mandatory Palestine. However, the two – state solution has eclipsed the one – state solution as it is increasingly debated in academic circles. In a 2021 survey of experts on the Middle East, 59 percent described the current situation as a one – state reality akin to apartheid. Joe Biden, the then American president said that he would listen to experts about what scholars of the Middle East think. However, this is politics of peace. The body language of the American president supports the cause of Israel, for good or bad¹⁶³.

Iran supports a one – state solution in which Palestine becomes the Sole legitimate government of Israel, which implies outright rejection of two – state solution for Palestine. This is further a

politics of peace. The one – state debate has been raging since 1999 and the intensity has elements of religion, ethnicity, and politics. When ethnicity and religion take pre-eminence in social decisions, politics of peace would always tilt towards injustice. The proponents for the one – state solution include Palestinian author, Ali Abunimah, Palestinian writer and political scientists, Abdalhadi Alijla, Palestinian – American producer Jamal Dajani, Palestinian lawyer Michael Tarazi. Two peoples, One State – Nations and State Global Policy Forum. Israel Journalist Gideon Levy and American – Israel anthropologist Jess Halper, Lebanese – American academic Saree Makdisi are in support of the one – state solution¹⁶³.

Support for one State is not a practical idea but recognition of the uncomfortable reality that Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories already function as a single state. They share the same aquifers, the same highway network, the same electricity grid, and the same international borders. The one – state solution neither destroys the Jewish character of the Holy Land nor negates the Jewish historical and religious attachment, rather it affirms that the Holy Land has an equal Christian and Muslim character. For those who believe in equality, this is a good thing. Michael Tarazi. “Two peoples, one state”. They advocate a secular and democratic state while still maintaining a Jewish presence and culture in the region. Hamas has at times ruled out a two – state solution, and at other times endorsed the possibility of a two – state solution. Hamas co – founder Mahmoud Al – Zahar has been cited saying he “did not rule out the possibility of having Jews, Muslims and Christians living under the sovereignty of an Islam State”. Hamas leader urges international community to respect Palestinian people's choice¹⁶⁴.

Islamic Jihad rejects out a two – state solution because the Islamic Jihad actors believe that the entire Palestine is Arab and Islamic land and belongs to the Palestinian nation. Islamic Jihad leader reject Two – state solution to Israel – Palestinian conflict¹⁴¹. Critics of a one – state

solution argued that the one – state solution would make Israeli – Jews an ethnic minority in the only Jewish country. The high total fertility rate among Palestinians refugees would quickly render Jews a minority. Considering the raging anti – Semitism and Hamas hostility against Israel, there is a need for a Jewish national home with the right to self – determination Israeli historian and politician Shalom Ben – Ami, who served as Foreign Minister of Israel, dismissed the one – state solution as “Ivory to war nonsense”, saying that it creates a “South Africa situation without a South African solution”¹⁶⁴.

The argument rages that the one – state solution may be just a true and not viable because of Arab unwillingness to accept a Jewish national presence in the Middle East. A bi – national state would also not be feasible because, with time, the supposed secular democratic state would instead become an authoritarian, fundamentalist state with a persecuted Jewish minority. Considering the racism and persecution minorities face throughout the Arab and Muslim world, and in particular, the fact that Jews in Islamic societies were historically treated as second – class citizens and subject to pogroms and discrimination; neither a one – state solution nor bi – national state solution inn feasible. What Muslim Arab society in the modern age has ever treated Christians, Jews, Pagans, Buddhists and Hindus with tolerance and as equals? Why should anyone believe that Palestinian Muslim Arabs would behave any differently? The mind-set and basic values of Israeli – Jewish society and Palestinian Muslim society are so mutually exclusive¹³⁵. The question about the workability of politics of peace as an intervention in the Israel-Palestine imbroglio still persists till date, considering other prefixes and suffixes to the ongoing violent conflict in the Levant. The workability of politics of peace is needed in Nigeria.

The Ethiopian News Agency, (ENA): Addis Ababa on April 15, 2024 reported that State Minister of Peace, Kairedin Tezera stressed the need to create a platform for religious leaders to

share best practices and develop the initiative for peacebuilding and environmental stewardship. Faith leaders and religiously linked institutions from various countries to foster understanding and promote peaceful co-existence across the globe. Issues that engender hostilities among political and religious people include peace, human dignity, hate speech, environmental security, violence and xenophobia in Africa and across the world. Both Nigeria and Israel stand at crossroads of respect for human dignity and rights which are the cornerstone of policy and action. For instance, the ongoing Israel Palestine violent conflict is juxtaposed with terrorism and banditry in Nigeria. Hostilities in the Middle East compare with regional hostilities agitations in Nigeria. All of these are threats to sustainable development, human dignity and human rights¹⁶⁴.

Faith fathers, as well as political action have served as anchors of peace religious peacebuilding offers a powerful path to promote empathy, inspire collective action to secure sustainable peace. Religious leaders have the capacity and privilege to speak to their congregations to foster peace and security regardless of cultural, political or ethnic identities. Religion has inherent transformative power in peacebuilding and to foster collective responsibility for the future.

The G20 interfaith leaders have the opportunity to identify and influence specific policy priorities in their different states and among political actors. Regional Director of United Religious Initiative for Africa, Mussie Haliu asserted that religious leaders have role to play in peacebuilding and achievement of the Agenda 2063 of Africa and of sustainable Department Goals. The G20 is praised to bring together the G20 agenda in consultation with other members and in response to development in the global economy¹³⁰. This plays an important role in strengthening global architecture and governance and this has implications for south western Nigeria too.

2.3.14.1 Ethnic and Secessionist Agitations in South West Nigeria

On Saturday April 13, a group of 29 masked persons dressed in army camouflage, armed with rifles, charms and Oodua Nation flags attempted to take over the Oyo State of Assembly and Government Secretariat to proclaim the emergence of a Yoruba nation. However, the rag-tag team of these insurrectionists were soon overpowered and arrested by officers of the Nigerian Police Command. A certain woman, Modupe Onitiri Abiola was alleged to be the sponsor of the insurrection because she was captured on different social media platforms that the Democratic Republic of Yoruba had emerged with effect from April 13, 2024¹⁴⁰. Separatist groups have always threatened the unity and integrity of Nigeria as a country after 1914, which has been perceived by some people to be a mistaken marriage of the Nigerian regions. For example, in 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw ethnic minority rights activist, formed a group known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force and declared the formation of a Niger Delta Republic. This was the first major rebellion against the Nigerian state¹⁶⁵.

The same year 1966, following the Unitary Decree No, 34 of the Aguiyi Ironsi military government, the people of Northern Nigeria openly talked of *Araba*, meaning “let us separate” following the death of Northern leaders like Tafawa Balewa, and Ahmadu Bello, through a military coup of January 1966. The coup was led by Kaduna Nzeogwu, an Igbo man and this led to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic. Since the new leader was also an Igbo man, Aguiyi Ironsi, the first military Head of State of Nigeria, there was a counter coup in July 1966 which ousted the Ironsi regime and this further worsened the regional relationship and widened the centrifugal ethnic fissures in Nigeria. In July 1967, the Igbos fought back with Odimegwu Ojukwu as the arrowhead, declaring the Republic of Biafra with a determination to secede from Nigeria¹⁶⁵.

The war that ensued from secessionist movement lasted three years and up till now, traces of hostilities still persist. The agitation for secession led to a coup led by Gideon Orkar in April 1990 whose plan included the excision of five Northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto from Nigeria. Orkar and his group believed that the five states slated for excision were the root cause of Nigerian's problems, the need to remove the stated five states and redraw the map of Nigeria. Orkar and his 41 colleagues were eventually captured, charged, convicted and killed by firing squad. Despite the death punishment attached to treason, agitators have not been deterred from separatist moves and that the map of Nigeria must be re-drawn¹⁶⁵.

In 2012, another separatist movement, formed a New-Biafra group tagged *Indigenous people of Biafra* (IPOB) which emerged with a view to realize the Biafran dream. Thus, Nnamdi Mazi Kanu, the arrowhead of this group, has been facing trial for treasonable felony since 2016. Other splinter groups in existence were *Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra* (MASSOB) led by Ralph Nwazurike; *Biafra Zionist Movement* (BZM) led by Igwe Onwuka. In the same vein, the Northern contemporary is the *Arewa Republic*. A common thread in all the separatist agitations is linked to frustration, marginalization, bad governance, ethnic identity, lack of true federalism, resource control, and religion. For instance, when the 1993 election, perceived to be free and fair and won by a Yoruba person, Chief M.K.O Abiola, was annulled by the Babangida regime, the *Oodua People's Congress* (OPC) was formed to fight for the rights of the Yoruba people and led by Dr. Fredrick Fasheun and later hijacked by a militant faction led by Gani Adams¹⁶⁵.

With the emergence of Buhari administration and the onslaught of Fulani herdsmen, especially between 2015 and 2023, the likes of Professor Banji Akintoye, and the militant Sunday Adeyemo announced the Oodua Republic in order to protect Yoruba territory against Fulani

invasion as it happened in the 19th century when Ilorin, a Yoruba town was seized by the Fulanis. However, to a reasonable extent, the Yoruba people have been pacifist in their agitation, only clamouring for restructuring and true federalism as canvassed by the Awoist group, the OPC, and the Afenifere. It is, thus, very obvious that the crisis in Nigeria bears some semblance with the Israeli-Palestinian crisis where ethnicity, religion, resource control, and politics are rife¹⁶⁵.

Self-determination is a fundamental right under the United Nations Charter (Article 1 sub 2) and countries such as Kosovo, Abkhazia, and the unresolved outgoing cases of Kurdistan, Northern Cyprus, Quebec, Scotland, Western Sahara, Tibet, and Taiwan are veritable case studies. Those who agitate that the amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Lugard was a mistake and that the mistake must be revisited and the Nigeria be re-negotiated have their points. Mrs Abiola and her 29 insurrectionists have, however, violated section of 2 of the Nigerian constitution which clearly states that Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Section 37 of the criminal Code prescribes death penalty for anyone who violates Nigeria's sovereignty and section 40-43 of the same code prescribes life imprisonment for anyone convicted of treasonable felony¹⁶⁵.

The Israel Palestinian conflict is driven by several factors including historical, ethnic, national religious and political factors. At the core of the conflict are both religious and political factors interlocking with historical and primordial factors. Religion impacts the identity of actors implicated in the conflict; therefore, religion should be part of any peacebuilding interventions proffered. For instance, extreme Zionists in Israel increasingly see themselves as guardians of the procedural about the Jewish state and are very stringent when it comes to any concessions to the Arabs just as Islamic fundamentalists are very stringent to shift sides. The Islamist groups in

Palestine equally violently contend for the “holy” territories for religious reasons, hence the unquenchable hatred and hostilities against Israel and the Jewish people¹⁶⁶.

Religion-based rumours peddled by the extremists on both sides in the media exacerbate the tensions. For example, it was rumoured that the Jews wanted to destroy Al Aqsa mosque and build the Jewish Third Temple on its remnants, and on the other hand, the Muslims hold the annihilation of the Jews at the core of their belief. Conflict analysts should not, however, forget that the worsening trend of socio-economic conditions in the Arab and Islamic world contribute immensely to religious radicalism, pushing a larger percentage of Muslim young people towards fanaticism and religion-inspired politics¹⁶⁶.

The advent of the Arab spring ironically posed a threat to Israel-Palestine peace process because extreme political views are threatening the stability of stable regime in the region. For example, the advent of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt which has threatened the peace agreement with Israel, based on their boundaries, security, settlement, and political control over Jerusalem are the bane of both Jewish and Muslim people. The original ownership and authority over Jerusalem are highly contested and this conflict is primordial, deeply rooted in history for which Jerusalem has been attacked fifty-two times, captured and re-captured forty-four times, besieged twenty-three times, and destroyed twice. Jerusalem had been ruled by the Ancient Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Israelites, the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, Byzantines, the Islamic Caliphates, the Crusaders, the Ottomans, finally the British, before its division into Israel and Jordanian sectors from 1948-1967¹⁶⁶.

In biblical and Jewish history, Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Israel during the reign of King David. Jerusalem was both the home to Temple Mount and Western Wall, a highly

sacred sites in Judaism. Also, in Islamic history, the city was the first Muslim Qiblah (the direction which was the place of prophet Muhammad's Isra and Miraj), bringing forward and ascension to heaven, and also called the night journey, according to Quran.) The relocation of the U.S embassy and recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel resonates among Palestinians and many Muslims around the world and has been viewed as a religious concern. The issues of West Bank settlements, too has been viewed mainly in a religious light. People perceive the unfolding events as a physical restoration of the biblical land of Israel before the return of the Messiah, especially as perceived by the Orthodox Jews. They have continued to settle the West Bank to fulfil prophecy while at the same time clashing with the local Palestinians. On the other hand, according to Islamic fundamentalists, at the end time, the whole of Israel and Palestine should be under Islamic rule according to some versions of (Hadith traditional sayings of the Prophet, although only implied in the Quran). As far back as the 1948 war, when Israel returned to Israel, some Jewish extremist groups have contributed to the conflict, claiming that they were divinely motivated to return to the holy land. Gush Emunim Underground (GEU) over which some fundamentalists plotted to bomb the mosques in the Temple Mount area in the 1980s but they were later banned by the Israelite government¹⁶⁶.

On the other side, several religious extremist groups like the Mushin Brotherhood justified their contribution to the conflict in 1948. Nowadays the terrorist Brotherhood off-shoots like Hamas call for violence against Israel in the name of Islam without distinction between civilian and military targets. The Hamas and Hezbollah use religion to gain supporters in Gaza and elsewhere by propagating apocalyptic narrative. The radical ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas seek to revive Islam and re-establish the historical Islamic (caliphate by seizing power and annihilating the Jews in Israel because they considered Israel as foreigners in the land of Israel.

However, two Arab countries: Egypt and Jordan had made peace treaty with Israel; but Syrian and Iran are fiercest in opposing Israel¹⁴². Specially, key aspects of the issues leading to conflict between Israel and Palestine may be categorized into nine:

1. The Israel occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip
2. The status of Jerusalem and claim and counter-claim of right of ownership and control
3. Israel settlements
4. Security
5. Borders and boundaries
6. Water rights
7. Freedom of movements
8. The permit regime
9. Palestinian right of return¹⁴²

All these and other inexplicit factors make peacebuilding interventions bothersome. However, digital technologies and adequate use of them would definitely bring a marked improvement on traditional approaches hitherto employed.

The goals of peacebuilding include structural and institutional change and development justice and healing; prevention of violence, swift response, and conflict transformation. Peacebuilding initiatives and interventions cover restorative and transitional justice; accountability and reconciliation; trauma healing and reparation; humanitarian action and acceptance of the rights of others; free flow of information; government and multilateral efforts that ensure well-functioning governance; equitable distribution of resources; non-violent social change; dialogue and conflict resolution strategies, including good relationship with neighbours; development of economic

community; adequate information and education including high levels of human capital; sound business environment and low levels of corruption; and handling of transnational and global threats. Peacebuilding covers a wide spectrum of positive peace for a healthy sustainable development¹⁶⁶.

2.3.15. Religious Dialectics: Implication for South West Nigeria

Religious dialectics explores the dynamic interplay between opposing forces within religious thought and practices. Religious dialectics involve examination of paradoxes, contradictions and tensions within religious beliefs, experiences and practices: Religious dialectics is used in this study to analyse the relationship between religious practices and politics of peace in south western Nigeria. For instance, religious practices have inherent tensions and paradoxes within Christianity and Islam, particularly the relationship between God and humanity. The two offshoots of Abrahamic faith differ in hermeneutics and other interpretive efforts with irreconcilable variances which ultimately lead to confusion, distrust, hostilities and conflict. Similarly, in the dialectics of religion and secularization, the romance between religion and politics seems to fuse both religion and politics together to the extent that government use religion as a political tool, consequently making religious surreptitiously subservient to politicians¹⁶⁷.

In religious dialectics, religious language and interpretation often create tensions which are challenged or contested within religious texts and practices thereby making interfaith dialogic systems a frustrating and daunting among peace advocates. Religious practices which are supposed to provide a framework for understanding the relationship between faith, reason, and knowledge often exacerbate hostilities among extremists. Religious practices which should engender and enhance enlightenment principles, are engaged as harbingers of terrorism, banditry

and wanton killings using religion as a potential tool for conflict instead of cooperation and collaboration¹⁶⁷.

Social and political dimensions of religious dialectics applied in this study to examine the relationship between religion and social and political structures is intended to promote social change and societal stability for sustainable development. The dynamic interplay between opposing forces in Christianity and Islam suggests that religious systems and practices are not static, but are constantly evolving and adapting in response to internal and external pressures. Most of the religious conflicts that seem intractable for political leaders are predicated on external pressures with political underpinnings. Beyond the benefit of cross-cultural learning, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) has affected human religious and political orientation to the extent that religious practices are opposed to one's faith or personal convictions. Engaging dialectical approach otherwise known as the Hegelian tradition, is designed to understand the contradictions in religion practices in relation to politics of peace¹⁴⁴. Thus, globalization should drive an evolution of religion beyond the binary understanding of religion where a subjective religious knowledge is used as a paradigm to judge others. Opposing religious doctrines and ideologies are causing collisions and clash with consequences of becoming logical contradictions, complexities and intricacies¹⁶⁷.

Religious dialectics in this study refers to the tensions and conflicts arising when the teachings, traditions, and practices of one religion directly or indirectly oppose that of another religion which may be as result of varying interpretations, cultural influences and historical development. The emergence of diverse and hybrid forms of religiosity, since people adapt their religious practices to fit both their local circumstances and the broader global context¹⁶⁷.

The religious world is not immune to the influences associated with technological therefore, the wave of digitalization, technology and social media has challenged traditional and orthodox religious models, resulting in post-modernist view of religion. The basis of this problem should be investigated, otherwise the cognitive schema would continue to see religious practices as synonymous with threat to humanity, Islam views religion as inseparable from religion¹⁶⁸. Conflicts arise when religious leaders want to influence national affairs with religious principles and ideologies. The scenario played out during the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria where most northern Muslim leaders brazenly fielded a Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket to pacify Islamic brotherhood. This raised agitation across Nigeria.

All the three religions sourced from Abraham have linear and magisterial tendencies that seem difficult to the modern mind. Patrimonialism and male chauvinism are in Judaism. Christianity, as the offshoot of Judaism has always fought patrimonialism and male chauvinism, a fight that them but after he departed this world, his disciples, being Jews, were still tied to the apron string of Jewish worldview about women¹⁶⁸. However, in defence of gender sensitiveness displayed by Jesus, a feminist theology was propounded to restore Christian female's dignity and purpose as full humans. Islam, the youngest of them all wholesomely resorted to the old Mosaic principle and practice about female believers, viewing them as mere players of the second fiddle¹⁶⁸. Both religion and politics have some sort of elements of authoritarianism, especially in Nigeria. Religion has been used for authoritarian legitimation in Iran in its onslaught against Israel. The stance of Israel in the aftermath of October 7, 2023 when the Hamas attacked it is another case of fiat system in a democratic dispensation. Politics of peace is actively engaged in the scenario and there has yet not been an end to the gory story¹⁶⁸.

A peace scholar has advocated a contingent reality for sustainability of peace and security as a strategy to sustain global peace¹⁶⁹. Both religion and politics are intrinsic denominators of conflict in Nigeria as they are characterised by parochial, incompetent and fragile leadership styles summarily described as ‘patronage system’ predicated on the philosophy of ‘clientelism and prebendalism’ which engender discernible groups and cleavages among people groups in Nigeria¹⁶⁹.

2.4 Conceptual Model

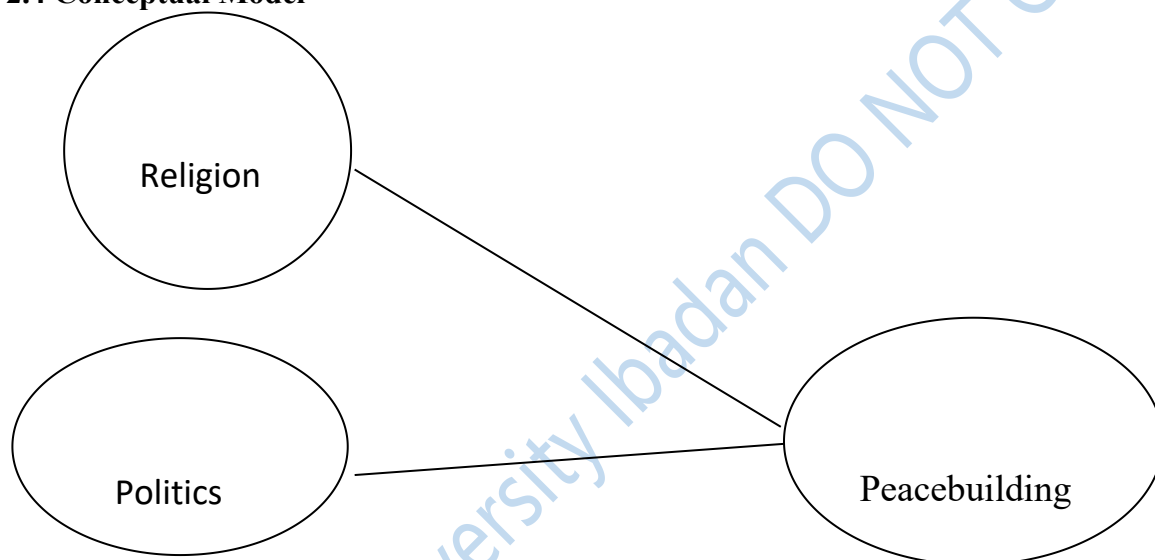


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model on Paradox of Religion, Politics of Peace in South West Nigeria, 1999-2024.

Source: Researcher’s Compilation, 2025

This conceptual model graphically highlights the variables in the paradox of religion and politics of peace in South West Nigeria: From the model, four variables and their interconnection are emphasised:

1. Independent Variables:

- Religious beliefs and practices
- Political ideology and governance

2. Dependent Variable:

- Peace and conflict resolution

3. Intervening Variables:

- Religious leaders and organisations
- Political leaders and government policies
- Community initiatives and social cohesion

4. Moderating Variables

- Ethnic and cultural diversity
- Economic development and poverty
- Education and literacy

The model suggests that religious beliefs and practices, as well as political ideology and governance, influence peace and conflict resolution in South West Nigeria. The influence of religion and politics on peace is mediated by the actions of religious leaders and organisations, political leaders and government policies, and community initiatives and social cohesion. The relationship between religion, politics, and peace is also influenced by ethnic and cultural diversity, economic development and poverty, and education and literacy. In conclusion, this conceptual model provides a framework for understanding the complex relationships between religion, politics, and peace in South West Nigeria. This model guides the research design and data analysis.

2.5 Summary of the Gaps in Literature Review

Global civilization is moving with constant transition and alternation, with unstable and variable boundaries, disregarding local civilizations. Ethics is no longer cultural, religious worldview is

formed based on modern perceptions external influences, and temperaments of the universe; even though they are not eligible to be archetypal of what religion was formed to be. Since the grand narratives of religious knowledge have broken down, religious practices are left at the whims and caprices of actors who hijack religion to torment troubles including environmental conflicts.

Several gaps identified in the course of the research include thematic gap, methodological gap, theoretical gap, empirical gap, and evidence gap. Religious practices in the south western Nigeria are fraught with epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice includes systematic distortion or misrepresentation of a religious scripture, exclusion and unjustifiable silencing of religious voice especially in their capacity as a knower. Epistemic injustice results in credibility deficit that harms religious actors in their capacity as rational agents and knowers. Thus, this disrupts the central connections between moral value, knowledge, and power, making the intervention of politics of peace in religious activities intricate and suspicious¹⁷⁰. The social harms of being denied credibility based on political identity, gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status are highlights of epistemic injustice engendering religious hostilities among religious actors. Epistemic injustice is exacerbated by lack of interfaith dialogue and unjust activities from non-epistemic power inequalities and impunity of political actors.

Epistemic justice complements social justice by encouraging citizens to be prudent smart, and dynamic to take and enjoy basic human rights without being a nuisance to other citizens. Epistemic justice curbs moral failings of religious leaders as well as political leaders through protection of human dignity and freedom of expression. Epistemic justice protects from democratic inequality, educational dislocations, social imbalance, political inconsistencies to allow for harmonious social and religious living¹⁷⁰. When epistemic justice is on ground,

religious engineering would be possible culminating in bridging transformational gap known as the paradox of religious practices in Nigeria. Once the gap between the “prophet” (founder of religion) and the legalists (regulators and implementers of religious behaviour in institutional forms) is bridged, paradox of religious practices would drastically reduce to allow for veracity in politics of peace in the south western Nigeria and this has implication for sustainable peacebuilding for the region¹⁷¹.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter is focused on the research method considered appropriate to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. The chapter also considers appropriate method of analysis to make the study a worthwhile academic effort. The research method is “a mixed-method comprising both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is a combination of descriptive survey and interview used concurrently. The research instruments engaged include questionnaire and in-depth interview for explanatory and exploratory purposes. While the research instrument for quantitative survey is questionnaire, the instrument for qualitative method is in-depth interviews. The essence of this design was to find out the “what” and “why” of the research theme which is centred on religion and politics surrounding it in an attempt to foster peace in the society. The focus of the design is to discover and understand the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants¹. Though, it is subjective in nature, it is helpful to determine skills, opinions, and knowledge capability of people and to grasp the totality of the socio-political and religious condition and historical development of Nigeria and especially south western Nigeria. In the light of this, the researcher engaged mixed methods research to triangulate findings, complements methods, and counterbalance the weaknesses of one method with the strength of another.

3. 2 Population of the Study

This geographic scope of the study was Southwestern Nigeria which comprises the following states:

- i. Oyo

- ii. Osun
- iii. Ondo
- iv. Ogun
- v. Lagos
- vi. Ekiti

The thematic scope comprised Christianity and Islam as the two major and linear religions in South West Nigeria estimated at 50 million people. Only notable religious leaders across the two religions as well as major politicians who are state actors in Nigeria made up the population of this study.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size is the number of individuals selected from the study universe or population which is considered representative of the homogenous population. Since the South West Nigeria is a political and geographical region in Nigeria comprising Yoruba indigenous and culturally homogenous people; the size was drawn from the population to represent the characteristics of the demography of south western people in terms of religion, politics, and peacebuilding. The sample was randomly selected but with equal size from both Christianity and Islam. In the light of this, 600 respondents were considered appropriate to be complemented by 60 respondents for in-depth interview equally distributed between the two religions. However, only 513 questionnaire items were returned. Sampling size was based on propensity for religion and politics according to the following pattern: Oyo(120), Lagos (120), Osun(90), Ekiti(90), Ondo(90), and Ogun(90) totalling 600 out of which 513 was returned. 60 key informants obliged the interview with useful information.

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The study employed questionnaire under quantitative approach and in-depth interview under qualitative method for both explanatory and exploratory purposes. The research questions engaged the Likert ordinal scale (4,3,2,1) developed by Rensis Likert in 1932 to measure attitudes and individual respondent's degree of perception of the questions administered to them. The questionnaire is segmented into various sections such as demographic data, religion (Islam/Christianity) politics, political experience, peacebuilding knowledge, and pragmatic solution to cover the objectives of the study. The mixed- methods approach is apt to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the relationship between religion and politics in South West Nigeria. The study considers the contextual factors that could influence that data including historical, cultural, religious, political and social factors.

3.5 Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity is concerned with the content and context within which the instrument is administered to ensure that it is suitable to elicit appropriate responses from the target-respondents. The supervisors and experts in this peculiar study were contacted to validate the instrument for content, context, and statistical report. Cross-validation of data with other sources were done to affirm consistency and accuracy of the instruments employed.

3.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability of instrument is concerned with the consistency and correctness of the instrument to measure what is intended for approximate results if the instrument is replicated using same data. To ensure this, a pre-test was conducted using the questionnaire on 50 people to achieve this. Triangulation and collaboration of the data from multiple sources enhanced the reliability of the

instruments. The sources of data collected were adjudged credible owing to the researcher's experience in handling data management. Biases were minimised with regards to the content, context, and administration of the instruments.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted with the use of questionnaire instrument including online survey to complement onsite survey through physical administration of questionnaire on one side and key informant interview on the other side. This was done to carefully handle the complex nature of religion and politics without negatively affecting the sensibilities of the respondents. The questionnaire and interview guides are the primary instruments, while the other instruments provide supplementary data to triangulate and enrich the findings². Data quality and control measures were applied in tandem with the sampling techniques.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from this study was analysed with descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviation to aggregate responses derived from the survey. Data collected from qualitative sources was thematically reviewed, analysed and reported after gleaning salient points objectively. Relevant notes, interviews, tables and illustrations are annexed to the appendix of the study. Data analysis methods used include statistical techniques along with thematic interpretation for the interviews.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration includes the confidentiality which ensured that participants were assured of the security of their private and personal information. Researchers ensured that data is securely kept and only

authorised personnel could assess it. All participants were fully informed about the nature of the study, their participation, and any potential risks or benefits. They were also given the opportunity to freely give their consent to participate in the study. Participants' safety, well-being and rights were well guarded and protected by the researchers all through the research process.

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Endnotes

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Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Demographic Data Analysis of the Survey

Table 4.1: Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	273	53.2
Female	240	46.8
Total	513	100.0

Table 4.1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The table indicated that 273 (53.2%) respondents are male while 240 (46.8%) respondents are female. This indicated that the data are normally distributed.

Table 4.2: State

	Frequency	Percent
Oyo State	109	21.2
Lagos State	101	19.7
Ekiti State	74	14.4
Ondo State	71	13.8
Osun	85	16.6
Ogun State	73	14.2
Total	513	100.0

Table 4.2 shows how responders are distributed throughout many states. From Oyo State (109), which makes 21.2% of the whole sample, the highest number of respondents is from Oyo State. Lagos follows closely behind Oyo State, 101(19.7%) respondents, Osun State has 85 (16.6%) respondents, Ekiti State, Ondo State and Ogun State have 74 (14.4%), 71 (13.8%), and 73 (14.2%), respectively. There are 513 responses altogether, with the states pretty well represented overall; Oyo and Lagos have the highest percentages. This distribution gives a wide regional view inside the research.

Table 4.3: Age

	Frequency	Percent
20-29 years	43	8.4
30-39 years	117	22.8
40-49 years	146	28.5
50-59 years	72	14.0
60-69 years	94	18.3
70 years and above	41	8.0
Total	513	100.0

Table 4.3 shows the respondents' age distribution. The majority of the respondents 146(28.5%) falls between age 40 and 49 years old, 117 (22.8%) respondent falls between 30 and 39 years old, 72 (14.0%) respondents fall between 50–59 years, 94(18.3%) respondents fall between 60–69 year, 41 (8%) respondents are age 70 years and above. This study covers 513 respondents, the most of the respondents fall between age 30 and 59 years. The age distribution provides a comprehensive view of the population's age diversity.

Table 4.4: Religion

	Frequency	Percent
Christian	263	51.3
Islam	250	48.7
Total	513	100.0

Table 4.4 shows the distribution of respondents by religion. The majority of the respondents are Christian, this represented 263(51.3%) while, 250(48.7%) are Muslim. This indicated that the data are normally distributed.

Table 4.5: Occupation

	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	169	32.9
Clergy	104	20.3

Civil Servant	75	14.6
Broadcaster	28	5.5
Engineer	9	1.8
Farmer	39	7.6
Student	14	2.7
Trader	64	12.5
Nurse	11	2.1
Total	513	100.0

Table 4.5 presents the occupational distribution of the respondents. The largest group consists of teachers, with 169 respondents, accounting for 32.9% of the total sample. The second-largest group is clergy members, comprising 104 individuals, or 20.3%. Civil servants follow closely with 75 respondents, representing 14.6% of the sample. Traders account for 12.5%, with 64 respondents.

Other occupational groups include farmers (7.6%), broadcasters (5.5%), and engineers (1.8%), with 39, 28, and 9 respondents, respectively. The smallest groups are students, who make up 2.7% with 14 respondents, and nurses, with just 11 respondents, representing 2.1%. Overall, the sample is heavily represented by teachers and clergy, indicating these professions are prominent within the surveyed population. The distribution suggests a variety of occupations, ensuring a diverse sample in terms of professional backgrounds, which enhances the study's generalizability.

Table 4.6: Education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No school	56	10.9	10.9	10.9
Primary education	94	18.3	18.3	29.2
Secondary education	232	45.2	45.2	74.5
Tertiary education	131	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	513	100.0	100.0	

Frequencies Variables=Rp1 Rp2 Rp3

4.2. Presentation of Data

4.2.1 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent has the fundamental purpose and goal of Christianity and Islam been understood?

Table 4.7: Analysis of Research Question One

	Very Unimportant	Not important	Important	Very Important
How important is your religion/faith to you?	45(8.8%)	42(8.2%)	177(34.5%)	249(48.5%)
How do you think religion/faith influences peace and conflict in South West Nigeria	No influence 83(16.2%)	Slight influence 147(28%)	Great influence 283(55.2%)	
Have you ever been involved in a religious peacebuilding initiative	Yes 220(42.9%)		No 293(57.1%)	

According to the findings, the respondents clearly saw the relevance of religion for their daily life. Most people (48.5%) said their religion is "very important," while 34.5% said it is

"important," suggesting that faith is vital to most people's life. About how religion shapes peace and conflict in South West Nigeria, 55.2% of respondents said that religion has a "great influence," implying that faith is regarded as a strong factor in determining societal dynamics. Regarding direct involvement in religious peacebuilding projects, only 42.9% of respondents said they have participated; 57.1% of respondents said they have not participated, suggesting a discrepancy between the actual participation in peacebuilding activities and the awareness of religion's capacity for peace. The results show a strong awareness of the relevance of religion overall but also point out the need of greater active participation in projects of peacebuilding.

Research Question Two: What strategies do you think are most effective in building peace and resolving conflicts in South West Nigeria

Table 4.8: Analysis of Research Question Two

	Frequency	Percent
Good Leadership	106	20.7
Conflict Resolution	41	8.0
Negotiation and Dialogue	91	17.7
Promotion and Peace and Tranquillity	87	17.0
Managing Difference	42	8.2
Transparency	35	6.8
Avoidance of discrimination	18	3.5
Spirit of Forgiveness	54	10.5
Respect for Others	39	7.6
Total	513	100.0

The respondents identified several key strategies for building peace and resolving conflicts in South West Nigeria, with a particular emphasis on leadership and dialogue. Good leadership emerged as the most frequently cited strategy, with 106 respondents (20.7%) considering it crucial. This suggests that effective, visionary, and fair leadership is viewed as a cornerstone for fostering peace in the region. Another widely supported strategy was negotiation and dialogue

(17.7%, 91 respondents), indicating that many believe in the importance of open communication and negotiation as tools for conflict resolution. Promotion of peace and tranquility (17.0%, 87 respondents) was also highlighted, emphasizing the need for broader societal efforts to maintain harmony.

Other strategies mentioned include conflict resolution (8.0%), managing differences (8.2%), and spirit of forgiveness (10.5%), which reflect a focus on addressing underlying issues and fostering a culture of reconciliation. Lesser cited strategies like transparency (6.8%), respect for others (7.6%), and avoidance of discrimination (3.5%) indicate an acknowledgment of the importance of trust, mutual respect, and equality in maintaining peaceful coexistence.

The findings suggest that while various strategies are recognized, a combination of strong leadership, dialogue, and promoting peace and reconciliation is seen as the most effective approach for peacebuilding in South West Nigeria. The responses reflect a deep awareness of the need for both structural and interpersonal interventions in conflict resolution.

Research Question Three: How do you think religious leaders and organisations can contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the south western region, Nigeria

Table 4.9: Analysis of Research Question Three

	Frequency	Percent
Advocating for Peace talking and Unity	168	32.7
Preaching and Promoting Peace	92	17.9
Genuinely repentance	101	19.7
Peaceful co-existence	56	10.9
Prayer and security	96	18.7
Total	513	100.0

The data from the table reveals several ways in which religious leaders and organizations can contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in South Western Nigeria, yet it also suggests potential pitfalls and limitations of relying solely on religion for peacebuilding.

One of the most frequently suggested strategies is advocating for peaceful talking, and unity (32.7%, 168 respondents). This indicates that religious leaders can be powerful voices in promoting harmony and unity. However, relying too heavily on this approach might overlook the complexities of socio-political issues, such as ethnic and economic disparities, which religion alone may not be able to resolve. Additionally, preaching and promoting peace (17.9%, 92 respondents) is another common suggestion, but this might be limited if the messages of peace are not accompanied by practical, on-the-ground actions. Over-reliance on verbal advocacy without tangible peacebuilding initiatives can lead to superficial or unsustainable peace efforts.

Another important contribution is genuine repentance (19.7%, 101 respondents), which highlights the role of religious leaders in encouraging self-reflection and moral transformation. While this can foster personal peace, it might not address systemic issues such as political corruption or inequality, which are often at the heart of conflicts. Furthermore, prayer and security (18.7%, 96 respondents) are seen as central to religious peacebuilding efforts. However, this may create the limitation of focusing too much on spiritual solutions, potentially neglecting the need for concrete security reforms and community mobilization.

A notable limitation is that religious leaders, especially in a diverse region like South Western Nigeria, might unintentionally deepen divisions if their peacebuilding efforts are perceived as biased toward certain religious groups. This could undermine the overall peace process and perpetuate sectarian tensions. Religion has significant potential in peacebuilding in South Western Nigeria, the pitfalls lie in the risk of over-reliance on spiritual solutions without addressing political, social, and economic factors. Mitigating these limitations would require a more comprehensive approach that combines religious advocacy with practical peacebuilding strategies, including dialogue, policy reforms, and community-based initiatives.

Research Question Four: Which principal factors are responsible for engendering ethnic, political, and cultural challenges in South West Nigeria?

The identification of corruption, discrimination, injustice, bad leadership, and ethical violence as main causes responsible for ethnic, political, and cultural challenges in South West Nigeria closely corresponds with the earlier discussion on the part of religion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Although religion may greatly help to promote peace, these ingrained social problems provide great obstacles to reach long-lasting peace and reconciliation. Still a major influence on driving political and ethnic conflicts in the area is corruption. Misuse of public resources or diversion of them usually aggravates inequality and generates discontent among many groups, therefore dividing the society. Though powerful in promoting harmony and peace, religious leaders might find it difficult to properly handle corruption as it calls for institutional and political level systematic transformation. Only with significant government reforms and the implementation of anti-corruption policies will religious teachings on honesty and integrity be fully applicable. Major causes of ethnic and political disturbance also are discrimination and injustice. Many times, these problems show themselves as the marginalizing of particular ethnic or religious groups, which causes unfairness and fuels intergroup strife. Promoting inclusion and supporting equal rights will help religious leaders and organizations to solve these issues; this will help to reflect the recommendation of advocating peace and harmony and really motivating confession. The drawback, though, is that these initiatives could not necessarily result in changes in discriminatory laws—especially if government policies or society standards contradict these ideals.

Another main factor fuelling strife in South West Nigeria is poor leadership. Leaders that neglect to meet the needs of their citizens or support divisive language can widen already existing

political, cultural, and ethnic gaps. Although preaching and supporting peace will assist to increase awareness, they might not be sufficient to directly challenge poor leadership. To advocate more responsible and open leadership, religious leaders must thus cooperate with political players and civil society. At last, ethical violence that which transgresses moral norms and human rights adds even another level of complication to efforts at peacekeeping. Whether politically driven or stemming from ethnic or religious conflicts, acts of violence make it hard for peace to seize. While preaching peace and encouraging attitude of forgiveness will aid religious leaders and organizations, this strategy is limited if it is not followed by initiatives to solve the underlying causes of violence including poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

In essence, even if religion plays a major part in fostering peace and conflict resolution, its influence is limited in face of the systematic problems of corruption, prejudice, injustice, poor government, and ethical violence. Combining religious advocacy with pragmatic, political, and social changes can help to solve the fundamental reasons of violence in South West Nigeria by means of a multifarious strategy.

Research Question Five: How do contextual factors like political, economic, and social conditions influence the role of religion to foster sustainable peace-building in South West Nigeria?

Table 4.10: Analysis of Research Question Five

R = .865, R² = .748, Adjusted R² = .748

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	4.470	1.738		2.572	.011
	Political Factor	.055	.015	.187	3.782	.000
	Economic Factors	.652	.043	.733	15.165	.000
	Social Conditions	.046	.030	.078	1.550	.123

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Peacebuilding

With $R = 0.865$, the robust model fit of the regression analysis indicates a substantial connection between the predictors and the dependent variable, sustainable peacebuilding. With a R^2 value of 0.748, the independent elements in the model help to explain over 74.8% of the variation in sustainable peacebuilding. Also 0.748, the Adjusted R^2 accounts for the number of predictors, therefore verifying the stability of the model.

With a standardized beta of 0.187 and a positive unstandardized coefficient of 0.55 the political element possesses. With a strong t-value (3.782) and a p-value of 0.000, indicating statistical relevance at the 1% level, this suggests that political considerations have a somewhat considerable positive influence on sustainable peacebuilding.

With a standardized beta of 0 Coefficient and an unstandardized coefficient of 0.652, the economic elements have the most impact. This implies that in the model, the most important predictor of sustained peacebuilding is economic one. The t-value of 15.165 and the p-value of 0.000 show that sustainable peacebuilding may be very much explained by economic elements.

Standardized beta of 0.078 and an unstandardized coefficient of 0.486 define the social conditions variable. On the 5% level of significance, the t-value of 1.550 and the p-value of 0.123, however, imply that social circumstances have no appreciable bearing on the model.

Overall, political and economic elements are major predictors of sustained peacebuilding; social variables do not seem to have a statistically significant impact in our model.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The gaps identified in the study were to a large extent, bridged to contribute to existing body of knowledge and solve certain problems relating to paradox of religious practices and politics of peace in the south western Nigeria. A gap in theoretical understanding conception of religion and religious practices is comprehensively and logically clarified in this study. A gap in the representation of specific demographics of both Christianity and Islam is taken care of to justify the legitimacy and equity of the study. In the same vein, the study rigorously engaged empirical data and studies within religious practices and politics of peace to bridge the empirical gap identified in the study. A gap of practical understanding, and application of theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts is bridged in the study with the use of massive primary data source and contemporary literature and occurrences that are germane to the study, especially in the south western Nigeria. Similarly, the knowledge gap is bridged as the study supplies information on religion, politics of peace, and religious practices to combat dearth of data and lack of understanding of the interaction and intersection of both religions and politics in the south western Nigeria.

Finally, owing to the volatile nature of religion and politics, there has always been lack of available research data or empirical evidence but the research design of the study was so crafted to elicit objective information from respondents that culminated in robust exploratory and explanatory outcomes. With the identified gaps diligently bridged, there is justification for the study, having extended the body of knowledge and solved problems associated with the contradictions in religious practices and politics of peace engaged by political actors to address religious crises and hostilities in the south western Nigeria between 1999 and 2024.

The interdependence of religion and politics is seen in the fact that political and religious groups are largely indistinguishable because religion and nationalism are merged and the driving force revolves around economic factors. Did religion have any sacredness again? Both the church and mosque have been desecrated with obvious vices including corruption, unhealthy competition, and such other abuses of privileges. The south western social structure was an integrated system in which rulers, cleric officers, tenets of faith, law, ethics, religious rites, and state rituals were actually combined. The fusion of religion and the state makes religious leaders subservient to the rulers and consequently, religious practices are covertly politicized. Religion has been a basis of cultural identity and nationality around the world. For instance, among tribal peoples and throughout almost all of Nigeria today, the religious community and the political community are intricately intertwined.

Now, in the modern totalitarian state in the gap of democracy and with the influence of political gladiators, religious practices are fraught with several inconsistencies ranging from interpretation of Holy writs to militancy against human rights and sustainable development. It is worrisome still, that religious practices of both Christianity and Islam did not allow a reasonable space for minority communities of faith; especially the adherents of traditional religion. The paradox of religious practices has engendered hostility to religion, a phenomenon fostered by the emergence of political totalitarianism, as in the case of Nazi Germany, a fascist and anti-clerical state. Restriction is placed on religious practices and supreme allegiance must be given to the state. This phenomenon resonates with a stern restriction placed on religion to the extent that the Nazi government, in 1941, concluded that National Socialism and Christianity are irreconcilable. This is an attitude of hostility toward religion as expressed in the political philosophy of communism.

The communist state is opposed to both the form and content of religion. It seems that religious actors not implicated, making true Karl Marx's view of religion as the ABC of all materialism.

Would it then be correct today that religion is a burden of some sort to politicians who, having been so entrusted with state affairs, have become complacent and weak in handling religious crises plaguing the society? The study advocates a symbiotic relationship of religion and politics to the extent of proper checks and balances in the political community as well as the religious community. While the clerics are responsible for prayer altars, the rulers are responsible for the throne to avoid a political crime committed by Pontius Pilate who used a symbol of state authority to sentence Jesus to death.

Politics of peace would not have been profoundly complex but for religious practices that have extended borders of religion to corruption, banditry, terrorism, and murder; a scenario for which human and non-human sacrifices are daily made. An integrated south western region is advocated where the governors and other political leaders would function in the secular, profane sphere, and religious clerics would function in the sacred sphere and the final arbiter in disputes rests in the judiciary without political or religious injustice.

Religion, as a primordial worldview, is an aspect of the superstructure of the society and it plays both positive, and negative roles in the struggle for social justice in Nigeria. Religion has a catalytic influence on Nigeria to entrench sustainable development therefore, its practice should be re-engineered. Religion and politics are two phenomenal factors in South West Nigeria and both have been used to define many other things. Religious practices have come with disillusionment and hypocrisy as a result of unmet expectations and frustration. The complex intersection of religious practices and politics highlights the ways in which religious beliefs and

practices shape political attitudes, behaviours, and institution. Religion is used as a tool for voting, policy outcomes, and social movements, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and context-specific approaches to understanding the complex dynamics at play.

In south western Nigeria, Islamic and Christian identities shape voting behaviour and policy outcomes, with many politicians using religious rhetoric to mobilize support just as it happened in the United States where evangelical Christianity has played a significant role in promoting conservative values and interest that was culminated in Donald Trump's victory at the 2025 presidential election.

Pope Francis's Encyclical "Laudato Si" emphasizes the need for environmental stewardship, calling for global action to combat issues emanating from climate change. Islamic Relief Worldwide is also a charity and justice organization that provides humanitarian aid and promotes social and economic justice in over 40 countries. The examples here reiterate the human value of religion contrary to opinion that religion is the hamburger of corruption, militancy and terrorism. Religion as well as politics is archetypally peaceful and pleasant but becomes a tool for crime and criminality in the hands and hearts of people of questionable characters.

The understanding of fundamental purpose and goal of Christianity and Islam is basically predicated on ethics to stabilize the society and promote mutual and harmonious co-existence among people of living faiths. In the light of this, their religious leaders have always participated in peace building initiatives using religious capacity to foster peace and security in the south west Nigeria. However, the awareness and peace advocacy and activism still leave much to be desired, nevertheless, the fundamental purpose of religion in the promotion of justice and peace is still upheld. Christianity and Islam are two leading world religions with significant impact on

human history and culture. Understanding the purpose and goals of these two religions in south western Nigeria can foster greater respect, tolerance, and co-operation among people for a better and more beneficial society. The shared values and goals of Christianity and Islam include love, compassion justice, fairness, personal accountability, respectful communication, collaboration and cooperation.

The understanding of fundamental purpose and goals of Christianity and Islam would mitigate negative media stereotypes including sensationalized media coverage and religious misinformation. With robust interfaith dialogue and more understanding of the purpose of religion, the incidence of extremism and historical conflicts would be grossly reduced in the south western Nigeria. Promoting the understanding of the purpose and goals of religion would enhance interfaith dialogic conversations, media literacy, and cultural exchange that could transform the age-long historical conflicts into mutual understanding and sustainability of peace in the south west Nigeria.

Findings of the study show that strategies for fostering peace building in religiously diverse contexts requires a multifaceted peace approach by local leaders through community-led initiatives. Both religious and political actors should be encouraged to take ownership of peace building efforts. Living examples in the south west include the concerted efforts of a Muslim cleric, Sheik Taofeek Akengbagold and a Christian cleric pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye through directorate of politics and governance. Efforts of the Catholic church Justice and Peace Development Council (JPDC) is commendable in this regard. Another strategy for fostering peace building involves grassroots approaches which address specific local needs and concerns.

Leadership and dialogue emerged as the most frequently cited strategies to foster peace in the south western Nigeria. Transparency on both political and religious spaces would enhance peace building and facilitate sustainability of peace in the region. The study equally considers religious literacy as a strategic tool to dispel misconceptions and stereotypes about different religions. Once this is achieved, collaborative and developmental projects would promote mutual respect and cooperation people.

In the south west Nigeria, most respondents advocate for restorative sound public policies to promote justice and equality. The many dimensions and contributions of religion to peace making and peace building processes are becoming robust and significant.

Potential pitfalls and limitations of relying on religion as a force for peace building include too much reliance on leadership and stereotypes. The complexities of economic disparities, which religion alone may not be able to resolve are part of the limitations of relying on religion for peace building. Similarly, over-reliance on verbal advocacy without tangible peace building initiatives often lead to superficial and unsustainable peace efforts. Religion, in the contemporary world is fraught with doubts and biases, considering the dynamics of politics and other socio-economic challenges that negatively impact on religious practices in the south western Nigerian. Another peril of religious preachers is avarice, a factor which makes people to cast aspersion on religious leaders. A concrete religious reform is solicited to foster interfaith dialogue, inter-cultural communication to achieve robust community-based peace building outcomes.

While religion can be a powerful force for peace building, religious identities can sometimes be exclusionary, leading to an “us versus them” mentality that exacerbate conflicts as portrayed in

the south west of Nigeria during the presidential electioneering processes heightened by the Muslim – Muslim ticket.

Different interpretations of religious texts and teaching have often led to disagreements and conflicts, even within the same faith tradition. For instance, Abel Damina is at loggerheads with other Christian leaders in Nigeria regarding hermeneutical and exegetical appropriation of the Christian scripture. Similar examples are in the public domain where an Islamic cleric Sheik Taofeek Akaugbagolo has been in tussle with Alhaja Kafila Kaola based on interpretational differences of the Islamic scripture. Power dynamics can be used to manipulate or coerce others since religious leaders wield significant power over politicians and such power can be used undermine peace building efforts.

The south western Nigeria has multiple religious traditions but both Christianity and Islam are much more pronounced. However, cultural and historical contexts overtly or covertly affect religious practices and interpretations which pose challenges to translate peace building efforts across different contexts. For instance, in Ogbomoso, Osun and cities in Oyo state, secularism and religious pluralism have always engendered tensions between religious and secular authorities, as well as challenges in accommodating diverse religious practices and beliefs. Recently, Islamic religious leaders proposed sharia law in the south west Nigeria but the proposal was vehemently opposed by other religions who thought that Islam was synonymous with fundamentalism and extremism, and that sharia would be an obstacle to peace building as it often involves rigid and exclusive ideologies that reject compromise and dialogue. The solution to the pitfalls and limitations revolves around interfaith dialogue; building institutional capacity, encouraging, inclusive and pluralistic interpretations that have contemporary values; and

encouraging critical thinking and reflection within religious communities to challenge fundamentalist and extremist ideologies.

There are complex and multifaceted principal factors responsible for engendering ethnic, political, and cultural challenge in south west Nigeria. Main causes of ethnic political and cultural challenges in the south western Nigeria include corruption, discrimination, injustice, bad leadership, and ethical violence. Religious practices actually impact on peace building and conflict resolution; however, misuse of power aggravates inequality and generates discontent among many groups, therefore, exacerbating tension and agitations among young people. Political leaders misuse public resources, thereby marginalizing many others. When anti-corruption policies are weak and ineffective, the integrity of political and religious actors is at stake and intergroup strife becomes inevitable. Poor leadership is equally cited as the bane of the political region of south west Nigeria. Leaders neglect their community people with many vulnerable women and children who are in several economic hardship and in state of hopelessness. Systemic injustice, bad governance, violation of human rights and corruption are major challenges considered as triggers of socio-political challenges in the society. In the light of all those, pragmatic advocacy has to be geared up to address religious, political and social challenges before they snowball into direct violence in the society.

The artificial creation of Nigeria by British colonizers brought together diverse ethnic groups, laying the foundation for current ethnic, cultural, and political conflicts. Ethnic nationalism is rife in Nigeria where allegiance is given to ethnic groups rather than the state. The struggle for power and wealth tagged “national cake” has always increased the incidence of systemic corruption, democratic injustices, and ethnic conflicts, especially in the south-eastern and south-southern states of Nigeria. South-western Nigerian is home to various ethnic groups, each with

distinct languages and cultural practices. In addition to this in the aftermath of the Biafra war with the legacy of historical grievances contributing to ongoing tensions in Nigeria. Ineffective institutions, corruption, and poor governance have equally contributed to the persistence of ethnic, political, and cultural challenges in south-western Nigeria, serving as impediments to peace building outcomes. Without doubts, ethnicity influences political development and ethnic politics is a principal factor responsible for low productivity and under-development in Nigeria.

From the In-depth Interview, considering the demographics, sixty key informants across the six geo-political states of south west Nigeria were interviewed. Their ages range between 32 years and 68 years. Minimum educational level of the respondents was secondary school certificate. Twenty-one (30) of the respondents were Muslims while twenty-two (30) were Christians. Thirty-one (44) of the respondents were males while twelve (16) were females.

Responding to religion and peace in south-western Nigeria all the respondents said that religion was very important to them. By implication, religion is fused with their culture or way of life including politics, and hardly separable as religion is believed to have been politicized. Even in families where both Christians and Muslims share the same biological origin, political culture and political philosophies were diverse and personal. Thus, religion and politics intersect and are potential factors in religious and cultural practices. Most of the interviewees agreed that religion has always played a vital role in promoting peace in various communities to many of them, religion fosters social welfarism, stability of the society and it is often used as final arbiter where there are political upheavals. The respondents agreed that religion is a strong intervention of instrument for promoting peace and security but politics of peace is of often used to achieve a truce of pacify the frustrated party where a religious crisis is involved. Interviewees also alleged religious clerics on both sides of “monetization of faith” especially for monetary or material

interest. The respondents agreed that religious practices might, on the long run, lose value as religion is bastardized by political money-bags who run for divine covering under religious clerics even if their offences are hanged on crime and criminality.

Politics in the south-western Nigeria faces great challenges of patronage or 'godfatherism' under political gladiators and religious leaders. This scenario contributes to diminution of integrity, forthrightness, and democratic justice. This, the romance between the "throne and the altar" has not effectively contributed to peace building, rather it has heightened nepotism, discrimination, distrust and corruption in the society. Instead of allowing both politics and religion to play their natural roles in the society, religious and political actors interfere with the course of good governance, thereby weakening the process of peace building.

A retired Muslim cleric who was interviewed was once a broadcaster and transmission director at the Broadcasting station of Oyo State (BCOS) responded fairly and squarely to stop the protest by some aggrieved Muslims who agitated that they wanted Islamic calendar as their new public year. This Muslim cleric was objective, fair and bold enough to douse the tension, whereas if it were to be some others, they would fuel the flame and throw the state into confusion and religious conflict. It can be inferred from this scenario that religious leaders as well as political leaders should primarily be people of peace before they are appointed to lead others in the first instance. Sustainability of peace and security in the south west region requires engaging interfaith dialogue, democratic, justice and good governance to ensure that the social, economic, cultural and political mechanisms foster peace building in the society.

The historical context of sharia law in Nigeria, and its implementation in south western Nigeria has always been complex and contentious. The implication of its application raises important

questions about the relationship between Islam and the state, the role of law in modern society, and the rights of non-Muslims in Muslim – majority areas. Sharia law has been a subject of controversy in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions where it has been implemented, how much more in the south western region where there are diverse religious practices. Politics of peace is a mechanism to handle this controversy but the potential peace advocates would either be Muslims or Christians and each of them may have sympathy for their religions or be under the influence of religious leaders leading to lack of objectivity in final verdict regarding the adoption or rejection of the proposed sharia law.

Religion has undermined democratic justice as well as human rights in Nigeria. As good as religion is politicians have not been forthright in the use of religion as far as public interest is concerned. Anytime there is misapplication of religion in political matters, or misapplication of politics in religious matter, the public suffers for it. Religion is so politicized in Nigeria owing to colonial legacy, ethnic and regional division, resource competition, identity politics, lack of economic development, historical trauma and misinformation from social media. Many religious leaders have become influential political actors and they often use their privilege platforms to mobilize support for specific politicians or policies to the detriment of others. Africans are generally steeped in religiosity to the extent that religious practices are paradoxical and politics of peace used as mechanisms to resolve religious tensions gave not achieved expected results in the south west Nigeria.

Politics of Religion: Religion has been weaponized in Nigeria and the south western Nigeria is not totally spared. The complex and multifaceted relationship between religion and politics has social consequences. Religious influence on policy by lobbying for or against specific politics, with religious groups seeking recognition, rights, or protection. Religion has equally been used

whether as a motivation for extremism or as a tool for legitimizing violence as observed in local and national politics. However, historical contexts of religion and political as well as power dynamics among different religious groups are major factors in politics of religion. The impact of global trends, events, or ideologies on politics of religion as observed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Kenya, Chad, Ivory Coast and Malawi. Religion is used as a political force for racial, cultural, and political domination. Overall, religion remains a significant factor in Nigerian politics, influencing voting behaviour, political culture, and policy decisions.

Religion constitutes an inextricable part of Nigerian society in general and south western Nigeria in particular. Socio-economic and political activities are often flavoured with rituals and religious activities. It is ironical however, that several syncretic and messianic sects from both Christianity and Islam to the extent of perversion of religion through religious practices that they peddle about. The blurring lines between religion and politics has led to manipulations of religious sentiments for political gain leading to and used to justify discriminatory practices such as gender-based violence and inequality. The Nigeria acknowledges the significance of religion but provides that there is no state religion, thereby making Nigeria a secular state. Having a state religion as a democracy restrains the exercise of the freedom of religion as affirmed in the constitution.

Religion is a force dominating the thought of humans; each social stratum is pervaded by religion, and occasionally, religion is used for polemic and predatory purposes. At times religious practices come with hate speech, sword, spear, servitude, subservience and suffering to affirm the paradox of religious practices, making religion to lose power and prospect among critical thinkers. Southwestern region is a relatively peaceful region in Nigeria where religious freedom is at its best. Religious tolerance is expressed in inter-marriages without fear of

molestation. In southwestern region of Nigeria, interfaith dialogue is active with religious houses freely erected in places of choice without undue persecutions. However, with the proposal for the introduction of sharia law in the south west of Nigeria, other non-Muslims are kicking against to avoid breach of peaceful co-existence among people of living faiths. To proponents of sharia law, it is their fundamental human rights but to non-Muslims it is regarded as a selfish agenda to Islamise the country. Politics of peace is at play to manage the situation but both the proposal and its rejection are undermining religious integrity and trust in the region. Religions as well as politics is under threat especially among young people who had been frustrated by the way it is handled.

Religion is closely tethered to politics in Nigeria, with religion playing a significant role in shaping political discourse, influencing voting patterns, and informing policy decisions. Nigeria's politics is often characterized by religious tensions, particularly between Christians and Muslims. The relationship between religion and politics in Africa is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the continent's diverse cultural historical and social contexts. The southwestern Nigeria has its own share of colonial legacy which made western Christianity intertwined with colonial powers. The post-colonial era is not significantly from the colonial era because the inherited complex relationship between religion and politics still lingers on.

The Nigeria state adopts secular constitutions but religious influences are very intense in practice and outlook for instance, almost in every matter in Nigeria, politicians frequently invoke religious rhetoric and symbolism to mobilize support and motivate the audiences to sustain confidence in them even though the situation is not so in reality. The implication of the romance of religion with politics has led to polarization, marginalization of minority faiths and conflict. Religious practices have overtly or covertly impacted governance, particularly in areas such as

human rights and social justice. There seems to be no clear distinction between the altar and the throne, both are fused together for anthropocentric and transactional reasons. When religious practices become eclectic and politicized, the integrity of religion diminishes, humans take pre-eminence instead of the Supreme Being.

The politics of peace refers to the processes, strategies, and policies aimed at promoting peace, resolving conflicts, and building sustainable relationships between individuals, groups, and nations. Considering the paradox of religions practices and politics of peace in southwestern Nigeria from 1999 to 2024 is a complex issue, with religion playing both a unifying and divisive role in the region. In southwestern Nigeria, religion has been engaged as a powerful tool for promoting peace and co-existence. Many religious leaders have been actively involved in peace-building initiatives, advocating for tolerance, understanding, reconciliation and dialogic development which has brought unprecedented transformation to the region within the last twenty-five years that this study has examined. Thus, to a good degree, the politics of peace has facilitated peace and security resolution of conflicts sustainable development, and harmonious society as a model to other regions in the country, observation and surveys have testified that the South West of Nigeria was the most peaceful for the last twenty-five years.

This trend has made south western Nigeria to play host to migrants from all other five regions where terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, economic, political and ethnic-religious conflicts are rife. Politicization of religion and the struggle for power and influence have always been triggers of conflicts among religious and political actors. However, the south western governors had developed the capacity through community-based initiatives such as dialogue sessions, and peace building workshops to build religious and political tolerance and respect for peaceful co-existence among people of diverse religious and political worldviews.

The paradox of religious practices in southwestern Nigeria has been handled by politics of peace through promotion of interfaith dialogue, community-based initiatives, resource distribution and conflict resolution. Certain gaps were identified in the study including limited geographic scope of southwestern Nigeria which may not be representative of the entire country. However, the study reflects a comparative study of different regions in Nigeria to understanding the dynamics of religious practices and its interaction with politics of peace. Another gap revolves around insufficiency of data because of the intricate nature of religion and politics, nevertheless this gap has been bridged through the use of a mixed-method research approach including surveys and interviews to gain a more nuanced understanding of the issue.

Furthermore, a long-term analysis of the paradox of religious practices and politics of peace is a gap that has been bridged in the study examining the issue over a period of twenty-five years (1999-2024). Most of the causes, challenges, and solutions to religious and political problems in Nigeria were experienced between the period under investigation, thereby qualifying as a reliable longitudinal analysis. Conclusively, the gap revolving around inadequate exploration of contextual factors has been bridged in the study as the study conducted an in-depth interview with key stakeholders in both contemporary religion and politics of the contextual factors that influence the paradox, such as, historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. The study draws inter-disciplinary knowledge and insights from multiple fields such as politics, religion and sociology, engaging stakeholders including religious leaders, political actors, policymakers, and community members to identify potential solutions.

African leaders have to foster regional and international cooperation and collaborate to address common challenges facing all the African countries with a view to promoting democracy across the continent. Furthermore, independent media and access to information would make

accountability and transparency feasible in the African continent as a way to check the incidence of authoritarianism since the media, as the Fourth Estate, is very instrumental to democratic governance and social justice. The press is regarded as the fourth power because of its normative role as a profession of journalism and reticent when it comes to its explicit capacity for advocacy and implicit ability to frame political issues. Thus, the clamour for independence of the media and freedom of thought and expression should be accorded the right priority.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

Religious dialectics in this study is a term used to analyse the complex relationship between religious practices and politics of peace which is largely paradoxical in south western Nigeria. The two linear religions sourced from Abraham have inherent tensions and contradictions which are hard to entangle. The two offshoots of Abrahamic faith (Christianity and Islam) in the hands of their actors are fraught with paradoxes in the practice of the received faith. Difference in hermeneutics and exegesis of respective scriptures as handled by humans are largely responsible for the paradox of religious practices often expressed form of confusion, hostilities, distrust, and conflicts. In the dialectics of religion coupled with secularization and globalization, contradictions in religious practices have become to intricate and complex to be easily managed or resolved by politics of peace being peddled by government and politicians. Socio-economic factors as well as political underpinnings negatively influence religion therefore the intensity of paradoxes. Religious language are interpretation by actors often exacerbate tensions and religious actors who take such extremist view of religion are largely responsible for religious conflicts.

Social and political structures are intended to promote of worship but in actual sense, the conservative nature of Christianity and Islam suggests that religious practices are not actively responding to evolving social realities. The interplay between religious ideologies and religious practices is subjective and full of logical contradictions, intricacies, and complexities as observed in the orientation of ISWAP, ISIS, Boko Haram and other terrorists causing social unrest and wanton killings under the disguise of religion. The unending crime in a criminality plateau,

Benue, Zamfara and Kaduna states are perpetrated by seemingly religious people. This is a clear case of paradox which makes analysts to doubt the sacredness of religious practices. The catalytic influence of religion on Nigerian people in general and south western Nigerian in particular calls for a re-engineering of religious ideologies and practices and actors to evaluate their mentality and disposition in the contemporary dynamic world in the struggle for social justice. The interdependence of religion and politics makes conflict management complex and enigmatic by government and politicians who should act as arbiters in religions tensions, strategies for fostering peace building in south western Nigeria where the two leading religions are Christianity and Islam include intensive dialogue among people of living faiths, peace education curriculum, peace advocacy, and equitable media literacy that could transform conflicts into peace and harmony in the society.

5.2 Conclusion

Religious identity, discrimination, poor leadership, injustice, ignorance, poverty, lack of dialogic relationship, and lack of political and citizenship education are main causes of religious paradoxes identified in south western Nigeria. Religion that is predicated on indoctrination of hate, resentment, and bigotry cannot foster peace and security as depicted by the outcome of the study. It is unthinkable that many religious leaders are grossly bereft of religious ideas that could advance their faith, hence they resort to crime and criminality including ritual-killing, falsehood and totalitarian leadership instead of being servant leaders. Religious leaders who lack requisite skills in handling interpretation and explanation of their respective scriptures would definitely resort to eclectic behaviour of mixing truth with falsehood the study equally revealed that incidences of religious perversion are traced to prophets and imams virtually in all the states of

south west Nigeria. It is incontrovertible that poverty and underdevelopment is largely responsible for religious paradoxes identified.

Another principal factor for the ineffectiveness of politics of peace to resolve religious contradictions has been traced to the unhealthy romance between religion and politics in the region. During electioneering campaigns, religious leaders use their religious platform to promote politicians hence, when such politicians fail to perform, such religious leaders would not have the audacity to challenge the erring politicians because they share same religious identity. The study therefore concludes that the paradox of religious practice in south western Nigeria is predicated on several factors including poverty and under-development, bad governance, religions identity, political clearages and carpet-crossing syndrome sub-normal scriptural interpretations totalitarian attitude of religious leaders, and other neo-colonial underpinnings.

5.3 Recommendations

With due diligence and gleanings from the findings of the study, following recommendations would bridge notable gaps identified, minimize religions paradoxes and strengthen politics of peace to transform south western Nigeria:

- Recognize, the significance of religion as an unstoppable force that has infiltrated the heart of an average south westerner in Nigeria.
- Re-engineer, view, and reactivate religion to promote human value and sustainable development, rather than practiced as sheer rituals.
- Engage religion in praxis-oriented conflict management and resolution to entrench or strengthen peace building in the south west region of Nigeria.

- Harmonize religion and politics in a way that each would not violate their unique underlying principles to foster peace and security in south western Nigeria.
- Public policy on politics of peace should be transparent, equitable, conflict sensitive, and pragmatic to make governance people friendly with a goal of transforming the south western region.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study is quintessential to religion, peace and conflict studies, governance, peacebuilding, and sustainable transformation. The study offers pragmatic solutions for managing and resolving contemporary religious conflicts and hostilities in south western Nigeria which can be replicated in any other part of the country. Religious values and threats are very obvious but peace and conflict scholars have always neglected a balanced and nuanced understanding of religious and political discourses the way this study has handled it. The researcher proposes the use of upstream, midstream, and downstream strategies for conflict resolution in the south western region of Nigeria.

Upstream interventions seek to prevent harm before it occurs, targeting structural causes, midstream interventions mitigate the effects of religious hostilities and harm, and then downstream interventions seek to cope with the consequences of harm and cost of conflict, if at all they had happened.⁷⁷ In all of these, religious and political actors have major roles to play and the neglect of this may exacerbate current paradox of contemporary religious practices and ineptitude of politics of peace in south western Nigeria. The design of the instruments and sampling techniques for data collection gave the study an impetus to have both explanatory and exploratory outcomes, despite the volatile nature of the research theme. The study highlights primordial factors and economic underpinnings as fundamental factors for the intricate and

complex interplay between contemporary religious practices and politics. In all, peace is “politics”, conflict is “politics” and politics of peace is “politics indeed”

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

Further studies suggested could revolve around challenges and opportunities of the intersection of religion and politics for sustainable development in the south western Nigeria. Similarly, studies should also consider and examine the significance of peace advocacy and activism for the transformation of Nigeria. The two suggested studies would go a long way to break the barriers of this study and contribute to existing body of knowledge in a bid to have a robust sustainability of development.

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Thesis/Dissertation

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Dandison, J. *Evaluation of Political Corruption and Strategies for its Reduction in Nigeria*. PhD Dissertation, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth U.K 2021

Ogundiran, R. O. *Pattern of Perceived Fear of Crime in Urban and Semi-urban Areas of Ibadan, Nigeria*. University of Ibadan Doctoral Dissertation. 2019

Appendix

Data Collection Instrument

Lead City University, Ibadan

Faculty of Management and Social Sciences

Department of Politics and International Relations

Questionnaire

On

Paradox of Contemporary Religious Practices and Politics of Peace in South West Nigeria
(1999-2024)

Dear Respondent,

I am a postgraduate student of the above-named institution. I am currently conducting a research study on “Paradox of Religion and Politics of Peace in South West Nigeria, 1999-2023. I therefore, solicit your support in completing this instrument. Please, note that any information supplied by you in this questionnaire shall be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for academic research only but will ultimately contribute to peacebuilding and security of southwestern Nigeria.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Researcher

Section A. Demographics

1. Gender: Male []; Female []
2. State of Origin-----
3. Age: -----
4. Occupation; -----
5. Religion: Christianity [] Islam []
6. Education Level: [Unschooler]; [Primary] [Secondary] [Tertiary]

Section B: Religion (Faith) and Peace

(Use the scale 1-4 to state degree of importance. (Faith or Religion is used here interchangeably to mean the same thing in this context) While 1 is the lowest (not important), 4 is the highest (very important)

1. How important is your religion/faith to you?
 - a. Very Important
 - b. Important
 - c. Not Important
 - d. Very unimportant

2. How do you think religion/faith influences peace and conflict in South West Nigeria?-----

3. Have you ever been involved in a religious peacebuilding initiative? [Yes]; [No]

Section C: Politics and Peace.

1. How satisfied are you with the current political leadership in South West Nigeria?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Dis-satisfied
- d. Very dis-satisfied

2. How do you think Politics influences peace and conflict in South West Nigeria?

3. Have you ever participated in a political peacebuilding initiative? [Yes]; [No]

Section D: Intersection of Religion and Politics

1. How do you think religious beliefs and practices shape political attitudes and behaviours in South West Nigeria?-----

2. Have you ever experienced or witnessed religious-political tension or conflict in your community? [Yes]; [No]
3. Would you agree that religion has been politicised in South West Nigeria? [Yes]; [No]
4. How do you think the intersection of religion and politics can be better managed to promote peace and security South West Nigeria?-----

Section E: Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

1. Have you ever been involved in a peacebuilding or conflict resolution initiative in your community? [Yes]; [No]
2. What strategies do you think are most effective in building peace and resolving conflicts in South West Nigeria?-----

3. How do you think religious leaders and organisations can contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the south western region, Nigeria?-----

Conclusion

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. Your responses will help us better understand the paradox of religion and politics of peace in South West Nigeria.

Interview Guide

This interview is intended to gather your thoughts and experiences related to the paradox of contemporary religious practices and politics of peace in South West Nigeria (1999-2024).

Section A. Demographics

1. Gender: Male []; Female []
2. State of Origin-----
3. Age: -----
4. Occupation; -----
5. Religion: Christianity [] Islam []
6. Education Level: [Unschooler]; [Primary] [Secondary] [Tertiary]

Section B: Religion (Faith) and Peace

(Use the scale 1-4 to state degree of importance. (Faith or Religion is used here interchangeably to mean the same thing in this context) While 1 is the lowest (not important), 4 is the highest (very important)

4. How important is your religion/faith to you?
 - e. Very Important
 - f. Important
 - g. Not Important

- h. Very unimportant

Section C: Background and Context

- 4. Can you please tell me about your background and experiences living in the South West Nigeria?
- 5. How do you think religion and politics intersect in your community?

Section D: Religion and Peace

- 1. Can you share an experience where religion played a role in promoting peace or resolving conflict in your community?
- 2. How do you think religious leaders and organisations can contribute to peacebuilding in South West Nigeria?
- 3. What challenges do you think religion faces in promoting peace in south western Nigeria?

Section E: Politics and Peace

- 1. Can you share an experience where politics played a role in promoting peace or resolving conflict in your community?
- 2. How do you think political leaders and government can contribute to peacebuilding in South West Nigeria?
- 3. What challenges do you think politics faces in promoting peace in the region?

Section F: Intersection of Religion and Politics

1. Can you share an experience where the intersection of religion and politics led to tension or conflict in your community?
2. How do you think the intersection of religion and politics can be better managed to promote peace in South West Nigeria?
3. Would you agree that religion has been politicised in South West Nigeria?
4. What role do you think religious leaders and political leaders can play in promoting peace and understanding?

Section G: Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

1. Can you share an experience where you were involved in a peacebuilding or conflict resolution initiative in your community?
2. What strategies do you think are most effective in building peace and resolving conflicts in South West Nigeria?
3. How do you think the community can come together to promoting peace and understanding?

Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with the researcher. Your contributions are valuable to this study.

Bio-data

A. Personal Data

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Date of Birth: June 8, 1957

Place of Birth: Odeomu, Ayedade LGA Osun State

Nationality: Nigerian

Name & Address of Next of Kin: Deborah Folasayo OYEDAPO, PhD
1, 2 and 3, Amos Wuraola Oyedapo Street, Oke-Owu Quarters, Odeomu, Ayedade LGA, Osun State

B. Educational Background with Dates

Educational Institutions Attended with Dates and Qualifications

- Lead City University, Ibadan – PhD Peace and Conflict Studies – 2021-2025
- University of Ibadan – 2016-2018
- Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State – 2006- 2009
- Acadia University, Wolfville, Canada – 1990- 1993
- The Polytechnic Ibadan – 1981- 1986

- Higher School (A Levels) – 1979-1980

C. Working Experience with Dates

- The Polytechnic, Ibadan – Accountant 1986 – 1990
- Nova Scotia, Canada 1990 – 1993
- Password Mortgage Bank – Manager 1994 – 1997
- Kayode Ojo & Co. – Consultant 1998 till Date
- Christian Theological Seminary, Affiliate of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State – Teacher 2006 - 2022
- Christian Theological Seminary, Affiliate of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State – Provost 2014 – 2022

D. Awards and Fellowships – N/A

E. Membership of Academic/Professional Bodies

- Member, The Association of International Accountants (AIA)
- Member, Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (CIIA, UK)
- Member, West Africa Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI)
- Member, Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa ACTEA)
- Member, International Council for Higher Education (ICHE)
- Member, Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS)
- Member, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators and Conciliators (ChMc)
- Member, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA)

F. Publications

- Oyedapo, P. O. (2019). *Energy and Air Quality in Nigeria*. **Journal of Creation and Environmental Care (JCEC)**; Vol. 6 (41-55). Penthouse Publications.
- Oyedapo, P. O. (2019). *Nationalism, Politics and the Nigerian Church*. An Essay in Honor of Dr. Samson Olusoji Bamgbose (36-45). Ibadan: Penthouse Publications.

- iii. Oyedapo, P. O. (2019). *Value-Based Theology and the Cogito Argument*. An Essay in Honor of Dr. Samson Olusoji Bamgbose (173-183). Ibadan: Penthouse Publications.
- iv. Oyedapo, P. O. (2021). *Economics of Conflicts and Intricacies of Sustainable Development in Nigeria*. In *Contemporary Tertiary Education in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Educational Development*. Ijebuode **Tai Solarin University of Education College of Special and Professional Education Journal**. (75-79). Ijebuode: COSPED Publishers.
- v. Oyedapo, P. O. (2022). *Religion, Revisionism and Peacebuilding in Nigeria*. In *Post-Modernism and African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Festschrift for Professor Afolorun Dairo* (37-53). Ibadan: John Archers Publishers.
- vi. Oyedapo, P. O. & Alade, A. A. (2022) *Peacebuilding in Nigeria through Religious Engineering and Epistemic Justice*, **Religions' Educator**, Vol.21 No 2, 114-131.
- vii. Oyedapo, P. O. (2024). *Patronage System in Religion and Politics and its Implication for the Nigerian Society*. **Gombe University Creative Business Journal**, (87-92).
- viii. Oyedapo, P. O. (2025). *Power, Privilege, and Predation: The Case of King Leopold's Regime in Congo and its Implication for Africa*. Book of Readings: Two decades of Lead City University, Management and Social Science Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Nigeria. (132-144)
- ix. Oyedapo, P. O. & Albert, M. (2025). *Magisterialism, Democracy, and Sustainable Development in Africa*. **Religions' Educator**, Vol.23 No 2, 64-72.
- x. Oyedapo, P.O.,&Alade A.A.(2025). *Religion and Politics for Sustainable Peacebuilding in South Western Nigeria*.GVU Journal of Management and Social Sciences, Vol.10, No1,(199-210)

G. Major Conferences Attended with Dates

- Leadership Conference, Haggai International Institute of Leadership, Peachtree, Georgia, USA
- Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), ADR Workshop University of Ibadan 2017
- SPSP, Sustainable Peace and Security Conference, Babcock University, Ilisan, Ogun State 2017

- SPSP, Conflict Analysis& Project Management, Osogbo, Osun State 2018
- SPSP, Gender and Conflict Management Skills. Redeemer’s University, Ede 2019
- SPSP, International Conference, Redeemer’s University, Ede 2019
- Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos 2024
- 7th Atanda Lecture & Conference Lead City University 2024
- FMSS 3rd & 4th International Conferences, Lead City University 2024/2025

H. Referees

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Signature

Date

The University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that this thesis written by Philip Olugbemiga OYEDAPO with matriculation number LCU/PG/002278 in the Department of Politics & International Relations, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

Signature

Date