



Africa Development, Vol. XXXVI, Nos 3 & 4, 2011, pp. 39–54
© Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2011
(ISSN 0850-3907)

Institutionalising Terror in the Name of Religion and Polity: The Nigerian Youth and the Cosmos of Violence

Amidu Sanni*

Abstract

Religion and ethnicity are two key issues in the economy of violence with which Nigeria has had to contend in the last twenty-five years. The protagonists of the issues are the state, the aficionados of religious or ethnic idealism and their opponents. The article argues that the culture of denial or marginalisation has largely been responsible for the tradition of violence, which militant and radical elements in religious and ethnic circles have often employed in their systemic campaigns. It concludes by submitting that a proper appreciation of the real causes of violence by the state, and a genuine commitment to their solution through dialogue and interactive means, remains the viable option in the enthronement of world peace and order.

Résumé

La religion et l'ethnicité constituent deux éléments essentiels dans l'économie de la violence à laquelle le Nigeria est confronté depuis vingt cinq ans. Les protagonistes sont l'Etat, les militants de l'idéalisme religieux ou ethnique et leurs opposants. L'article défend l'idée selon laquelle la culture de déni ou de marginalisation a été à la base de la tradition de violence, ce que les militants et les éléments radicaux appartenant aux cercles religieux et ethniques ont souvent employé dans leurs campagnes systémiques. L'article propose pour conclure qu'une appréciation adéquate de la part de l'Etat des causes réelles de la violence, et un engagement sincère dans la recherche d'une solution par le dialogue et des moyens interactifs restent l'option la plus viable pour l'enracinement de la paix et l'ordre dans le monde.

* Lagos State University, Nigeria. Email: amsanni@yahoo.co.uk

Introduction

In his fascinating overview of the impulses and scenarios of terror activities following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack in the United States of America, Heine talks about '*neue Terrorismus*' (new terrorism) operating world wide (Heine 2004:159). The wave of religious revivalism in the major world confessions and of ethnic nationalism, and their capacity to provoke conflict and violence in a globalising world, has been a subject of interest in modern religious and social science scholarship. This is not surprising as there are 'family resemblances' between militant and fundamentalist movements in the various religious traditions (Ruthven 2004). This notwithstanding, the more militant religious and indeed ethnic fundamentalism becomes, the more likely the clashes between rival systems in cognate spheres will be institutionalised (Sim 2005). Shared perception of oppression, exclusion, denial, and marginalisation often breeds radicalism which ultimately promotes the culture of organised and sustained violence, be it in religious or socio-political configurations (cf. Juergensmeyer 2003; Moussalli 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Duffield 2000). The imperatives of modernity, the triumph of Western democracy as expounded by America, and the end of the messy history of clashing civilisations, to borrow from Fukuyama (1992), has inspired new perspectives in religious and ethnic revivalisms under democratic dispensations. But then the geo-political dominance exerted by America in the name of propagating democratic and human values is considered, and rightly too, as an 'imperialist fundamentalism' 'the mother of all fundamentalisms' (Ali 2002). According to Jacquard (2002), 'violence in the name of religion – of all religions – is as old as history'. Religion and politics are soulmates or bedfellows and the interaction between both creates positive and negative developments. This is the binding link in this study which attempts to examine the imperatives for the reign of terror in the name of promoting or opposing religious idealism as well as in the defence or pursuit of ethnic, political, or primordial institutions and interests.

Background to Conflicts

Bloody conflicts, across and within religious and ethnic groups, have put Nigeria in the spotlight since the beginning of the new millennium. One of the most recent conflicts occurred after local government elections in Plateau State on 27 November 2008. By the following week, hundreds of lives had been lost and many mosques and churches had been destroyed in the paroxysms of violence that assumed both religious and ethnic characteristics. Historically, the mass media has succeeded in mitigating or promoting fits of violence generated by conflicts and their after effects, and this has generally affected post-violence reconstruction efforts and prevention of

future occurrences. As observed by Ojo, a set of public perceptions [I say if not prejudices], guide the media treatment of the subject (Ojo 2005: 245; cf. Umechukwu 1995; Said 1997).

Until the British colonialism of the nineteenth-century, the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) was the operative code in the Caliphate, which later came to be known as Northern Nigeria. The recession, if not the reversal, in the operational fortunes of the legal system has been at the bottom of difficult and often raucous relationships between the Muslims and the Christians in Nigeria (Sanni 2007a; Sanni 2007b). Since 1979, no serious issue has generated greater controversies and blood letting in Nigeria than the *Shari'a*. Ethnic violence has never been an unfamiliar phenomenon since independence, but it has reached a high watermark since the country's renewed experience with democracy in 1999. Agitation and counter agitation for the institutionalisation of the Islamic legal code and the culture of ethnic and state protestation, with regard to natural resources and access to power in all its ramifications, are the major indices of the reign of terror in the Nigerian scene to date.

***Shari'a*: Much Ado about Nothing?**

The Islamic legal system is almost as old as Islam in Nigeria. Until the advent of British colonialism in the nineteenth-century, it was the only legal system in northern Nigeria, through which civil, criminal, property, and family cases were adjudicated (cf. Umar 2006; Lydon 2009). The British explorer Clapperton noted that the Islamic law was so strictly applied during the reign of Muhammad Bello (r. 1817 – 37) 'that the whole county when not in a state of war, was so well regulated that a woman might travel with a casket of gold upon her head from one end of the Fellata dominions to the other'. (Quinn & Quinn 2003:37-38). In 1902, however, the first British Governor High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria, Frederick Lugard proclaimed his official policy on the operation of the *Shari'a* in an address delivered in Sokoto (Peters 2005:121):

The alkali and emirs will hold the law courts as of old, but bribes are forbidden, and mutilation and confinement of men in inhuman prisons are not lawful. Sentences of death will not be carried out without the consent of the Resident. . . Every person has the right to appeal to the Resident who will, however, endeavour to uphold the power of the Native Courts to deal with native cases according to the law and custom of the country (Quoting A. G. Karibi-Whyte, *History and Sources of Nigerian Criminal Law* (Ibadan-Nigeria: Spectrum 1993:177).

The operation of the Islamic legal system in pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria was not, however, limited to northern Nigeria alone, as Kumo claims it was.

According to him, the *Shari'a* was not applied anywhere else but in Northern Nigeria, in spite of the large Muslim population among the Yoruba in southwest Nigeria and in part of the Midwestern region (Kumo 1993). I have discussed elsewhere with specific examples, instances of the promotion and application of the Islamic law in south western Nigeria, particularly by local heads, from the mid-nineteenth century till late into the colonial period. (Sanni 2007a; cf. Salamone 1998). Muri Okunola also gives instances of cases that were settled according to the Islamic legal code among Yoruba Muslims from 1900 onwards (Okunola 1993).

The nostalgia for what was considered the 'golden age' of religious traditions, when scriptural canons held sway, has thrown up new debates about Islamic Salafism and Christian Lefebvrism in modern religious and social science discourses (Netton 2006). Muslim thinkers, and indeed activists, have often argued for the need to have a moral society based on the *Shari'a* as one of the prerequisites for the establishment of an Islamic state (Moussalli 1999). The agitation is intense in countries with a Muslim majority population and in places where Muslims constitute a sizeable minority. For example, on 17 September 2006, large rallies in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, were held by Muslim youth and people carrying mock guns, calling for the enhancement of the application of the *Shari'a*.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution heralded the implosion and the explosion of global religious politics and introduced new vista on global Muslim popular consciousness (Zubaida 1989). It became a significant reference point for the resurgence of radical Islamism throughout the world, including Nigeria, where it is believed that Islamisation will offer the ultimate solutions to societal problems (Kane 2006). The politicisation of religious institutions, such that it leads to violent dimensions, often builds upon a complex structure of ancient rhetoric and experience. Nigeria has never been short of people and circumstances that could put life into this (Last 2007). Tribute and profits from selling non-Muslims, and of course perceived or real misapplication of *Shari'a* provisions to the disadvantage or rather, the displeasure of non-Muslims (largely Christians), continually stirred a sense of reaction and violent opposition to the Islamic code once it became a subject of national discourse in democratic Nigeria. The constitutional responsibility of the government to maintain law and order has often been cited to justify and rationalise the visitation of state physical and psychological violence on the proponents of the enthronement of the Islamic legal code, even under a democratic dispensation. The 'satanisation' of the Islamic legal system by non-Muslims and Western-oriented analysts ultimately led to the 'sunnatisation' of *Jihâd*, that is, the legitimisation of force, by Muslim proponents of the legal code.

What is said about militant religious activism is equally valid for other forms of activism, they are expressions of 'performance violence' (Juergensmeyer 2003:220). But as rightly observed by Ostien, if the Christians had not created a stone wall in the Muslims' legitimate agitation for the expansion of the spatial authority of the *Shari'a* in the 70s, the revival of the debate in the legal system and the resultant violent dispensation from 1999 would not have occurred (Ostein 2006).¹ In other words, lack of tolerance or shortage of it had been a significant factor in religion-coloured violence since the beginning of the present millennium in Nigeria.

The Genesis of Ethnic Violence

The strong sense of nationalism and the freedom to control the natural resources of the land had been strong among the ethnic nationalities in the various regions that existed before British colonialism in Nigeria. In 1895, for example, the Jaja (King) of Opobo in the Niger Delta protested to the Crown in London, calling for greater access to the resources that had lubricated his traditional authorities before colonialism. For this, he paid very dearly. In the same year, the people of Nenbe, also in the Niger Delta, having failed to achieve their desire for greater economic welfarism and access to resources through peaceful agitations, resorted to violence. So, the campaign by indigenous peoples for greater access to the resources of their native lands had been part of the Nigerian history before independence in 1960.² But the liberalism of the post-independence era, which of course had its roots in the few decades before that, allowed the political regions a far greater control of their affairs and resources. The North controlled the agricultural products and its natural resources, for example, the groundnut, tin, cotton, etc. The West was in charge of cocoa, marble, and other items. The East used palm oil and other minerals for its social and developmental needs. The 1966 military incursion into the polity and the resultant centralisation of political and economic control saw the introduction of the culture of marginalisation, denial, and oppression of the Niger Delta area which has been producing about 90 per cent of the nation's revenue through crude oil. All through the military era, the people of the area consistently agitated through peaceful means for a more equitable treatment. A notable effort in point was the 1998 Keyamo Declaration by the Ijaw Youth which called upon the then military government to tackle the issue of environmental degradation of the area and pay better attention to infrastructural and human development, especially of the unemployed and underemployed youth. The government has always responded with brute force either on the individual as arrow heads, as was the case with Ken Saro Wiwa, or on the whole community, as happened with

the Odi people nearly a decade ago. The youth have since then engineered a new economy of violence through economic sabotage of oil installations, the kidnapping of foreign and local oil and construction workers, and very recently, through car bombs. Between 1 January and 8 February 2007, news reports indicate that some 52 persons, largely foreigners, had been kidnapped in the Niger Delta.

Unofficially, the government negotiates and possibly pays ransoms in order to avoid international embarrassment. On the surface, the government plays and talks tough by perpetrating state-induced or condoned terrorism (cf. Combs & Slann 2002). On Tuesday, 15 August 2006, for example, former President Obasanjo gave a new order for a military crackdown in an operation code-named 'fire for fire'. The following day, four members of the so-called militant movement had been arraigned before a court in Abuja, and by Friday over a hundred youth had been detained after what was said to be a raid on a militant slum in Port Harcourt. These extreme measures notwithstanding, the kidnapping of foreign oil and construction workers continued unabated, and the sphere of kidnapping had even been extended to night club houses known to be call points for Western oil and construction workers. So, the triangle of violence, in which the state, the agitators, and the society are players and victims, continues.

Concept of Violence and its Impulses

There is hardly any single, all-embracing definition of violence, for which reason it may be defined, like terrorism, as 'the language of being noticed' (Thackrah 2004). But one definition of it which may be considered here says that it is 'any uninvited but intentional or half-intentional act of physically violating the body of a person who previously had lived in peace' (Keane 2004:6). Anger, alienation and the denial of national or religious rights may lead to the radicalisation of the victims of such deprivations and this radicalisation may find expression in the form of violent actions or reactions. According to the first ever global report on violence by the World Health Organisation, 1.6 million people die violently every year; each day an average of some 1400 are killed, while 35 people die hourly through armed conflict.³

In the spiritualisation of violence by religious movements and the indexicalisation of it as a social matrix by peripheralised or marginalised ethnic groups, new meanings, perspectives and profiles have been given to the culture of violence, its proponents, its victims, and the society at large. The problem of violence under democracy has been worrisome in Nigeria. Even now that the country is under a new political leadership that gives a more responsive attention to the problems of the Niger Delta, the spate of economic

sabotage and intimidation has barely subsided. Admittedly, the fit of the political killing of opponents has significantly reduced since 2007. Politics in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, is marked by neo-patrimonialism, that is, the interconnectivity between the formal and informal sectors of the polity. The youth in Africa are economically and politically disenfranchised, making them a handy tool for violence and disorder. There is also the issue of state violence; when the state, through the instrumentality of security apparatus, visits brutality on the citizenry in the name of maintaining law and order. There is also the issue of violence in religious groups. On 22 July 2006, for example, one Rev. Kingsley Ezeugo of the Christian Praying Assembly, Lagos, doused some members of his congregation with fuel and got them burnt as a cleansing ritual from immoralities. Similar things had happened in Uganda, Japan, and the US; all pointing to a global trend in spiritual violence. Some have argued that the 'real' or 'ultimate' purpose of violence is to contain the violence capacities of others. How far has this applied to the Nigerian state and what general principles can we draw from the experiences of a multi-ethnic society such as ours?

The Nexus between Resources and Violence

It has been observed, and correctly too, that countries that are overly dependent on exports of natural resources have performed abysmally in all aspects of governance and social responsibility, a phenomenon often referred to as 'resource curse' (Pegg 2005). This is no less true of Nigeria where government (mis)management of crude oil has generated a sustained and unending culture of violence. Development and technology transfer that should have resulted from proper deployment of resources has failed to materialise since independence. A major reason is that the modernisation paradigm on which the processes were based failed to take account of the country's peculiar socio-cultural realities (Dibua 2006:147). Two contemporary theses about the relationship between resources and violence are relevant here. Homer Dixon (1999) is an illustrious exponent of the idea that scarcity of resources is an impulse for conflict. According to him, environmental degradation – the like of which is being experienced in the Niger Delta – breeds 'social scarcity', as people are forced off unviable land to peri-urban areas where they would have to compete for available facilities which are often inadequate. The tensions arising from this encounter becomes violent when crystallised around ethnic divisions. The other thesis links 'abundance of resources' to the generation of wars and conflicts. The abundance of resources insulates rulers from their subjects who would otherwise have been made to pay taxes which would then embolden them to

challenge the authorities in case of failure in the provision of social amenities and infrastructure. In other words, wealth generated through natural resources encourages leaders to employ violence to sustain their hold on power and on the people's psyche (cf. Last 2007). In his exposition of the 'greed and grievance' theory, Collier (2000) examines the relationship of conflicts by studying the link between the drive to control resources and protests by marginalised people striving to access resources. This may well explain the current tension in Nigeria where the central government, having put all natural resources under its control without commensurate socio-economic obligations to the producing areas, naturally provoked the violent reactions of the youth of the area, whose reactions are now visited on all strata of the society. The government, officially and unofficially, realises more revenue from royalties paid by oil companies than it does from taxes paid by the people (cf. Mehler 2006). In this way, the oil industry becomes a legitimate target of attack by aggrieved victims of the social and environmental degradation. These companies have also succeeded in luring the government into institutionalising a state crackdown on agitating youths. Clearly, there is an obvious correlation between scarcity or abundance of resources on the one hand, and the (mis)management of either and violent conflicts on the other.

Chronicles of Violence and Palliatives

Reference was made above to the historical antecedents of violent protestations by indigenous peoples in Nigeria against lopsidedness or outright denial, in terms of their access to resources. I have also discussed elsewhere in some detail the circumstances that had led to the employment of violence in the pursuit of, or opposition to, the *shari'a* issue by the Nigerian youth (Sanni 2007a; Sanni 2007b). But for now, a short chronicle may not be out of place here.

The hitherto academic and civil dimension to the debate on *Shari'a*, assumed a new character with Ibrâhîm Zak Zaky (b. 1963) of the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria and Aminud-Din Abubakar of Bayero University Kano. On 4 and 20 August 1980, Zak Zaky led the first public demonstrations outside the university campus as an expression of the rejection of the 1979 Constitution and as a launching pad for a more robust campaign for the recognition of *Shari'a* as a national law (Loimier & Reichmuth 1993). But all the violent and bloody conflicts that took place until 1999, when Nigeria once again returned to democracy, could best be described as an antebellum comedy, if compared to the nature, scope, sophistication and globalised character of what followed the Zamfara declaration of Thursday, 21 January 2000. On this day, Ahmad Sani Yerima, the governor of the northern Nigerian

state of Zamfara signed into law the bill establishing the penal aspect of the *Shari'a* for the state, prohibiting prostitution, gambling and the sale, purchase and consumption of alcohol (A Law to Establish a *Shari'a* Penal Code for Zamfara State, Law No 10, 2000; January 27, 2000).

The first amputation of a convicted thief took place on 22 March 2000 and another one sometime later. On 8 February 2005, the Council of Ulama, which may well be regarded as the 'court of final order', quashed the ten cases of amputation that had been pronounced by the *Shari'a* court in Zamfara State between 2001 and 2004. According to the Attorney General of the State at that time, Muhammad Sani Takori, the two amputations that had earlier been carried out were not in error. More importantly, he claimed that the International Court of Justice in The Hague had, somewhere in 2004, endorsed Nigeria's right to implement any constitutional law of justice. It is worthy to note that regional governments, in whose states the *Shari'a* has operated since 2000, largely draw on the support and backing of young Muslim enthusiasts and activists (*Yan Hisba*), fondly called *Shari'a*, in the implementation of *Shari'a* provisions. The *Hisba* actually sponsored the bill on full implementation of *Shari'a* at the Kano State House of Assembly in 2004.⁴

The series of violent and bloody conflicts that have been witnessed since the other 11 states of northern Nigeria followed the Zamfara model, with regard to the penal aspect of the *Shari'a*, have been quite remarkable in terms of human and material losses. In this regard, the 21-23 February 2000 episode in Kaduna and the 20-25 November 2002 cataclysm over the Miss World show, also in Kaduna, may be mentioned. It should, however, be stated that in a number of cases, the reason for the eruption of bloody conflicts that are associated with religious issues, is traceable to another form of disequilibrium, namely 'structural violence' (Sheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). This form of disequilibrium represents the violence of poverty, collective denial, social exclusion, hunger, youth unemployment; all of which there has never been a shortage of in Nigeria in the past twenty-five years, specifically after the economic depression that followed the oil boom of the 1970s. Besides, the issue of 'indigene' versus 'settler' divide, which denies access to power and resources to certain categories of people whose ancestors must have come from areas other than where they currently reside, has been a major catalyst for unending socio-ethnic violence which has sometimes assumed a religious character (Harnischfeger 2004; ICG 2006c).

Furthermore, the state and indeed the existing political structures are sometimes targeted in the paroxysm of violence, which has become a familiar feature since the Maitatsine riot of the early 1980s. For example, on 21 September 2004, a group of young men calling themselves the Taliban and

advocating for the transformation of Nigeria into an Islamic state attacked two police stations in Borno State (Northeast Nigeria) and killed eight officers. The group lost 29 of its men. Barely a fortnight later, precisely on Friday 8 October, the militia of the same group, held some policemen hostage at the Nigerian-Cameroonian border, also in Borno State.⁵ Its members were also reported to have attacked some Christian villages in Bulama in March of 2005, and to have looted shops and abducted several businessmen whom they had requested to convert to Islam. These incidents underpin the argument that religious diversity does not by itself engender violence 'independent of predisposing social, economic, and political conditions as well as the subjective roles of belligerent leaders' (Carnegie 1997).

Whatever the real or assumed nature of any violence, the government has always adopted a stick-and-carrot approach, either sequentially or simultaneously. Religious leaders and institutions readily come in handy in case of faith-coloured conflicts, while community leaders, local opinion moulders, and youthful 'war lords' become instruments of conflict management or suppression as and when it suits the state. The government sometimes introduces some palliative and superficial measures to assuage the militant youth and wave off international criticisms which are hardly strong enough to expose the brutality of the government anti-violence measures, even under democracy. For example, The Human Rights Watch, a New York-based NGO, released a report on 25 May 2005 criticising the Nigerian government for doing nothing to punish culprits that caused the 2004 bloody 'religious' riots in Kaduna and Jos, while in August 2006, the International Crisis Group (ICG 2006c), passionately requested for more revenue for the Niger Delta states as a way of mitigating the unending crises in the region in particular and in Nigeria in general.

For now, let me just give a chronicle of some of the recent events in the prosecution of the war, or rather, in the enthronement of peace as threatened by religious and ethnic radicalism. Inter- and intra-religious clashes are not a rare occurrence. This goes to show that there are some underlying fundamental issues beyond the level of confessional disagreements. On 13 May 2005, there was a bloody clash at the two main mosques in Sokoto after the Jumat service between Shi'ites and Sunnis, on account of what was said to be mutual denigration of their leaders. Between January and February 2006, there were violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Nnewi and Onitsha among other places, arising from protests and counter protests over the defamatory cartoons of the Prophet published by a Swedish periodical in 2005. Mosques, churches, and lives fell in the clashes. This further illustrates the fact that regardless of the location

of events, the phenomenon of a deterritorialised response has become a feature of a new religious public across the world.

Assaults on religious and ethnic or militia groups received a new twist with the 7 February 2006 government's proscription of *Hisba* in Kano and other "*Shari'a* states", and of vigilante and ethnic militia groups in Abia among other southern states. Consequently, members of the *Hisba* started to be detained, and in April 2006 the Court of Appeal turned down the request for bail on behalf of two detained members from Kano. They were arraigned for belonging to an illegal organisation. On 19 June 2006, a draft bill on violence was presented to the government by an eight-man committee that had been instituted by the Federal Ministry of Justice. The bill aims at preventing, curbing, and punishing violence. Again, this is a purely cosmetic measure that fails to address the real cause(s) of violence. Perhaps one seemingly serious attempt at addressing the Niger Delta issue was the introduction on the 27 March 2007, at the twilight of the rule of former President Obasanjo, of a master plan for the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta. But before this, some measures, fitful and haphazard as they turned out to be, had been taken. On 18 April 2006, former President Obasanjo inaugurated in Abuja, the presidential council on the socio-economic development of the coastal states in the Niger Delta, to study the restiveness of the youths in the area. Immediate, medium, and long-term measures were proposed. These include the creation of special employment opportunities in the armed forces and the oil sector for indigenes of the region. The government also announced the establishment of the National Oil Spillage Detection and Response Agency. All the activities of the Agency were to be co-coordinated by a bureau in the Office of the Secretary to the Government. By the time another round of the quarterly meeting was held on 18 July 2006, it was clear that there was a wide gap between the expectations of the people from the affected area and what the government was prepared to offer.

This reality may well explain why violent activities and adventures by militant groups in the area have not subsided. The Niger Delta Volunteer Force, an offshoot of the Ijaw Youth Council, has been demanding a greater access to power and resources. Its leader, Mujahid Asari Dokubo, a Baptist turned Muslim, has been a pain in the neck of the government for quite a while. This raises the question of whether militants, of whatever orientation, are inspired by religion or ideology. According to Dokubo, his struggle is 'purely national' and not religious. This sounds reasonable; after all, the majority of his fighters or foot soldiers are non-Muslims. Yet again, there is an intriguing twist to the underpinning factor of the struggle. When asked about the reason for his conversion to Islam, he said: 'I became a Muslim

because of the revolutionary spirit of Islam in Iran (...)’ (Montclos 2005). The infectious spirit of Islamism, if it can be so characterised, has become a source of worry to the government in its effort to stem the tide of ethnic and religious conflicts. Some of the palliative measures taken so far have not gone far enough to address the fundamental issues that have engendered bitter confrontations between the state and militant, protesting youth.

Since the Yar A’dua government came in place in May 2007, there has been a remarkable shift in attitude on the side of the government and stakeholders in the Niger Delta. For instance, on 12 July 2007 Asari Dokubo, who had been kept in detention under Obasanjo, was able to discuss concrete steps toward solving the crises in the Niger Delta with the then Vice President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan. This was the first high-level government contact and deliberation with any militant group from the area. On top of this, a two-day peace conference was held between 7 and 8 November 2007 at Abuja, at the insistence of Asari Dokubo. Stakeholders, including representatives from the political establishment, called for dialogue and the convocation of a national sovereign conference to discuss all issues affecting all ethnic nationalities in the state. Coincidentally, the government presented to the National Assembly, on the first day of the conference, a budget which increased the allocation to the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC) by about 300 per cent. Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to a new understanding of the problems of the violence-prone area was the establishment by President Umaru Yar’Adua, in September 2008, of a full-fledged Ministry of the Niger Delta, for this resulted in a substantive minister being put in charge by December 2008.

Conclusion

The unending cycle of religious, ethnic, and resource control driven violence is already taking its toll on the Nigerian economy, its corporate existence and international profile. Already, more than 30 per cent of the nation’s oil output has been lost since the beginning of 2008. Apart from the loss in revenue, the knock-on effect on micro- and macro-economic and political dimensions is inestimable. The economy of violence in which the Nigerian youth is the active exponent and victim, has raised new questions about the relationship between democracy and violence (Babawale 2003). Since democracy is about choice and respect for the sensibilities of others, one would have thought that the government would frontally address the issues of youth empowerment, environmental degradation, and confessional pluralism, allowing advocates of the *Shari’a* to have their choice within the constitutional provisions, and allowing proponents of an ethnic agenda, to have their problems solved. Omar offers five proposals that could help in overcoming religious

violence. These are developing theologies of religious pluralism, nurturing inter-religious dialogue and solidarity, inter-religious peace-building from the perspective of conflict resolution and conflict transformation, giving life to the prophetic role of religion as the moral conscience of society and inter-religious global action campaigns (Omar 2002).

Anthony Oji, the president of Ijaw Youth Association, Joseph Eva, and other leaders of militia and pressure groups fighting for self-determination and resource control in the Niger Delta areas, have consistently called on the government to sit with the people instead of opting for a military solution or negotiation through crises brokers who, almost invariably, misuse funds and resources that are meant for the development of the area. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), an ultra militant group, has even threatened to employ a stronger force against the government. This is already manifesting itself in the killing of government security forces that are sent to maintain peace in the area under the acronym JTF (Joint Task Force). The fact that there is always an upsurge in violence and kidnapping whenever the central government announces an increase in revenue allocation to the state governments of the region, or to such parastatals as the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC), clearly indicates that real development has not actually been filtering down to the common people for whom those institutions and systems are intended in the first place. No military or coercive mechanism will solve the restiveness in the area. Not even judicial or quasi-legislative measures. Former President Obasanjo's Prevention of Terrorism Act proposal of 2006, which was sent to the National Assembly, stipulated a maximum jail term of twenty years for a 'terrorist', a euphemism for the militant youth or radical religious enthusiasts. Another bill by former Senator Obi from Anambra State proposes the establishment of an Anti-Terrorism Agency and a life sentence for culprits.⁶ The fact of the case is that only a thorough perception of the real problems within Nigerian society, along with the deployment of a political will and the sincerity to solve them, remain the key instruments in the pragmatic interaction with the new culture of violence in the name of religion, politics, resource control and the society.

Notes

1. For more on the shari'a in Nigeria see Ibrahim 2004; Noibi 2003-2004; Marshall 2002.
2. For details of this problem from colonial time to-date see (ICG 2006a; ICG 2006b, ICG 2008)
3. *World Report on Violence and Health* (Geneva, 2002), available on www.who.int/violence-injury-prevention.

4. For more on the *Hisba* visit <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/Nigeria0903> [released 21 September 2004].
5. *The Vanguard* [Nigerian Daily] 11 October 2004.
6. *The Vanguard* 28 August 2006.

Bibliography

- Ali, Tariq, 2002, *The Clash of Fundamentalism: Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity*, London & New York: Verso.
- Babawale, Tunde, ed., 2003, *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, Lagos: Malthouse.
- Carnegie, 1997, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, Washington D. C.: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict.
- Chabal, Patrick and Daloz, Jean-Pascal, 1999, *Africa Works- Disorder as Political Instruments*, Oxford & Bloomington Indiana: James Currey & Indiana University Press.
- Collier, Paul, 2000, 'Doing Well out of Wars', in Mats R. Berdal and David M. Malone, eds, *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agenda in Civil Wars*, Lynne Rienner: Boulder & Co, p. 91 – 111.
- Combs, Cindy C. and Slann, Martin, eds., 2002, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, New York, Facts on File, p. 140, s.v. 'Nigeria'.
- Dibua, Jeremiah, 2006, *Modernization and the Crisis of Development in Africa- the Nigerian Experience*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Duffield, Mark, 2000, *Global Governance and the New Wars- The Merging of Development and Security*, London & New York: Zed Books.
- Fukuyama, Francis, 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harnischfeger, Johannes, 2004, 'Sharia and Control Over Territory: Conflicts between "Settlers" and "Indigenes" in Nigeria', *Journal of African Affairs*, vol. 103, pp. 431-52.
- Heine, Peter, 2004, *Terror in Allahs Namen- Extremistische Kräfte im Islam*, Freiburg: Verlag Herder.
- Homer-Dixon, Thomas, 1999, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ibrahim, Jibrin, ed., 2004, *Sharia Penal and Family Laws in Nigeria and the Muslims—Right-based Approach*, Zaria-: Ahmadu Bello University Press.
- International Crisis Group (ICG), 2006a, 'The Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria's Delta Unrest', *Africa Report*, no. 115, August 2006. Available at: www.crisisgroup.org.
- ICG, 2006b, 'Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis', *Africa Report*, no. 118, 28 September 2006. Available at: www.crisisgroup.org.
- ICG, 2006c, 'Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment', *Africa Report*, no. 119, October 2006. Available at www.crisisgroup.org.
- ICG, 2008, 'Nigeria: Ogoni Land after Shell', *Africa Briefing*, no. 54, 18 September 2008. Available at www.crisisgroup.org.

- Jacquard, Poland, 2002, *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden: Global Terrorism and the Bin Laden Brotherhood*, translated by George Holsch, Durham, NC/ London: Duke University Press.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark, 2003, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Berkeley & Co.: University of California Press.
- Kane, Ousmane, 2006, 'Political Islam in Nigeria', in Michael Bröning und Holger Weiss, eds, *Politischer Islam in Westafrika- Eine Bestandaufnahme*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, pp. 154-78.
- Keane, John, 2004, *Violence and Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumo, Sulaimon, 1993, 'Sharia under Colonialism- Northern Nigeria', in Nura Alkali et al., eds, *Islam in Africa- Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference held at Abuja-Nigeria 24-28 November 1989*, Ibadan: Spectrum, pp. 1-22.
- Last, Murray, 2007, 'Muslims and Christians in Nigeria: An Economy of Political Panic', *The Round Table*, vol. 96, no. 392, October 2007, pp. 605-616.
- Loimeier, Roman and Reichmuth, Stefan, 1993, 'Bemügunen der Muslime um Einheit und politishe Geltung', in J. M. Abun-Nasr, ed., *Muslimen in Nigeria- Religion und Gessellschaft im politischen Wandel seit den 50er Jahren*, Münster : LIT Verlag.
- Lydon, Ghislaine, 2009, *Trans-Saharan Trails. Islamic law, Trade Networks and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marshall, Paul, 2002, *The Talibanization of Nigeria: Sharia Law and Religious Freedom*, Washington, DC: Center for Religious Freedom.
- Mehler, Andreas, 2006, 'Area Studies: The Analysis of Conflicts and the Evaluation of Preventive Practice in Africa', in Patrick Chabal, Ulf Engel, Anna-Maria Gentili, eds, *Is Violence Inevitable in Africa-Theories of Conflict and Approaches to Conflict Prevention*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, pp. 99-123.
- Montclos (Pérouse de), Marc-Antoine, 2005, 'Conversion to Islam and Modernity in Nigeria: From Global Trends to Individual Stories', Paper Presented at a two-day Conference of ZMO, Berlin, 25-26 November 2005.
- Moussalli, Ahmad S., 1999, *Moderate and Radical Islamic Fundamentalism- the Quest for Modernity, Legitimacy, and the Islamic State*, Gainesville & Co.: University Press of Florida.
- Netton, Ian R., 2006, *Islam, Christianity and Tradition- A Comparative Exploration*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Noibi, Monsour, 2003-04, 'Sharia and the Nigerian Constitution: the Jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal', *Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law*, vol.10, [2006], pp. 97-105.
- Ojo, Matthews A., 2005, 'Religion, Public Space, and the Press in Contemporary Nigeria', in Toyin Falola, ed., *Christianity and Social Change in Nigeria—Essays in Honour of J. D. Y. Peel*, Durham NC: Carolina Academic Press, pp. 233-250.
- Okunola, Muri, 1993, 'The Relevance of Sharia to Nigeria', in Nura Alkali et al., eds, *Islam in Africa- Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference held at Abuja-Nigeria 24-28 November 1989*, Ibadan: Spectrum, pp. 23-35.

- Omar, Rashied, 2002, 'Towards a Polycentric Theory on Religion and Violence', *Journal of the Henry Martyn Institute*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 63-83.
- Ostein, Philip, 2006, 'An Opportunity Missed by Nigeria's Christians: The 1976-78 Sharia Debate Revisited', in Benjamin. F. Soares, ed, *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, pp. 221-255.
- Pegg, Scott, 2005, 'Can Policy Intervention Beat the Resource Curse? Evidence from the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project', *African Affairs*, vol. 105/418, pp. 1-25.
- Peters, Rudolph, 2005, *Crime and Punishment in Islamic law: Theory and Practice from the 16th to 20th Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quinn, Charlotte A. and Quinn, Fredrick, 2003, *Pride, Faith, and Fear- Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruthven, Malise, 2004, *Fundamentalism: the Search for Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Said, Edward, 1997, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See The Rest of the World*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Salamone, Frank A., 1998, 'The Waziri and the Thief: Hausa Islamic Law in a Yoruba City: a Case Study from Ibadan-Nigeria', *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, vol. 42, pp. 139-56.
- Sanni, Amidu, 2007a, 'The Shari'ah Conundrum in Nigeria and the Zamfara Model: the Nigerian Muslim Youth in the Historical Context', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1, April 2007, p. 117-32.
- Sanni, Amidu, 2007b, 'The Nigerian Muslim Youth and the Sharia Controversy: Issues in Violence Engineering in the Public Sphere', *Journal of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 16, pp. 119-133.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. and Bourgois, P., eds, 2004, *Violence in War and Peace- An Anthology*, Malden & Co: Blackwell Publishing.
- Sim, Stuart, 2005, *Fundamentalist World- The New Dark Age of Dogma*, Cambridge: Icon.
- Thackrah, John R., ed., 2004, *Dictionary of Terrorism*, 2nd edition, London/New York: Routledge'.
- Umar, Muhammad S., 2006, *Islam and Colonialism- Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule*, Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Umechukwu, Panta O. J., 1995, *The Press Coverage of Religious Violence in Nigeria*, Enugu-Nigeria: Ugovin Publishers.
- Zubaida, Sami, 1989, *Islam, the People, and the State*, London: Routledge.